Contents

1 The Voice From Heaven—March 31–April 6 ........................................5
2 The Final Word—April 7–13 ..........................................................17
3 Bible Prophecy Fulfilled—April 14–20 ...........................................29
4 The Bible Is Reliable—April 21–27 ..................................................41
5 When the Rocks Cry Out—April 28–May 4 ...................................53
6 The Bible and Science—May 5–11 ..................................................65
7 The Word in Our Lives—May 12–18 ..............................................77
8 Revelation of Hope—May 19–25 ....................................................89
9 The Bible and Health—May 26–June 1 .........................................101
10 The Bible and Happiness—June 2–8 .............................................113
11 Daily Wisdom—June 9–15 ...........................................................125
12 Growing Through the Word—June 16–22 .................................137
13 The Word of God Endures—June 23–29 .......................................149

Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Come visit us at our Web site at [http://www.absg.adventist.org].

Principal Contributors
Jonathan and Kathleen Kuntaraf

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Associate Editor
Lyndelle Brower Chiomenti

Publication Managers
Lea Alexander Greve
Soraya Homayouni Parish

Editorial Assistants
Tresa Beard
Jean A. Kellner

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Paul A. Hey

Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Concept Design
Dever Design

The teachers edition components were written by the following:

1. I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .: Tresa A. Beard, editorial assistant, Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide, General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

2. Learning Cycle, Lessons 1–3: Loren Seibold, pastor of Worthington Adventist Church, Ohio, U.S.A.

3. Learning Cycle, Lessons 4–6: Alan Hecht, librarian, Rebok Memorial Library, General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

4. Learning Cycle, Lessons 7–9: Lynn Ripley, department director, Minnesota Conference, U.S.A.

5. Learning Cycle, Lessons 10–13: John Fowler, associate director, Education Department, General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

The Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, whose members serve as consulting editors. The published guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).
As Seventh-day Adventist Christians we believe that God reveals Himself to us in this fallen world. Among all the various ways He has done so, the Bible is, we believe, the greatest expression of that revelation available today—the final and ultimate standard of truth for a fallen world.

The Bible does, indeed, make claims about itself that very few books ever do. Even more so, it comes with a massive amount of evidence to back up those claims. It is self-authenticating; its proof comes built right in.

It’s not just the incredible prophecies, however impressive; it’s not just its historical accuracy, however authenticating; it’s not just the revelation of God as revealed in its pages, however powerful. Though all these have their role in showing that the Bible is the Word of God, perhaps the greatest evidence for the Bible is the influence and impact for good it has had and still continues to have on the lives of those who apply its teaching to themselves. Despite all the evidence of prophecy, history, and so forth, in some ways the most powerful proof is found in the Bible’s amazing ability to bring hope, joy, and promise to people thousands of years after it was first written. For many centuries now, people all over the world have found in the Bible the answers to their deepest needs. And why not? After all, it’s the greatest revelation of the only One who can meet those needs—our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

With such claims made for the Bible, it’s no wonder that people have challenged its authenticity and reliability. Is it truly the Word of God? Does the Creator of the universe really speak
through its pages? How reliable are the texts? What scientific evidence, if any, backs up its claims? What does archaeology say regarding the Bible? And even if we believed that the Book is inspired, is it applicable to us who live in the twenty-first century? And if it is, how and why?

These, and more, are some of the questions our Bible study guide for this quarter will address. We just as easily could have titled it “Why I Believe in the Bible,” for in it the authors show why they do trust the Bible and have made it the spiritual and moral guide of their lives.

Even more important, during this quarter we seek to show just how relevant the Bible remains for us today—pretty impressive for a book whose latest sections were written about seventeen hundred years before doctors finally discovered that it might be a good idea to wash their hands before surgery. Again, it’s in this, the Bible’s power to change our lives for good, that we find some of the greatest proof of its relevancy and importance.

Jonathan Kuntaraf, also known as Oey Giok Kun, is a native of Indonesia. At the time of this writing he was associate director of the Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department at the General Conference. He and his wife, Dr. Kathleen Liwidjaja (an associate in the Health and Temperance Department at the General Conference), have two grown children.
How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Practice, and Apply

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, practice, and apply. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Practice); and

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in the “I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

**Step 1—Motivate:** Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

**Step 2—Explore:** Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

**Step 3—Practice:** Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

**Step 4—Apply:** Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Gen. 3:8, 9; 2 Sam. 12:1-7; Isa. 59:2; Jer. 38:14-19; Ezekiel 4; Amos 3:7; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 3:1.

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

Key Thought: Since the fall of humanity, the Lord has been communicating with us through various means.

How much is a human worth? From a purely chemical standpoint, quite a bit. According to various estimates, the value of the proteins, enzymes, RNA, DNA, amino acids, and biochemicals within the human body may make a person worth, literally, millions of dollars.

Of course, our true worth can be understood only through the life and death of Jesus. If our value wasn’t infinite in the sight of God, such an infinite price would not have been paid for our redemption.

How, though, has the Lord revealed to us the good news of our worth and our redemption? This week we begin by looking at the various means in which God has been communicating with us.

Yes, God is still talking to us sinful and degraded creatures. The crucial question is, Will we listen to what He is saying?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 7.
God’s Search for Humanity

Before sin, Adam and Eve were in direct communication with God; after sin, that communication was broken. They no longer could speak face to face with their Maker. It was not because God had changed, but because Adam and Eve’s relationship to Him had.

Read Isaiah 59:2. What principle seen here helps explain what sin has done to our relationship with God?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Because of sin, Adam and Eve were unable to stand at the presence of the Lord (see Gen. 3:8). They were afraid of God. Sin had driven them from the Creator. Moreover, the sin that separated humankind from the Creator also has separated nations, kingdoms, tribes, communities, churches, and families from each other. This is an unfortunate fact of life that we all have experienced, one way or another.

Read Genesis 3:9. What is the significance of this verse? Why would God, who knows all things, ask this question?
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

How ironic that we sometimes hear such phrases as “Man’s search for God.” The truth is the opposite, actually: God is searching for us. He is seeking us, using all kinds of ways and means to lead us to salvation. From Genesis to Revelation, from Moses to John, the Bible reveals God’s search for humanity; it shows His desire to touch us, to let us know He is there and that He loves us despite our sins (Isa. 5:1-5, Matt. 23:37).

“Where are you?” The question isn’t so much about where we are physically as it is about our spiritual well-being. Where are we in relationship to our Creator and Redeemer, who has done so much for us? If you were to hear the question “Where are you?” from the Lord, how would you answer, and why?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

▲Key Text: Isaiah 55:6

▲Teach the Class to:
  Know: That the Bible is a revelation of God’s search for mankind.
  Feel: The Lord’s desire to restore communication between Himself and mankind.
  Do: What we can to maintain open communication with God.

▲Lesson Outline:

I. Lost Communication (Gen. 3:6-10)
   ▲ Our direct communication with God has been broken because of sin.
   List and discuss some of the specific barriers to open communication with God.
   ▲ God is the initiator in restoring open communication with His people.
   In what ways does He attempt to do this?
   ▲ How can we respond to the Lord’s desire to communicate with us?

II. God’s Messengers (Amos 3:7)
   ▲ What special role do prophets have in our relationship with God?
   ▲ What were the various duties given to the prophets?
   ▲ How has the revelation of Christ through the prophets given us a better understanding of the Father?

III. The God of Today (Heb. 13:8)
   ▲ What are some of the avenues in which the Lord reveals Himself and seeks to communicate with us today?
   ▲ Though written long ago, how is the Bible still relevant in our time?
   ▲ Discuss the ways in which we can keep an open communication with our God in this century.

▲Summary: God uses various means to reveal to us our true worth and value. One of those avenues is the Bible, which points to our salvation and redemption in Jesus.
God and the Prophets

Read Amos 3:7. What does that tell us about the importance of prophets to the human race?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

From the earliest days—indeed, from the time that direct communication was broken—God used prophets to communicate with us. The prophets’ work consisted of numerous things: They revealed both comings of Jesus; they showed that God values human beings enough to choose from among them prophets to represent Him; they were the means by which the Lord revealed His love and character to His people; they sent warnings about impending judgments. The prophets also revealed the plan of salvation. And the Lord used the prophets to write the Bible.

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-7, Jeremiah 38:14-19, Ezekiel 4, 2 Peter 3:1. How do the prophets deliver their messages?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Compare 2 Chronicles 20:20 and Luke 16:31. Here we see two attitudes toward the prophets displayed. In a sense, we are in one of the two camps depicted here. Either we believe in what God says to us (often through His prophets) or we don’t. In the end, our attitude toward the prophets merely reflects our attitude toward Him.

How do we know if we really believe? Can we be deceived into thinking we believe when we really don’t, as were many of the leaders in Israel all through the nation’s history?

The answer is easy. Jesus said it numerous times. “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15, NKJV); “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we say that we believe in the writings of the prophets. Do we really? Have your actions in the past week reflected belief or unbelief, faith or lack of faith? What’s the only way you can answer this question correctly? If you could do something over, what would it be?
Learning Cycle

**STEP 1—Motivate!**

**Just for Teachers:** Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

Clear communication is foundational and essential to accomplishing any human endeavor. Organizations simply cannot function if people do not understand one another. Humorous (but costly) miscommunication occasionally happens in cross-cultural advertising. When Coca-Cola was first widely marketed in Japan, it was rendered phonetically in characters that literally meant “bite the wax tadpole.” Pepsi’s slogan, “Come alive with the Pepsi generation” was translated in Taiwan as “Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead.” Only after General Motors introduced the Chevy Nova in Latin America did they notice that “no va” means in Spanish, “it won’t go”—not a good recommendation for a car. Kentucky Fried Chicken’s slogan “finger lickin’ good” initially was mistranslated into Chinese as “eat your fingers off.”

Without clear communication, misunderstanding is bound to occur. So it is no wonder God has worked hard to provide humanity with clear and compelling communication about Himself and His plans for humanity.

**STEP 2—Explore!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

**Bible Commentary**

I. God’s Search for Humanity *(Isa. 59:1-8)*

Isaiah 59:2 says that sin is an effective blockade against clear communication between humanity and God.

**Consider This:** What types of sins does Isaiah identify as likely to cause this separation? Societal—sins of violence and injustice toward
The Revelation Through Jesus Christ

While the revelation of God through His prophets is the most common method, the coming of Jesus Christ in this world is the greatest and most complete revelation of God ever given. After all, Jesus was God, here in the flesh. What more could we ask for?

Although Jesus came in a different form from what people had expected, His life and His teaching demonstrated to humanity the will of God. People who lived in the time of Christ looked for greatness to satisfy their physical expectations. They looked for power instead of humility, for majesty and not meekness. However, the coming of Jesus faithfully revealed the true character of God the Father.

How do the following texts show how Jesus fully revealed God?

Matt. 11:27

John 1:14, 18

John 14:8-11

2 Cor. 4:6

Heb. 1:1-3

Based on John 14:8-11 we know that those who have seen Him have seen the Father, because Jesus and the Father are “in” each other. Their intimate relationship is much more than that of a master and a disciple. The words that Jesus speaks are more than those of a mere human being; they are a revelation of the actions of God Himself. Therefore, when we become acquainted with Jesus, we become acquainted with God, the Father, as well. The best way to know God’s love and His goodness is to know Jesus Christ personally.

If you claim to know Jesus, how would you answer this question: What is Jesus like? Be prepared to share your answer with the class on Sabbath.
Learning Cycle continued

others—or personal and private sins? Based on the types of sins listed, who do you think Isaiah is talking to?

- Genesis 3:8-9 shows God searching for Adam and Eve, whose sin had separated them from Him. Cite other examples in Scripture of God searching for someone (for example, the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, the invitations of Matthew 11:28 and Revelation 22:17).

II. God and the Prophets

Consider This: The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary defines a prophet as “a person supernaturally called and qualified as a spokesman for God.”—Page 903. Evaluate this definition. How does being called differ from being qualified? Can you think of any who were called but were not qualified? (For example, Balaam.)

For those times when there is no living prophet, who is God’s spokesperson?

III. God Speaks Today

The lessons highlight texts that describe six ways God communicates with humankind: family, Christian example, the Bible, nature, circumstantial leading, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Consider This: Which of these means of communication is clearest to you? Why? Which is least clear? Why? Are all equally good at communicating all aspects of God? Explain. Besides those listed above, does God have any other ways of communicating? How do you evaluate the claims of someone who professes to have an out-of-the-ordinary light from God?

IV. God Speaks Through the Bible

A popular word applied to Scripture by conservative biblical scholars is the word inerrancy. This means that the Bible is without errors. Many Adventist scholars have shied away from using this word, believing that it implies a verbal style of inspiration (God dictating each word of Scripture) rather than “holy men of God” speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

One of the important concepts to remember when talking about Scripture is the extent to which God safeguarded its content. Though, at
God Speaks Today

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

We have discussed divine communication through the prophets and through Jesus Christ. However, divine communication has not been confined to biblical times only.

In what way does God reveal Himself to us?

Job 12:7-10

____________________________________________________________________

Psalm 107:1-8

____________________________________________________________________

John 4:16-18, 26

____________________________________________________________________

John 5:39

____________________________________________________________________

Phil. 4:9

____________________________________________________________________

2 Tim. 1:5

____________________________________________________________________

The above texts clearly show that God never intended for us to be without certainty regarding the purpose of life. He made certain that we could know the truth and the means of salvation. God has revealed Himself through nature, science, the Bible, Jesus, divine providence in our lives, human relationships, and the Holy Spirit. He also reveals Himself through the image of God reflected in those who have dedicated their lives to Him.

What about you? How has God been communicating with you lately? The more important question, however, is, How well are you listening? Again, you can know the answer easily simply by asking yourself, Am I doing what the Lord is commanding me to, or not? There’s your answer.
times, minor questions can arise (often they can be explained, too), we must emphasize that the spiritual message is, in effect, without error. That message is enough to make us “wise unto salvation.”

**Consider This:** Is it possible there are errors in the Bible? What sort of errors might you find—and what sort of errors would you never find?

►**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

**Thought Questions:**

1. A billion Christians around the world claim to honor the Bible. How do you answer the person who asks, “If the Bible is clear, why are there so many denominations?”

2. Think about some of the extreme biblical interpretations you may have heard. Can you identify any mistakes that such misinterpreters commonly make? What factors distinguish good biblical interpretation from faulty?

**Application Questions:**

1. Do you tend to read bits and pieces of the Bible? Is it important to read Bible stories in context, or is going from text to text sufficient? Explain your answer.

2. How do we make reading the Bible less intimidating to people?

**Witnessing**

Do you know your Bible well enough to give someone even a basic Bible study about why you trust in Christ for salvation?

►**STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a
God Speaks Through the Bible

Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20, 21. Summarize in your own words the basic message of these two texts. What should they be saying to each of us?

___________________________________________________________

In many cases, the Lord specifically asked the prophets to write down His messages; many of them have been preserved. Those preserved writings are in the Bible. For example, “Moses wrote all the words of the Lord” (Exod. 24:4; see also Exod. 34:27, Lev. 26:46). Joshua was commissioned to write (Josh. 24:26). The Lord also asked Jeremiah to write a book containing the words He would give him. Years later the prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:2) tells of his reading Jeremiah’s message and how the Lord had promised deliverance for God’s people after the 70 years’ captivity. Daniel himself was told to write a book especially for those living at “the time of the end” (12:4). Thus the Lord reveals Himself through the Bible. As the written message, the Bible is an expression of God’s will.

It is interesting that the word Bible is not found in the Bible. It comes from the Latin word biblia, “books,” which comes from the Greek word biblos, meaning “a book.” The Holy Bible therefore means “the holy books.” This is indeed appropriate, because the Bible is composed of many books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New.

Despite a great deal of diversity in style and form, from the first book to the last, the Bible speaks about a loving God, the Creator of the universe, who reaches out to His sinful creatures. The theme of God’s love is the focus of the Bible, which is seen particularly through Christ, who came into this world, lived as a human being, and died on Calvary. This is the greatest truth of the universe. All major Bible truths, therefore, should be studied from this perspective.

What role has the Bible played in your relationship to God? What changes might you need to make so that the Bible could have an even greater impact in your walk with Jesus?
life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

In his famous *Church Dogmatics*, theologian Karl Barth explains what happens when the church ceases to interact directly with Scripture:

“Let the Church go away from Scripture as such. Let it replace it by its traditions, its own indefinite consciousness of its origins and nature, its own pretended direct faith in Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, its own exposition and application of the word of the prophets and apostles. . . . All kinds of ‘life,’ evolutions and revolutions will be possible in the Church. It can include conservative and progressive thinking in their constant action and reaction. . . . And these may give the deceptive appearance that the Church is really alive. But it does not live in the inner movement of these tensions. In them we see rather the process of decay to which the Church is at once subject when it ceases to live by the Word of God, which means by Holy Scripture.”—Page 75.

Are we Seventh-day Adventists interested in reading Scripture, as it communicates God to us, or do we only talk about Scripture, as it helps us solve our own theological arguments? When Scripture becomes the reason for our “evolutions and revolutions” and is used primarily to argue “conservative and progressive thinking in their constant action and reaction,” is it still communicating God to humankind?

“Jesus met the people on their own ground, as one who was acquainted with their perplexities. He made truth beautiful by presenting it in the most direct and simple way. His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream. His voice was as music to those who had listened to the monotonous tones of the rabbis. But while His teaching was simple, He spoke as one having authority. This characteristic set His teaching in contrast with that of all others. The rabbis spoke with doubt and hesitancy, as if the Scriptures might be interpreted to mean one thing or exactly the opposite. The hearers were daily involved in greater uncertainty. But Jesus taught the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority. Whatever His subject, it was presented with power, as if His words could not be controverted.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 253.

Discussion Questions:

1. God has never given up on us. What are the implications of this fact as we deal with our relatives, friends, or neighbors who belong to the unchurched community? How can we have the never-give-up spirit in reaching out to others?

2. Discuss your answers to Tuesday’s question. What things do you see in common? What are the differences? What can you learn from one another?

3. What can you say to someone who claims that he or she is earnestly seeking to know God and His will? What practical things can you say to help him or her hear the voice of God?

4. Share various encounters in which God spoke to you in a powerful manner. What happened? How did you know for sure that it was the Lord? Did you have any means to test the experience to know if it truly was of God? If so, what were those means?
The Final Word

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 4:4-10; 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Gal. 1:11, 12; James 2; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:16.

Memory Text: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, NIV).

Key Thought: From where does the Bible derive its authority?

We all live under one final authority or another, whatever it happens to be. As Christians, we believe that the final authority is God, whose will is expressed in the Bible. Hence, the Bible is the final Word.

But why should any one of us put ourselves under the authority of a book? The answer is that the Bible isn’t just a book; it is, instead, the Word of God.

Thus, by virtue of who its Author is, the Lord God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Book comes with its divine authority built in. After all, who has authority over God? No one. That’s why the Bible has to be the foundational and final Word.

This week we’ll take a look at the authority of the Scripture. What does the Scripture say about itself? What claims does it make about itself and its origins? How did the Bible writers view other books of the Bible? And, most important, what does Jesus Himself have to say about the Scriptures? After all, He—the Lord Himself—would have, no doubt, the final word on the final Word.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 14.*
The Word of the Lord

The Bible writers made incredible claims about the books they were writing. Phrases used to describe the original sources of their messages were expressed as “the Lord has spoken” (Isa. 1:2, NIV), “this is what the Lord says” (Amos 1:3, NIV), “the word of the Lord that came . . .” (Mic. 1:1), or “this is what the Lord has revealed to me” (Jer. 38:21, NIV).

The Old Testament writers testify that their messages came directly from God. It is “the word of the Lord” that came to such Old Testament writers as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, and others (Jer. 1:1, 2, 9; Ezek. 1:3).

Read 2 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 2:2; 11:5, 24; Micah 3:8. What common thread runs through these texts?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________


____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Read Romans 4:3 and Galatians 1:11, 12. What was Paul’s conviction concerning the Scriptures? What authority does Paul say lies behind the gospel he preached?

____________________________________________________________________

Scattered over the long centuries, all these men, regardless of the vast differences in their circumstances and background, testified to the same thing: that the messages they were writing weren’t their own but that they were moved by the power of God, who commanded them to write what He was telling them.

If we believe the prophets, that they were inspired by God, what practical implications does that belief have for our daily lives? That is, how well does your life reflect your belief in the authority of Scripture? What things, if any, have you done in the past 24 hours that violated the clear teaching of the Bible?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: 2 Timothy 3:16

Teach the Class to:

Know: That the Bible is the inspired Word of God.
Feel: Assured that the Holy Spirit inspired each Bible writer.
Do: Choose to live our lives in accordance with God’s Word.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Inspired Word of God (1 Pet. 1:10)

A The Spirit of God inspired the messages given in the Scriptures. How can we be sure of this?
B Bible writers themselves attribute their messages to the Lord. Give some examples.

II. Jesus and the Scriptures (Matt. 4:4)

A Jesus often made references to what was written in the Scriptures. Give some examples.
B Describe how Jesus verified His own mission by using the Scriptures.

III. The Unity of the Scriptures (1 Thess. 2:13)

A How did New Testament writers show confidence in Old Testament Scriptures?
B New Testament writers believed themselves to be inspired of God. Did the Lord communicate with them in the same way He spoke to the prophets of old?

Summary: God speaks to us through His Word. We can be sure of its divine authority.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?
God-breathed

Read 2 Timothy 3:16. Where does Paul place the origin and authority of Scripture?

The Greek word for “inspiration” in 2 Timothy 3:16 means literally “God-breathed.” It clearly indicates that the Scriptures originated from God. God enabled His messengers, prophets, and apostles to grasp and then communicate that which He revealed to them in a trustworthy and authoritative fashion.

Keeping in mind the above text, especially the definition of “inspiration,” read Genesis 2:7 and Psalm 33:6. What commonality do you find between these texts? What message should this give to us about the authority of the Bible?

________________________
________________________

The same creative power that brought the world into existence was also behind the origins of Scripture! Dwell on the implications of this amazing truth.

The Lord communicated His Word through various means. Besides revealing Himself in visions and dreams, He sent messages in the form of direct appearance (Exod. 3:2-7), through an angel (Dan. 8:15, 16), or through eyewitnesses (1 John 1:1-3).

Regardless of how God communicated to them, the writers of the Bible were not acting merely as writing machines. God did not push them as He would keys on a typewriter to produce His message. Each writer had his own writing style; these differences are seen all through the Bible. The crucial point is that these messages were not their own; they were writing down what was delivered to them by God. They were His messages, not their messages (2 Sam. 23:2, Amos 3:8).

As a result of this divine revelation, the Bible also is called “the book of the Lord” (Isa. 34:16), “the gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1), “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2), “the word of Christ” (Col. 3:16), and “the good word of God” (Heb. 6:5).

Compare the various writing styles found in Scripture. For example, compare Paul to John, Isaiah to Moses, or Isaiah to John. Does one speak more clearly to you than others? If so, why? Also, what might be God’s reason for allowing the author’s own writing style to come through in what is His Word?
Consider These Situations:

1. You purchase a household item that requires assembly. Unfortunately, the instruction sheet is missing. You try to put it together anyway. The finished result is a misassembled mess that does not work as intended.

2. You are driving to an unfamiliar destination. Perhaps you have vague verbal directions but no map; perhaps you have a map, but do not use it; and you refuse to ask anyone for directions. You get lost and miss your appointment.

3. You are taking a test. Because you do not read the directions at the top of the page, you do not realize you need to answer only one of the three essay questions, and instead try to answer all of them—and do it poorly.

Ask class members to share examples of their own failure to follow directions.

STEP 2—Explore!

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Bible Commentary

I. The Word of the Lord (Gal. 1:11, 12)

There are good reasons Paul felt compelled to detail the direct source of his messages. It would have been easy for someone to say, “Paul is just parroting ideas he heard from Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem.”

In addition, Jewish theologians believed in a long chain in the transmission of divine messages. A text in the Mishnah, a Jewish Bible commentary, says “Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue” (‘Abot 1:1). Paul knew, however, that the longer the chain of transmission, the less...
Christ’s View of the Scriptures

Today there are all sorts of views about Scripture, about its authority, validity, role, and so forth. Unfortunately, many within Christianity don’t view the Bible as the kind of authority it ought to be.

What authority is that? Well, let’s go to the ultimate Authority Himself, Jesus. How did He view Scripture?

**What** do the following texts tell us about how Christ viewed the **authority of Scripture**? *Matt. 4:4-10; 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; Mark 2:25; 12:36; Luke 4:21.*

Those texts are but a few that reveal how truthful and authoritative Jesus’ view of Scripture was. Jesus believed in the story of Creation (*Mark 10:6*), of Noah and the Flood (*Matt. 24:37-39*), and of Jonah and the large fish (*Matt. 12:39-41*). He also referred to the creation of the first couple (*Matt. 19:4*), and He quoted Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:5, which speaks about the original purpose of marriage.

**Read** Luke 24:25-27 and John 10:35. What did He say about His endorsement and acceptance of the Old Testament as a whole?

Jesus Himself verified His own mission by using scriptures. “‘For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?’” (*John 5:46, 47, NKJV*). After His resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus quoted Scripture to clarify the importance of His ministry. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself” (*Luke 24:27, NKJV*). Throughout His life on earth, Jesus used Scripture, spoke from Scripture, promoted Scripture, uplifted Scripture, and interpreted Scripture. “Jesus is the true Interpreter of Holy Scripture. His message is our key to unlock the correct meaning of the Old Testament. . . . Christ’s use of Israel’s Scriptures is our model of biblical interpretation. Our guiding principle is based on the conviction that the redemptive activity of God in the history of Israel reached its fulfillment in Christ.”—Hans LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, Fla.: First Impressions, 1997), p. 13.
likely people are to believe its accuracy.

So Paul makes it clear that there is no intermediate source of his gospel. In Galatians 1:11 he calls his message, literally (in Greek), “the gospel that was gospeled to me.” This excessive phrase is meant to show that the story of Jesus is not just a message he is passing on, like an office memo. Rather, it is something that came in and transformed him, allowing him to speak with godly power.

**Consider This:** You have heard the gospel; but have you been “gospeled” by the gospel, as Paul was?

**II. God Breathed** (*Gen. 2:7, Ps. 33:6, 2 Tim. 3:16*)

Because breathing is both necessary and detectable, yet breath is invisible to the eye, the Greek word for breath became the root of some important spiritual words. *Spiros* is the root for the word *spirit* (an invisible force) as well as *inspire* (to fill with spirit or enthusiasm) and *expire* (to die).

**Consider This:** Have the class identify the three separate uses of God’s breath (transmission of truth, creation of biological life, and creation of the physical universe). Does God literally blow, or breathe, to do these creative acts, or is this a metaphor? What does John 4:24 mean by its description of God as Spirit?

**III. Christ’s View of the Scriptures**

Bible students must remember that when Jesus quoted Scripture, He did not have our modern Bible, but was quoting from the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament. While this gives credence to the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative, Christ’s use of it does not alone remove the need for us to understand the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. Much of what the Old Testament addressed was, in fact, brought to completion in Jesus. For example, we need not sacrifice animals any longer, because Christ is our sacrifice. Perhaps the most significant text in this regard is Matthew 5:17 (*NIV*): “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

**Consider This:** What is the proper use of the Old Testament for
Apostles and the Scriptures

The New Testament writers also showed full confidence in the Scriptures.

Read James 2. In what ways does he show his belief in the authority of the Old Testament?

In the book of Romans alone, Paul quotes more than forty times directly from the Old Testament, and chapters are essentially built upon quotations or allusions from the Old Testament scriptures. He quotes from Isaiah at least twenty-five times. Peter did the same thing in his books. All the epistles have a strong foundation in the Old Testament scriptures (see also Matt. 1:23, 3:3; Heb. 10:7; 1 John 3:12). The New Testament authors have confidently assured us of their conviction regarding the authority of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16). In his admonition to the rich, as stated in James 1:11, James used Isaiah 40:6, 7 and Psalm 103:15. The apostle Peter expressed his confidence in the Old Testament prophecies with emphatic words in 2 Peter 1:21. He was alluding to the Old Testament (Exod. 12:5) when he said in 1 Peter 1:19 that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

When Paul spoke about the gospel in Romans 1:17, he used the underlying principle of the gospel as found in Habakkuk 2:4. In describing humanity’s sinful nature (Rom. 3:10-12), the apostle makes reference to Psalm 14:1-3. When Paul spoke to the Jews in Rome, he said, “‘The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet . . .’” (Acts 28:25, RSV).

The apostles were solidly convicted that the Scriptures were the Word of God. At Pentecost Peter said, “‘This Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David’” (Acts 1:16, NKJV). Paul also said, “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13, NKJV).

What forces exist in your culture that work against having the kind of trust in the Scriptures as depicted in today’s and yesterday’s lessons? How can you recognize those forces? Even more important, what can you do to help protect yourself, and others, against them?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Christians today? How do you sort out those things that have present authority from those fulfilled in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection?

STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

Exercise:

You can use this exercise to begin your class. You will need to copy the following for each class member. They also will need a blank sheet of paper. Give these verbal instructions: “We’re going to do an exercise today. Please read and follow the instructions I’m handing you. Some of these things may seem silly, but remember: It is intended to test your ability to follow directions.”

Directions:

1. Read all directions before beginning.
2. On the sheet of paper you’ve been handed, number your paper 1-7.
3. On the first line, write your name.
4. On the second line, write the name of the person sitting next to you.
5. On the sixth line, draw three stars.
6. In the center of the paper, below number seven, draw a box.
7. Write the number of siblings you have to the right of the box.
8. Divide the box into four equal parts.
9. Draw a flower in the bottom left-hand corner of the box.
10. Turn your paper upside down.
11. Write out today’s date using all capital letters.
12. Turn your paper right side up again.
13. On line three, draw a small picture of your favorite food.
14. Draw a circle around it.
15. Write the name of your first pet on line four.
16. Draw a star in each corner of your paper.
17. Underline two of the stars.
18. Turn your paper over.
19. Fold it in half lengthwise.
20. Fold it in half the other way.
21. Write your middle name on the outside.
22. Ignore directions two through twenty-one and enjoy watching every-
Unity Amid Diversity

Read 2 Peter 3:16. What is Peter referring to as Scripture?

With Peter’s reference to Paul’s writings as Scripture, we see internal evidence for the validity of both Testaments; both were considered the Word of God (see also 1 Thess. 2:13). And despite some vast differences in the backgrounds and authors of the Bible, there’s also an incredible unity found within both.

A span of a thousand years covers the writings of the Old Testament. There was, then, a gap of about five hundred years when no Bible books were written, at least not until the birth of the New Testament church. The books of the New Testament were started and completed in the last half of the first century A.D. Thus, the Bible took more than a millennium and a half to be completed.

Read the following texts: Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:36–40, John 13:35, 1 Corinthians 13. What great unifying theme appears here?

One of the strongest evidences that the Bible was prepared under divine direction is its unity. Although the writers came from diversified backgrounds, its content has one predominant purpose. The Bible was written by kings, a prime minister, shepherds, fishermen, prophets, priests, a publican, a physician, and many other people with different occupations—but all of them wrote about the same God. Some books are historical; some are prophetic. Some writers wrote in poetry; others in prose. Some books are missionary reports; others are church letters or personal correspondence. However, each speaks about the same loving and caring God; each one informs us about the same plan of salvation; and each one uplifts the same standard of righteousness. All look forward to the same eternal reward. This is not coincidence. It all shows that the Bible writers have one Source of inspiration.

What common theme in Scripture is your favorite? Which speaks to your heart the best? Go through a few books in both Testaments and pull out texts that share this common theme. Bring them to class on Sabbath.
one else do this activity wrong—because they didn’t follow instruction 1!

Had you read all the directions at the beginning, as told to, you would have saved yourself a lot of time!

Witnessing

Discuss when following God’s directions can be an effective witness. Is there ever a time when following His directions can be a bad witness (for example, when following His instructions become legalistic)? Explain your answer.

STEP 4—Apply!

Just for Teachers: In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

“No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the Long Parliament. England became a people of the book, and that book was the Bible. It was read at churches and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom has not deadened, kindled a startling enthusiasm. As a mere literary monument, the English version of the Bible remains the noblest example of the English tongue. But far greater was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people. Elizabeth might silence or tune the pulpits, but it was impossible for her to silence or tune the great preachers of justice and mercy and truth who spoke from the Book. The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new conception of life and of man superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class.”—John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People* (1874), ch. VIII, sect. 1.

Consider This:

1. Green speaks of the powerful effect that reading the Bible had on the English people in the Elizabethan age. Is the Bible continuing to change your life?
2. More important, are you giving the Bible a chance to change your life? Many people have lovely, leather-bound Bibles that are worthless to them, because they do not read them!
3. With all the talk about biblical Christianity that goes on in some nations today, why do so many of the arguments in the public forum seem petty?

“The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. . . . The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 21.

“The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. v.

Discussion Questions:

1. As a class, share your responses to Thursday’s question.

2. What other sources of authority can be in competition with the Bible? Identify these sources (government, media, science, culture, etc.), and then as a class talk about what you can do to help balance these sources with the Bible while, at the same time, accepting the Bible as the final authority in your life.

3. No doubt there are some things in Scripture that are difficult to understand. Why should that not be surprising when one considers what this book is about and the themes it deals with? What can you do to help one another maintain faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God, despite some things in it that can be hard to grasp?
Lesson 3  *April 14-20

Bible Prophecy Fulfilled

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Isa. 52:13–53:12, Daniel 2, Matt. 24:24, John 13:19.

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

Key Thought: Biblical prophecy remains a powerful factor in helping establish our faith.

Every year people seek expert advice on how various stocks will do. Yet, in the end the experts can tell them everything about the stock except the one thing everyone wants to know: what it will do in the future.

God, though, knows the future. He has proved that to us, again and again, by some of the incredible prophecies in the Bible. Many of these prophecies were written well in advance of the predicted events. And, sure enough, time and again the events happened just as the Lord said in the prophecy. We know this because today, looking back over history, we see the prediction in the Bible, and then we can see that the prediction came true. “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7, NKJV).

Having seen that these past predictions were so accurate, we can trust the Lord on the prophecies yet future, such as the greatest future prophecy of all: the second coming of Jesus.

This week we’ll take a look at some of the great prophecies in Scripture. What can we learn from them? What is the principle behind prophecy? How does prophecy help us learn to trust in the Bible as the Word of God?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 21.
Prophetic License

In Hebrew the verb *naba* means “to prophesy.” It carries the idea of someone pouring forth words with fervor or inspiration. The noun *nabi* means a spokesperson, a prophet, a person authorized to speak for another (see Exod. 6:28-30, 7:1). Another word used in the Bible for someone with the prophetic gift is *seer*, translated from two different Hebrew words, each with the meaning “to see.” Prophets, it seems, have been given the ability to prophesy regarding things that ordinary people might not see. Thus, not only do prophets see what others might not—they are called by God to speak those things, often with fervor and might, as well.

Read Matthew 24:24. What warning about prophets is Jesus giving to us? What’s implied in those words?

Jesus’ warning about false prophets can be understood to contain the idea that true ones will exist, as well. After all, if we were to reject all prophets—that is, reject the gift altogether—there would be no need of the warning about false ones.

Read Matthew 24:32, 33 and John 13:19. What principle about how prophecy should work is revealed here?

With these verses Jesus showed us that prophecy is not just about being able to tell the future. Instead, prophecy is given to strengthen our faith in God and His Word after the events have occurred. The more we see the fulfillment of the prophecy, the more we believe that the Bible really comes from the Lord.

There are various kinds of prophecies. One kind has to do with the predictions of a coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Others have to do with the future of the Israelites and of various nations; others deal with the end of the world, and even beyond.

Think over the role that prophecy has played in your own walk with the Lord. What lessons about prophecy have you learned over time? What words of advice or caution would you give to a new Christian or to someone studying prophecy for the first time, regarding this wonderful gift?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: 1 Peter 1:12

Teach the Class to:

Know: That prophets are called by God to prophesy of things that others do not know and understand.
Feel: That our faith is strengthened by the fulfillment of prophecy.
Do: Seek to understand the prophecies concerning the second coming of Jesus.

Lesson Outline:

I. Trusting in the Prophecies (John 13:19)
   A Prophecies were given to strengthen our faith. Name some of the prophecies that are found in the Bible. Discuss how they strengthen faith.
   B Jesus warned that false prophets would arise. How can a false prophet be identified?

II. The Fulfillment of Prophecy (Isa. 7:14, Matt. 1:21)
   A Explain how the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled with such accuracy.
   B Name the specific details of the Messianic prophecies found in Isaiah that point directly to Jesus. (See Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7.)

III. Future Events (Matt. 24:3)
   A Why was it so important for Jesus to give His disciples signs of His second coming?
   B Discuss our place in the prophetic sequence of events to take place before the Second Coming.

Summary: The fulfillment of prophecy is the surest evidence of its authenticity.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?
Early Prophecies

“Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” (2 Chron. 20:20).

Beginning even in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we can see that prophecy plays an important role in the history of God’s work with fallen humanity.

Look up the following texts. What was prophesied, and how and when were those prophecies fulfilled?

Gen. 3:15

Gen. 6:13

Gen. 12:1-3

Gen. 15:13, 14

Gen. 18:10

It’s easy for us now, looking back, to see just how accurately those prophecies were fulfilled. But place yourself in the position, say, of Noah, who was told that water from the sky was going to wipe out the earth, even though, according to Ellen White, prior to that time it had never even rained! (See Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 96, 97.) Or of Abraham and Sarah, that she would one day be the mother of their child when she was long past child-bearing age. It was surely a great test of faith on their part (Heb. 11:8-11) to trust God concerning the events that He said would come to pass.

What promises of God are you waiting to see fulfilled? What lessons can you learn from past examples of Bible characters who trusted in God’s promises that can help you learn to trust Him, as well?
The weather forecasters are unanimous: It is going to be a gorgeous day. That is why you do not have any second thoughts as you prepare for a day outside.

So how surprised you are when you look up from your comfy spot only to see storm clouds gathering.

Most human predictions of the future, even those based on the best scientific information, are not very accurate. There is only One who knows the future well enough to tell us what will really happen. The prophecies that come from God are recorded in the Bible—and we can trust them.

**STEP 2—Explore!**

*Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?*

**Bible Commentary**

**I. Early Prophecies (Gen. 3:15)**

Of all the early prophecies, this is perhaps the most difficult. Here are some points to consider in interpretation:

- On the surface, this text has been understood to describe the origin of the natural fear that human beings have for snakes.
- God’s curse on the serpent—that he would henceforth transport himself in the dust—is the ultimate degradation of the serpent. To say specifically that he would eat dust might reflect that it was in the area of appetite that the serpent deceived the woman. In other words, one bad “eating” is punished with another.
- Given the snake’s posture, and the woman’s, the head of one and the heel of the other are the natural points of contact. While the snake can injure
The Prophecy of Daniel 2

Review the prophecy of Daniel 2. What does it teach us about the power of God to foretell the future?

World history supports the accuracy of this amazing prophecy. Babylon’s golden kingdom ruled the world from 605 to 539 B.C. Babylon’s influence was greatly extended, and it became the dominant power in the ancient Near East. Today the ruins of the city of Babylon are located in Iraq, 70 miles south of Baghdad. Not only did the Bible predict the fall of Babylon (Jer. 51:49, 53), it clearly stated who was to direct the campaign against Babylon (Isa. 45:1-4). Cyrus and his army were at the gates of Babylon about one hundred seventy-five years after the prophecy was given.

The Medes and Persians ruled the world from 539 B.C. to 331 B.C. But then God said in Daniel 2:39, “‘Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth’ ” (NIV). Daniel 8:21 clearly explained that Greece was the third kingdom. Within a short time the Greek armies, led by Alexander the Great, conquered the world. Wearing bronze breastplates and helmets, they carried bronze shields and swords. What a fitting symbol for Greece.

The Greek Empire was then conquered by the iron monarchy of Rome in 168 B.C., another dramatic fulfillment of the prophecy. Rome had the longest reign of any other world power. For more than five hundred years Rome was dominant; from the British Isles to the Arabian Gulf, from the North Sea to the Sahara, and from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, Rome held sway.

But as Daniel said, “‘The kingdom shall be divided’ ” (Dan. 2:41, NKJV). Rome was divided into independent kingdoms that later became the nations of modern Europe, nations that would “not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay” (vs. 43). We, today, are living in the time of those feet and toes of the statue.

The next kingdom to come is the final one, God’s eternal kingdom. Daniel was so right on all the others. How foolish it would be to not trust him on this, the last one.

Think about this amazing prophecy: Daniel, living more than five hundred years before Christ, described Europe even as it exists today! How could he have done this other than by the power of God? Is your faith wavering? Are you sometimes having trouble trusting in the Lord? Go back over this prophecy or others that have been fulfilled, asking the Lord to use them to help build your faith.
the woman by biting her heel, a heel on the snake’s head is fatal.

- A second-level interpretation is to see this as a Messianic prophecy: The seed of the woman is Jesus the Messiah, and the serpent is Satan, with conflict anticipated between them.

So this text may prefigure Satan’s role in Jesus’ torture and death (the biting of the heel), and Jesus’ ultimate victory (crushing the serpent’s head).

II. The Prophecy of Daniel 2

**Consider This:** A discussion of the feet and toes of mixed iron and clay as a picture of modern Europe might lead to a lively discussion among modern Adventist readers: In light of advances in creating a united European Union (already achieved in the area of currency), how do we understand the prophecy’s implication that Europe always will remain divided?

III. The Messiah in Prophecy

*(Review passages in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 that speak of servanthood.)*

The word to highlight in explaining this passage to your class is *servant.*

Most Jewish interpreters of the Messianic prophecies anticipated a messiah who would be a strong political and military leader. Straightforward economic and military power had so often overcome Israel in its conflicts with other nations that they naturally hoped God might give them that same kind of power and leadership to overmatch their opponents. When Isaiah gave this startling prophecy, few had the capacity to understand the idea of power as service and a leader as a servant. This paradox was not understood until it was modeled in the life of Jesus. Even then, however, some were more excited by what His power could add to military conflict with the Romans.

**Consider This:** Many misunderstood the prophecies about the role of Jesus at His first advent and, therefore, actually wanted His church to be something quite different from what He meant it to be. What about Jesus and His role in the world today might we misunderstand? For example, might we, too, want Jesus’ church to have certain types of worldly power and recognition, when He desires servanthood?
The Messiah in Prophecy

Of all the prophecies in the Old Testament, the ones concerning the first coming of Jesus are among the most powerful. There are about sixty Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming Messiah. One of the most powerful is found in Isaiah.

**Read** Isaiah 52:13–53:12. What characteristics of the Messiah do you see here? How did Jesus fulfill them?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

This has to be one of the most powerful examples of predictive prophecy in the Bible. It is full of contingencies that could not be rigged in advance in an attempt to produce fulfillment. This prophecy has been and still continues to be powerful proof for the Christian faith.

**Below** are a few Old Testament prophecies about Jesus and their New Testament fulfillment. What can we learn from these about the trustworthiness of God’s Word?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Testament Prophecy</th>
<th>New Testament Fulfillment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 7:14</td>
<td>Matthew 1:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micah 5:2</td>
<td>Luke 2:4-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosea 11:1</td>
<td>Matthew 2:14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is exciting to study how Jesus also refers to the predictive prophecies about Himself and their fulfillment after His resurrection. He told two disciples on the road to Emmaus, “‘Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:26, 27, NIV). The things concerning Himself may have included His birth (Isa. 7:14), ministry (Isa. 9:1, 2), His being rejected (Isa. 53:3), His hands and feet pierced (Ps. 22:16), His being mocked and insulted (vss. 6-8), His crucifixion with sinners (Isa. 53:12), and His resurrection (Ps. 16:10).

Because of what Jesus did in fulfilling these prophecies, you can stand forgiven before God right now, regardless of your past, simply by claiming His work in your behalf. How should this great truth, that of salvation by faith, change your life? How has it changed it already? What other changes need to come, as well?
STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

Thought Questions:
In light of Jesus’ insistence in Matthew 24 that there is no way to know the precise time of Jesus’ coming, and that it will be as surprising as a thief’s break-in, what is the best way to talk about these end-time prophecies? What can you accurately say about Jesus’ coming (for example, it could be soon but will be unexpected), and why should you never say “Jesus will come in July of 2014”?

Application Questions:
1. Make a list (on a blackboard, dry erase board, or flip chart if possible) of ten news stories that have grabbed class members’ attention this week.

2. With Matthew 24 open before them, have the class try to coordinate verses in the chapter with each news story.

3. Be creative and interpretive. For example, false Christs and false prophets may bring to mind the almost fanatical attention paid to entertainment and sports figures. Refugees in troubled regions of the world may remind us of Jesus’ words about fleeing to the mountains in the end times.

4. How useful are these ten news stories in figuring out the precise time of Jesus’ return? On the other hand, how might they be useful in reminding us of God’s trustworthiness?

Witnessing
You know someone who is constantly setting dates for Christ’s return. You also know someone who believes He is returning soon but meanwhile spends a great deal of time helping others in various ways. What type of witness is each person giving to those around them?
The Second Coming

As we have been seeing all week, so many of the prophecies about past events have been fulfilled, just as predicted, and often in an amazing way. But these were all prophecies fulfilled in the past. The Bible, however, talks about prophecies yet to take place. Among the most important of these are, of course, the prophecies about Christ’s second coming.

If all the prophecies about His first coming were so accurately fulfilled, what should that tell us regarding the certainty of the ones about the Second Coming?

Before leaving His disciples, Jesus had promised them concerning the certainty of His coming: “‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am’” (John 14:3, NIV). Peter, one of the closest disciples of Jesus, wrote, “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13, NIV).

The Bible not only reveals the manner and the characteristics of the second coming of Christ but also describes the signs of His second coming. Read the following prophecies concerning the signs of His coming, and mark an X by the areas that are seeing fulfillment:

1. Increase of knowledge (Dan. 12:4)
2. False messiahs (Matt. 24:4, 5)
3. Wars and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6, 7a)
4. Famine (Matt. 24:7b)
5. Earthquakes (Matt. 24:7b)
6. Preaching of the gospel (Matt. 24:14)
10. Social problems (2 Tim. 3:1-5)
11. Increase of skepticism (2 Pet. 3:3, 4)

A pretty accurate description of our world, is it not? Amazing, too, if you consider that the passages were written many long centuries ago. Hence, even more proof that we can trust the Bible.

If you believed that Jesus were coming back tomorrow, would that thought make you happy or fearful? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your relationship to God?
STEP 4—Apply!

Just for Teachers: In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

This story may be fictional, but it makes a good point:

Some seminary students took a break from their studies to play basketball in the gymnasium of a local school. The janitor, an elderly man with white hair, would wait patiently until the seminarians had finished playing. While he waited, he’d read the Bible.

One day a seminarian went up to the janitor and asked, “What are you reading?”


The seminarian, acquainted with all the difficulties of understanding the book, was surprised. “The book of Revelation!” he said. “Do you understand it?”

“Yes, I understand it,” the old man assured him.

“Really?” the seminarian said. “So tell me, What does it mean?”

“Pretty simple,” the old janitor said. “It means that Jesus is gonna win.”

The seminarian realized that the old janitor knew Revelation better than he did!

Consider This: If you watch the news on television, or read a newspaper, practice this exercise: At the end of each news story, say to yourself, “God anticipated all of this. And no matter how bad it looks, in the end, He’s going to be victorious!”

“It is the voice of Christ that speaks through patriarchs and prophets, from the days of Adam even to the closing scenes of time. The Saviour is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New. It is the light from the prophetic past that brings out the life of Christ and the teachings of the New Testament with clearness and beauty. The miracles of Christ are a proof of His divinity; but a stronger proof that He is the world’s Redeemer is found in comparing the prophecies of the Old Testament with the history of the New.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 799.

“Every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on the earth, that the fact might be determined whether it would fulfill the purposes of the Watcher and the Holy One. Prophecy has traced the rise and progress of the world’s great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. With each of these, as with the nations of less power, history has repeated itself. Each has had its period of test; each has failed, its glory faded, its power departed.”—Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 535.

Discussion Questions:

1. As a class, talk about the lesson in general this week. What things stood out that perhaps have helped you better understand the role of prophecy and how it works?

2. With so much evidence for the validity of the Scriptures revealed in prophecy, why do you think many people—when presented with this evidence—still refuse to believe? What other factors might be involved? What things could you do that could help break down some of these barriers?

3. With so many strange teachings on prophecy out there, what can you, as a class, do to help church members, especially new ones, be more solidly grounded in Bible prophecy and the principles behind it?
The Bible Is Reliable

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 5:17, 18; 24:35; John 10:34, 35; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:6, 12-19; Gal. 3:22; 2 Tim. 3:16; James 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:25.

Memory Text: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

Key Thought: Why would God give us His Word and not give us evidence that enables us to trust it?

Mark Twain once said that rumors of his death had been greatly exaggerated. One could make the same claim about the Bible. More than once people have declared that the Book one day would be deemed dead, a relic from a bygone era.

The Bible continues to come under attack. Interestingly enough, the critics come and go, but the Bible remains. Critical ideas about the Bible, once deemed cutting edge and revolutionary, have been long forgotten, but the Bible remains. Men deemed great scholars, whose work questioned the authenticity of the writings of Moses or Isaiah, are barely known anymore, while Moses and Isaiah are still being read all over the world.

For the past few weeks we have looked at elements that should give us confidence in the Bible. This week we continue to look at reliability. Thousands of years ago copy machines and digital scanners did not exist. How accurate are the manuscripts we have today? Why do we trust them?

Let’s find some answers.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 28.
The Evidence

From the start, Satan always has hated the Bible. After all, it reveals the whole plan of salvation, from start to finish. In it everyone can find the path to eternal life. No wonder Satan hates it.

Many have been his attempts over the centuries to destroy it. When, finally, because of massive circulation, the destruction of the Bible became impossible, Satan tried a new tact: If he couldn’t destroy the Scriptures themselves, then he could do the next best thing: destroy their credibility. Hence, the arrival of what’s known as higher criticism, which has been very successful in destroying faith in the Bible as the Word of God. For many scholars, the Bible is just another ancient text, a Jewish version of, for instance, the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Full of historical interest, for sure, but not divinely inspired.

Look up Matthew 5:17, 18; 24:35; John 10:34, 35; 1 Peter 1:25. What do they say to us about the reliability of the Bible?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

There is, however, one problem here. We are using what the Bible says about itself to verify the reliability of the Bible. That’s circular reasoning. How can we use the Bible to verify itself when it’s the reliability of the Bible itself that is coming into question? It’s like defining by using that word itself in the definition.

On the other hand, God has given us plenty of reasons to trust in the reliability of the Bible. We have been given enough internal and external evidence so that we can trust what it says. We don’t have to believe just because it tells us to believe. God gives us reasons to trust in the Bible as His Word, even though, in the end, we have to go by faith. The bottom line, however, is that we can trust the Bible because God has given us many good reasons to.

Suppose someone were to ask you, “Why do you trust the Bible? Why do you think the Bible is the Word of God? Why do you live according to what the Bible says?” How would you answer, and why?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: 1 Peter 1:25

Teach the Class to:

Know: That the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that it will stand forever.
Feel: The need for a personal appreciation of the Scriptures.
Do: Live by the principles in God’s Word and share its truths with others.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Bible Stands the Test of Time (Isa. 40:8)
   A. There have been many failed attempts to destroy or suppress the Bible. Why is this so?
   B. In what ways do the Old and New Testaments validate one another?

II. The Bible and the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-6)
   A. Discuss the unity of the Bible in the different accounts of Christ’s resurrection.
   B. The disciples risked their lives to protect and defend the resurrection of Jesus. Is this enough to prove that their testimonies were true?

III. Personal Application of the Bible (Ps. 119:105)
   A. What one thing concerning the preservation of the Bible is the strongest evidence of its truths?
   B. How does our believing in the accuracy of the Bible influence our decision to follow its guidelines?
   C. How can we help others accept the Bible as the true Word of God?

Summary: We have good reason to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and has been preserved with accuracy through divine intervention.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the
The Old Testament

Read  Mark 15:28, Luke 4:21, John 13:18, 17:12, 19:24, Galatians 3:22, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 2:23. What do these texts tell us about how the Old Testament was viewed by the writers of the New Testament? What message is in these words for us?

As we saw last week, there are amazing prophecies in the Bible that give powerful testimony to its accuracy in both the Old and the New Testaments. The fulfillment of these prophecies shows how both Testaments are reliable; each one works to help establish the validity of the other.

But there’s even more. For many years higher critical scholars have told us that the Bible can’t be trusted. After all, there are no complete copies of the Hebrew Old Testament dated earlier than around A.D. 900. Certainly, with no copy machines around, many errors got into the texts. Thus, how can the Old Testament be trusted?

Then, in early 1947, the world learned about what has been called “the greatest archaeological discovery of the century.” In caves near the Dead Sea, ancient jars were discovered containing the now famous Dead Sea Scrolls, many of them dated from about 150 B.C. to A.D. 70, which means these biblical texts were more than one thousand years older than many of the other known texts. The find included the earliest manuscript copy yet known of the complete book of Isaiah and fragments of almost every book in the Old Testament. The books of Samuel, in a tattered copy, were also found, along with two complete chapters of Habakkuk.

In comparing the Dead Sea Scrolls with the other manuscripts, scholars were amazed to find just how accurate our modern Bibles are. In most cases there were just minor spelling differences. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has given us great external evidence on just how reliable the text of the Old Testament is.

How much sense would it make for God to give us His Word and it not be reliable? Or for Him not to give us reasons to trust its reliability? Should we not be able to trust the Bible in the same way that we trust in the God of the Bible?
learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

As Christians, we base our faith on the Bible. To us, the Bible is a source of comfort; it is the guide to belief and the practice of our faith. The Bible as God’s Word “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Everyone understands that, right?

As it happens, the answer is often No. Many live in a pluralistic society where people may have no faith and may support their beliefs in a number of ways. Many people in these societies want to know why they should accept the Bible’s authority to the exclusion of, say, the Koran, the Veda, or even *The Lord of the Rings!* As Christians, we need to know why we should look to the Bible as our primary authority and why others should also.

Ask class members to discuss the importance of the Bible in their own lives. How would they convince others of its importance?

**STEP 2—Explore!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

**Bible Commentary**

I. What Does the Bible Claim About Itself?

*(Review Matthew 5:17, 18 with your class.)*

Matthew 5:17, 18 clearly indicates that belief in Jesus as Savior and Lord requires the believer to have the same high regard for the Scriptures that Jesus Himself did.

**Consider This:** What did Jesus mean when He said that “not one letter” shall pass from the law until heaven and earth pass away? In light of these words, how would you answer the point that there are many
The New Testament

Read Revelation 22:18, 19. What message about just how seriously the Lord takes the words of the Bible is found here?

“I’ll be honest with you. . . . When I first found out that there are no surviving originals of the New Testament, I was really skeptical. I thought, If all we have are copies of copies of copies, how can I have any confidence that the New Testament we have today bears any resemblance whatsoever to what was originally written?”—Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), pp. 58, 59.

Good question. Here, too, we have to ask ourselves: Would God not leave us a reliable source to know His will? Even more so, would He not give us reasons to trust in whatever sources He left us?

Yesterday’s lesson showed that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is important for us to see the accuracy and reliability of the Old Testament. Can we find the same evidence for the New Testament?

One of the most amazing things about the New Testament, something that gives us incredible evidence for its reliability, comes from the fact that so many copies of its manuscripts are still in existence, so many more than other ancient manuscripts. The Lord has left us with a wealth of manuscript evidence that attests to the accuracy of the New Testament that we have today. According to scholars Norman Geisler and William Nix: “The New Testament, then, has not only survived in more manuscripts than any other book from antiquity, but it has survived in a purer form than any other great book—a form that is 99.5 percent pure.”—Strobel, p. 65.

Then, too, there is so much external evidence; that is, there are many quotations and excerpts from the early copies of the New Testament found in commentaries, sermons, and letters of the early Church Fathers. The Apostolic Fathers, writing mostly between A.D. 90 and 160, showed great familiarity with most of the books of the New Testament. This external evidence, called the lectionaries, were the reading lessons used in public church services. By the middle of the twentieth century, more than eighteen hundred of these reading lessons had been classified. Because they so closely reflect the New Testament as we have it today, these early church manuscripts also give us many reasons to trust in the reliability of the New Testament texts as handed down through the years.

How firm is your faith in the Bible as the Word of God? Also, ask yourself this question: “If I can’t trust the Bible, what can I trust?” What’s left?
instructions, particularly in such books as Leviticus, that no Christians observe literally?

■ What else can we learn from the following passages about the importance of Scripture to the Christian? (Matt. 24:35; John 10:34, 35; 1 Pet. 1:25).

II. Jesus as Fulfillment of the Scriptures

Consider This: The following commentary explores the meaning of the word fulfill in the context of Jesus’ life and ministry. What meaning does this have in our own lives? How might one’s Christian life fulfill the Scriptures?

“The word fulfill has been understood in at least three ways: (1) Jesus accomplished or obeyed the requirements of the Old Testament through His obedient life, (2) He brought out the full meaning of the Scriptures through His teachings, and (3) He fulfilled the predictive elements of the Old Testament, as such elements were included in both prophecy and the sacrificial service.”—George Knight, Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1994), p. 91.

III. The Old Testament in the New Testament
(Review Mark 15:28 with your class.)

Christians often note that the Old Testament testifies to the validity of Jesus’ mission and message. Yet Jesus also testifies to the validity of the Old Testament. This contradicts the belief that Jesus’ mission and message is separate from the message of the Old Testament.

Consider This: Have class members look up the following Messianic passages in the Old Testament to learn how Jesus fulfills them. (Ps. 69:4, Isa. 37:31, Hos. 11:1, Zech. 11:12).

IV. Reason to Believe

Consider This: What do experts mean when they say an historical document such as the New Testament is reliable? Why is the historical accuracy of the New Testament particularly important to Christians?
Internal Evidence: Part 1

What other evidence can help us trust in the Bible as the Word of God, besides what we’ve looked at in the past few days?

Think about the New Testament story of Jesus. Of all the things that happened to Him, which event is not only the most incredible (in that it is not something that happens very often) but has a great deal of importance to the whole Christian faith? See Rom. 8:34, 1 Cor. 15:12-19.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 makes it very clear how central the resurrection of Jesus is to our faith. In other words, even though Christ died for our sins, even though He was our Substitute, it all would have come to naught had He not been resurrected. That shows how important this event is to all that we believe.

Of course, it’s one thing for a Jew to have been crucified by the Romans. That happened all the time. It’s wholly another for that Jew to have been resurrected from the dead. And yet that’s exactly what the New Testament writers declared happened to Jesus.


Whatever the differences in the Gospel accounts (in that some writers recorded things that others didn’t), one thing all have in common is that all testified to the resurrection of Jesus from the grave.

Now, some reject the idea that someone, anyone, could be raised from the dead after three days. It’s crazy, they say—the product of a sick mind, of someone having hallucinations.

Now, that might be a reasonable assumption if only one person were making the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. But in this case, there were four! It’s one thing for all four Gospel writers to be crazy. But for all four to be crazy in the same way? Hardly sounds as if the hallucination theory makes any sense.

Read again 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. Why is the resurrection of Christ so central to our faith? Now ask yourself this question: “Would God ask us to believe in something like this and not give us plenty of evidence to believe it?” Explain your answer.
How does the New Testament compare with other trusted historical documents in these measures of reliability? Summarize the difference between external and internal evidence for the New Testament’s reliability and its significance.

Christianity is an historically based faith. Its founding narrative did not take place in some never-never land but is firmly grounded in real places, real time, and real events. As Paul said to the Corinthians, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17, NIV). For that reason, God has given us a document—the New Testament—that can withstand any test given by any examiners. We have excellent reason to believe that “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20, NIV).

STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question: How can I practice the information I just learned?

Thought Questions:
Most Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Does this mean that the Bible is true and infallible down to the letter, that it is verbally inspired? Or can it be said that the Bible is not the Word of God as such, but contains the Word of God (prophecies, direct statements from God Himself, etc.)? What is wrong with either or both views? What alternative is there?

Application Questions:

1. To spread God’s message, we must be prepared to engage people whose ideas and/or lifestyles are not in harmony with it. How can we interact with people who differ from us on important points while not compromising our own faith?

2. With Matthew 24 open before them, have the class try to coordinate verses in the chapter with each news story.

3. Inevitably, there will be things we discover in our own Bible study that we will find mystifying or alienating. How should we resolve such issues?
Internal Evidence: Part 2

As we saw yesterday, the idea that the resurrection of Jesus was based on the claim that the disciples were crazy made no sense. Realizing that this idea wasn’t too sensible, others claimed that the disciples conspired to make up the story of Christ’s resurrection.


What reason would they have for making up this story? Power? Prestige? Money? Please! Shunned by their own people, rejected by the religious leaders, and mercilessly persecuted by just about everyone, the disciples never gained worldly power, influence, or money as a result of the Resurrection. On the contrary! They lost everything the world had to offer because of their insistence on it.

Some have argued that though the disciples had conspired in hopes of personal advantage, things went awry concerning their plans. However, because they already had committed themselves to the story of the Resurrection, they had no choice but to keep promoting it. The only problem is that the Gospels were not written until many years after the Resurrection. If the disciples had hoped that through the fabricated story of Jesus’ resurrection they were going to get rich or powerful, they learned early that this was a vain hope. Why, decades later, long after they had had plenty of time to disassociate themselves from the whole failed endeavor, did they cling to it anyway—even at such a great personal cost?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:6 (NIV). What is Paul saying here that gives even more evidence for the resurrection of Jesus?

Paul is telling people that Jesus, after the Resurrection, appeared to more than five hundred people, “most of whom are still living.” In other words, Paul is so confident about the resurrection of Jesus that he is all but inviting people to talk to those among the 500 who are still alive and ask them to tell them what they saw. And, of course, one reason that Paul was certain of their testimony was because he, himself, had been a witness to the resurrected Jesus (Acts 9:1-8).

Go over in your own life and experience the reasons you have for your faith in Jesus. What things can you do to strengthen that faith? At the same time, what activities tend to weaken it?
**Consider This:** Do you have a regular habit of personal Bible study? If not, what is keeping you from having one? Think about what would make such study seem more feasible or attractive to you.

**Witnessing**

As we see God’s character revealed in the Bible, how can we bring others to see the truth about God and His world that we find there?

► **STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

“Accepting the Bible as the Word of God means first recognizing that the biblical writers do not expound their own views (2 Pet. 1:19-21). It also means acknowledging that the content of the biblical message conveys God’s will, since it originates in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16) and for that reason is relevant, compelling, and authoritative, independent of human acceptance. It also means following in the footsteps of men and women who trusted scripture as the Word of God.”—*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 2000), p. 679.

**Consider This:** Ask class members to share ways in which they apply the authority and reliability of Scripture in their own lives. Offer the following suggestions to challenge them to make the Scriptures a daily presence in their conduct of life and decision-making.

1. As Christians, we believe that God has a plan for our lives, and that this is revealed in the Scriptures. What is God’s plan for your life? Can you draw up a personal mission statement based upon what you read in the Bible?
2. How has the Bible guided you in the choices you have made in your life? List these and the benefits you have gained from following its advice.
3. With the Bible as our authority, we have a means of evaluating other claims of truth or spiritual authority. What criteria does the Bible give you to discern truth from error? Isaiah 8:20 is a good place to begin. How does this apply to the many claims facing us daily?

“God has faithful witnesses, to whom He committed the truth, and who preserved the Word of God. The manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have been preserved through the ages by a miracle of God.”—Ellen G. White, Letter 32, 1899.

Aside from the Dead Sea Scrolls, there are two other ancient witnesses that attest to the accuracy of the copyists of the Old Testament. One of these is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint; another is the text that was preserved by the Samaritans that live today in Nablus, Palestine. No wonder R. Laird Harris, an Old Testament scholar, concluded: “We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 B.C. At that time there were two or three types of text available for copying. These types differed among themselves so little, however, that we can infer that still earlier copyists had also faithfully and carefully transmitted the Old Testament text. Indeed, it would be rash skepticism that would now deny that we have our Old Testament in a form very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the Law to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity.”—R. Laird Harris, Can I Trust My Bible? (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), p. 124.

Discussion Questions:

1. Russian Leo Tolstoy wrote the great novel Anna Karenina. Could you imagine Tolstoy willing to face persecution, rejection, jail, and maybe even death, because he insisted that the whole story was true, even though he knew he had made it all up? How does this analogy help us understand why the disciples wouldn’t have made up the story of Christ’s resurrection?

2. However much evidence God has given us to trust in His Word, there is always room for doubt; there are always unanswered questions. What can you as a class do to help those in your church who are struggling with questions about the reliability of the Bible?

3. As a class, go over your answers to Sunday’s final question. What can you learn from each other?
When the Rocks Cry Out

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:24, 25).

Key Thought: Archaeology has played a key role in affirming the veracity of the Old Testament.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Bible faced an onslaught of attacks from many sources. The greatest were coming from, sad to say, Bible scholars themselves, who argued that we just couldn’t trust the Bible and its historical accounts. All sorts of new theories were proposed to explain the origin of the Bible, and though varying one from another, they had one major point in common: All brought the biblical accounts into disrepute. Interestingly enough, when these attacks were at the strongest, archaeologists began making startling discoveries, and, bit by bit, challenges against the Bible were being answered.


This week we’ll take a quick look at some discoveries and how they have answered some challenges.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 5.*
Faith and Archaeology

“‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out’” (Luke 19:40, NIV).

Though Jesus probably wasn’t talking about archaeology when He made the above statement, He might as well have. Over the years various archaeological discoveries, such as the Rosetta Stone and the Behistun inscription, have done much to help confirm the Bible record.

Don’t, however, take our word for it. Read the few quotes below by these archaeologists:

Dr. W. F. Albright, perhaps the most famous archaeologist of the twentieth century, said: “There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition.” —Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1942), p. 176.

Millar Burrows, from Yale: “On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine.” —What Mean These Stones? (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1941), p. 1.


However nice it is to have these quotes and others, we mustn’t base our faith on archaeology, because, like all disciplines, it is still a human endeavor. People have to interpret the evidence, and so a subjective element always arises. Also, what happens when someone makes a find that some scholars interpret as contradicting the biblical account? Is our faith then shattered? Though it’s nice when archaeological interpretations fit what we believe, our faith must rest, not on rocks and inscriptions, but on the promises of God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Read John 20:24-31. What principle that has application in our own experience of faith in Jesus is revealed here? What lessons can you draw from this account, particularly verse 29, that helps us understand what faith is about?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: Matthew 5:18

Teach the Class to:

Know: That Bible truths have been uncovered by many archaeological findings.

Feel: That God has given assurance that His Word is true by the preservation of historical records and artifacts.

Do: Seek to understand how to apply the principles of the Bible to daily life.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Unhidden Truth (Luke 19:40)

A. Bible scholars in the early nineteenth century tried to prove that the Bible was untrustworthy. Why did their attempts fail?

B. Discuss how some archaeological discoveries have proven the authenticity of the Old Testament.

C. Why is it important that we do not rely wholly on scientific evidence to determine our faith in the Bible?

II. Evidence of Biblical Empires (Dan. 2:21)

A. Show the parallel between historical and biblical accounts of ancient empires.

B. How do historical records such as the Moabite Stone and the Clay Tablets of Ebla validate Bible truth?

III. More to Come (Matt. 24:35)

A. Archaeologists expect future findings to further validate the Bible.

B. What role does personal experience play in one’s faith in the Bible?

Summary: The Lord has given evidence that His Word is true through the many findings of archaeologists.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?
Some Prophecies Confirmed

The Bible, as we know, is filled with prophecies, many of them already fulfilled. It’s exciting, from our standpoint, to look back and see how archaeology shows us that these prophecies were fulfilled as the Bible said they would be.

For example, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria at the height of its power and glory. It was one of the centers of the world. From its administrative offices governors were dispatched to rule over a vast empire, reaching from Persia and Arabia in the east to the green shores of the Mediterranean in the west, and from the border of Ethiopia in the south to the Black Sea in the north. Yet, according to the Bible, it wasn’t going to last.

According to Nahum, what was going to happen to this great city Nineveh? See Nah. 3:2-7.

Through the combined forces of the Medes and the Babylonians, the city was destroyed in 612 B.C. The palaces were burned, its temples were broken down, and its strong fortifications were demolished.

Read Isaiah 13:19-22. What was to be the fate of another great kingdom, Babylon?

Archaeological discoveries over the years have revealed that Babylon was once, indeed, a magnificent city that had, among other things, (1) a wall about the main city more than 11 miles long and 85 feet thick; (2) many gates, including the Ishtar Gate with its enameled bricks showing 575 dragons and bulls and 120 lions; and (3) the gorgeously decorated palace of Nebuchadnezzar with its banquet hall and throne room, 57 feet wide and 168 feet long. Yet, whatever its ancient glory, as affirmed by archaeology, the city today remains in ruins.

Babylon in ruins? Nineveh in ruins? Today it would be comparable if someone said that the United States would be in ruins. What lesson should there be here for us about how fleeting anything earthly is? What should our priorities in life be?
Since the nineteenth century, the Bible has been under attack for its alleged lack of historical authenticity. There are scholars who claim that most of the events in the Bible never occurred or occurred differently from the Bible’s account. Their material is quite influential with people who are only a little informed, because it often is delivered with an air of authority by specialists who should know what they are talking about. Fortunately, most attempts to gain information about the world of the Bible and biblical events usually support the biblical account.

Believers, especially those who encounter friends, family, and coworkers who believe the Bible is inaccurate, owe it to themselves to become familiar with the relevant archaeology.

STEP 2—Explore!

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Bible Commentary

I. Faith and Evidence
(Review John 20:24-31 with your class.)

Faith is often preceded by the adjective blind. This refers to faith in the absence of supporting evidence. Yet this passage clearly shows Jesus was not opposed to giving evidence for His mission. And it was not just Thomas who demanded proof and received it. Consider John the Baptist in Luke 7:20-23. Obviously, Jesus is happy to provide evidence in order to ease our doubts.

Consider This: While Jesus provides Thomas with the evidence he seeks, He goes on to say “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe” (John 20:29, NRSV). Is Jesus saying that belief without evidence is superior to belief as a response to evidence? Is there ever a point at which all reason for doubt can be removed?

Discuss the significance of evidence in light of Hebrews 11:1 and 1 Peter 3:15.
More Affirmations

Look up the following texts: Genesis 15:20, Exodus 3:8, Joshua 1:4, 1 Kings 10:29, and 2 Chronicles 1:17.

What nation is mentioned in each of these texts?

These were just a few times, out of dozens, that the Hittites were mentioned in the Bible. For many years, however, this was seen as evidence that the Bible couldn’t be trusted historically. Why? Because no other ancient sources referred to the Hittites. Thus, some saw this lack of other sources as proof that the Bible couldn’t be trusted. The Hittites were deemed a mythical people, or, at most, an insignificant tribe occupying a village or two. Thanks to numerous archaeological discoveries, however, we now know that the Hittites once ruled the greater part of Asia Minor, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River, and that their power was scarcely inferior to that of Assyria or Egypt. It was only when the empire ended around 1200 B.C. that they finally vanished from history, though small city-states remained. Again, the rocks have cried out testifying to the accuracy of the Bible.

Another biblical record also confirmed is the relationship between Israel and Moab. How does the Bible depict that relationship? 2 Kings 3:4-27.

In a little village eastward from the Dead Sea the Moabite stone, a stone inscribed by King Mesha, was found. It tells of Moab’s oppression by the nation of Israel, as depicted in the Bible. This stone is now in the Louvre museum in Paris. It is regarded as very precious since its writing differs very little from early Hebrew. It was engraved about 850 B.C.

Suppose no Moabite stone had ever been found. It’s not hard to imagine critics saying, “Oh, more proof that the Bible is unreliable,” just as they did with the Hittites. What lessons can we learn from this about what faith should and should not be based on?
II. Archaeology and Prophecy
(Review Isaiah 44:28, 45:1-7 with your class.)

Consider This: Fulfilled prophecy always has been a powerful witness for the Christian faith, and of the messiahship of Jesus in particular. How has archaeology helped to confirm the accuracy of prophetic predictions that already have occurred?

“Cyrus is mentioned some 23 times in the literature of the Old Testament. . . .

“What many people do not realize in reading Isaiah 44:28ff. is that this heathen ruler was named by the prophet long before the monarch was even born. Isaiah prophesied in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1). His ministry thus occurred in the latter portion of the eighth century B.C. (ca. 740-701 B.C.). This was some one hundred fifty years before Cyrus came to the throne! . . .

“Excavations at Babylon (1879-82) led to the discovery of a clay barrel, known as the Cyrus Cylinder, which contained a marvelous historical confirmation of the biblical narrative. It portrays the benevolent policies of Cyrus in the following fashion: ‘All of their peoples I gathered together and restored to their dwelling-places.’ ”—Wayne Jackson, “Cyrus the Great in Biblical Prophecy,” Christian Courier Web site [http://www.christiancourier.com/archives/cyrusProphecy.htm].

III. The Bible as a Reliable Guide to Ancient History
(Review Genesis 15:20 with your class.)

The Bible not only is supported by archaeology and contemporary scholarship, it also has proven to be a reliable guide for studying the ancient world. Much of what has been taken to be evidence of its historical unreliability has been shown, with time, to be precisely the opposite, as was the case with the “imaginary” people known as Hittites.

Consider This: Our willingness to trust a person, an institution, or a document is based on his/her/its record of authenticity when tested. What can we say about the Bible’s performance in this regard?
Ebla and Other Discoveries

Another important discovery was the Ebla Tablets, found in the Syrian city of Ebla (Tell Mardikh) in the 1970s. These were a whole library of clay tablets, about fifteen thousand of them, dated from about twenty-three hundred years before Christ. The Ebla Tablets are “now considered more significant for elucidating ancient history and the early background of the Bible than any other archaeological discovery ever unearthed.”—Thompson Chain Reference Bible, pp. 1653, 1654.

Read Isaiah 20:1. What king is mentioned there?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

For years it was claimed that there was no such king, and thus the Bible wasn’t trustworthy. But in the 1840s, archaeological discoveries uncovered a palace with a statue and inscription telling all about Sargon, king of Assyria. The Bible was, again, confirmed by archaeology.

What tragic end came to Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who took the throne after Sargon? 2 Kings 19:36, 37.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Interestingly enough, an unearthed Assyrian record says that on the twentieth day of the month Tebet, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was killed by his son in a revolt.

The discovery of the law code of Hammurabi in 1901–1902 in Susa and the excavation in Nuzi have shown that some of the practices of the patriarchs—such as the experience of Sarah giving her slave girl to Abraham (Gen. 16:1-3), the selling of the birthright for food (Gen. 25:33), and married daughters receiving a handmaid (Gen. 29:24, 29)—were common practices in the ancient world.

Whether in archaeology, science, history, or whatever, it’s always nice when things affirm what we believe, and we should be thankful for these affirmations. At the same time, what message is found in Hebrews 11:1 that is so important for us to remember?
IV. The Bible in Historical Context

**Consider This:** The events in the Bible occurred in a time and place quite different from our own. Therefore, some of its content is not easy to understand. How has archaeology brought the world of the Bible closer to us? How important is it to understand the cultural/historical world of the Bible?

“As the fitly-spoken word of man must have suitable conditions of time, place, and circumstance, so it is with the word of God addressed to man. The apples of gold are placed in a dish of wrought silver. This also is of noble metal, and to make it, many threads are bent and blended together into a design, and the design is repeated to form a vessel of usefulness and beauty, but is inferior to the fruit of gold, and its purpose that of service. So the word of revelation shines in a setting of human disposition, domestic incident, social customs, and amid special surroundings.”—G. M. Mackie, *Bible Manners and Customs* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), p. 5.

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, *How can I practice the information I just learned?*

**Thought Question:**
The Bible itself seems to make few efforts to prove its points in a philosophical, scientific, or historical sense. Why might we find it necessary to do so? Consider this in the light of 1 Corinthians 1:22-26.

**Application Question:**
Most of us accept God’s goodness, in spite of the fact that we encounter incidents that are repugnant to us in biblical passages. Our experience and study lead us to the conclusion that God is trustworthy, and therefore an explanation must exist that will resolve the question. How would you respond to a skeptic who accuses you of circular reasoning in this regard: that because God is good, what He does must somehow be good?
More Insights

**Read** Hebrews 11:24-27. According to these texts, what did Moses give up for his God?

What might have been some of those treasures that Moses left behind? In 1922 Howard Carter discovered the tomb of Tutankhamen, who lived in the fourteenth century B.C. Carter’s discovery helps us better understand the text regarding Moses and the treasures of Egypt. There are more than seventeen hundred objects on display in the Cairo Museum that were found in Tutankhamen’s tomb. These include the king’s mask of pure gold, a golden death boat, 143 jewels, and many other precious ornaments. This one tomb alone has a multimillion dollar treasure that dazzles the senses. Again, this is just one tomb of one pharaoh. Yet, according to the Bible, Moses left those precious treasures because “he saw him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27, NIV).

Siegfried Horn said that the discovery of Tutankhamen’s tomb also has answered the Bible critics who said that “the mentioning of iron in the stories of the books of Joshua and Judges is strong proof of a late date for these books, because it was thought that iron had not been used before the twelfth century B.C. The iron objects of King Tutankhamen’s tomb however, show that the critics were wrong and that iron objects were used in that very age.”—The Spade Confirms the Book (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Pub. Assn., 1957), p. 121. The discovery gives more evidence for the historical accuracy of the Bible stories.

**Read** 1 Samuel 15:2, 3. What did God tell the Israelites to do?

Many find such texts as these disturbing. During the years, however, archaeology has added some light that can help us better understand what was going on. Some archaeologists have argued that the Canaanite religion was exceedingly cruel and bloodthirsty, and it led the Canaanites to violent and degrading acts. If this is true, it could help explain why the Lord used the Israelites to bring judgment upon them. Meanwhile, Genesis 15:16 unveils a principle that can help us better understand what was happening here.

Why is it so important for us to trust in the Lord and His goodness, despite such hard texts to understand, such as 1 Samuel 15:2, 3? Go over in your own mind examples of God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness. Ask the Lord to give you faith to trust, despite things that are hard to understand.
Witnessing

It is inspiring to see archaeology confirming biblical truths to a skeptical twenty-first century world. How can we bring these facts to the attention of friends, family, and strangers who may not be aware of them?

**Consider This:** To supplement your Bible study with information about archaeological finds, search the Web, or subscribe to a periodical such as *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Be prepared to share the information you find with others. You might be surprised at who actually welcomes this material.

►**STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: **With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?**

1. Think of a biblical figure with whom you identify. Look into the circumstances of daily life and world history at the time this figure was living. Find such information at your local Christian bookstore or library. Also search the Web. With the information you find, imagine what a day in this person’s life might have been like.

2. When you study the Bible, see what insights archaeology brings to the topic. As always, the Web is an excellent resource. Try the Christian Answers site [http://www.christiananswers.net/archaeology/home.html].

3. Even the secular world is interested in the historical/archaeological background of the Bible. Look for major news magazines that have cover stories on these topics. They often take a skeptical viewpoint, so be prepared to analyze them and to discuss them with unchurched friends and relatives.

4. If you are puzzled by material in the Bible, pray to God for answers. Document the process in a prayer journal. You probably will not get an answer in a supernatural way, but be prepared for a discussion or item that “just happens” to come your way to clear it up.

“Skepticism toward ancient writings, well founded in many cases, was then also extended to the writings of the Bible. Many people thought that the Biblical records about this world’s ancient history, and the stories about the patriarchs, prophets, judges, and kings, were in most cases just as legendary as those of other ancient peoples which had come down to us through Greek and Latin writings. The most famous historians and theologians of the 19th century were the greatest doubters of the veracity of the stories of the Bible, and were among its most vigorous critics.

“This attitude has greatly changed since the turn of the [twentieth] century. Much more respect is now shown toward the Old Testament, its narratives, and its teachings than was shown a few decades ago. The results of explorations in the Near East have done more than anything else to bring this about.

“In the flood of light thrown by archeology upon the ancient civilizations the Old Testament stands forth not only as historically reliable but also as unique in scope, power, and lofty ideals in comparison with the best products of the ancient world.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1,* p. 100.

Discussion Questions:

1. As a class, talk about the whole question of faith in God. What is faith? Where does it come from? What causes people to lose it? What role can archaeology have in our faith? At the same time, why must we not put too much emphasis on it, or any other discipline, such as science? What can we do to help strengthen each other’s faith?

2. Suppose evidence for the existence of the Hittites had never been found. Critics still would be using that lack of evidence to attack the Bible, despite the fact that the Hittites really did exist. In other words, just because proof isn’t readily available doesn’t mean something isn’t true. What lessons can we learn from this account about what our faith needs to be based on and what we shouldn’t base it on?
The Bible and Science

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Gen. 1:1; 2:1, 2; 7:11-24; Deut. 4:32; Pss. 100:3; 139:14; Isa. 42:5; 45:18; Jer. 33:22; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2.

Memory Text: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Proverbs 1:7, NIV).

Key Thought: Though often viewed as in opposition to the Bible, science can help strengthen our faith in the Word of God.

In the earliest years of the scientific revolution (the seventeenth century), science was viewed as a way to understand God. All the early giants (Descartes, Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus, Newton) believed their work was revealing the handiwork of the Creator. Kepler, talking about his achievements, wrote: “I am stealing the golden vessels of the Egyptians to build a tabernacle to my God from them... I cast the die, and I write the book. Whether it is to be read by the people of the present or of the future makes no difference: let it await its reader for a hundred years, if God himself has stood ready for six thousand years for one to study him.” Over time, however, science started moving away from the idea of God, choosing instead to work in a purely materialistic, atheistic paradigm. This, of course, led to the struggle between faith and science that we often hear about today.

Though we certainly acknowledge the challenges that science can present, this week we’ll focus on places where science has, indeed, given us reasons for our trust in the Bible.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 12.*
Anthropic Coincidences

Look up Genesis 1:1; 2:1, 2; Deuteronomy 4:32; Psalm 100:3; Isaiah 42:5; 45:18; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Revelation 10:6; 14:7. What’s the one point that all these texts have in common?

For many years, much of science worked on the presupposition that all existence, including human life, was the result of pure chance. We are just a big accident, nothing more.

Now, though, science seems to be moving in another direction. In fact, a new phrase has been coined: “anthropic coincidences,” from the Greek word anthropos, meaning “man.” Science reveals that many factors in the universe are so finely tuned that even the slightest variation would create an environment unfit for human existence. It’s almost as though the universe was created with the existence of humanity in mind!

What are some of these “anthropic coincidences”?

For starters, if the rate of expansion after the creation of the universe had been smaller by one part in a hundred million, the universe would have collapsed in on itself. On the other hand, had it been greater by one part in a hundred million, the universe would have expanded too rapidly for stars or planets to form.

Also, one of the known basic forces in nature is called the strong nuclear force. Had it been slightly weaker, there would have been only hydrogen in the universe; had it been slightly stronger, there would have been only helium. In either environment, humanity as we know it could never have been formed.

There are many other examples, enough to get even someone like the famed Stephen Hawking (hardly a biblical creationist) to admit: “The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. . . . I think there are clearly religious implications.”—Quoted in Ian Barbour, When Science Meets Religion (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), p. 58.

American poet Walt Whitman once wrote: “And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery.” What other examples from nature put “to scorn all machinery”? What does this complexity and design say to us about a Creator? Be prepared to talk about your examples in class.
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: John 17:17

Teach the Class to:
- **Know:** That the study of science, at times, can validate some biblical claims.
- **Feel:** That the Word of God can stand the test of scientific study.
- **Do:** Live according to biblical standards.

Lesson Outline:

I. Science Supports the Bible *(Prov. 1:7)*
   - A. The Bible and science agree that the stars are billions of miles away from the earth and cannot be numbered. What else do the Bible and science agree upon?
   - B. How is scientific evidence of the function of organs and systems of the body a challenge to the evolutionary model?

II. The Body System and Bible Principles *(Ps. 100:3)*
   - What do scientists understand about the link between the mind and the body?

III. Evidence in the Rocks *(Ps. 24:1)*
   - How are global deposits in the layers of the rocks consistent with the Genesis account of the Flood?

Summary: The study of science has given evidence that the Bible is true. Many scientific findings are consistent with Bible teachings.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

Representatives of science and religion often seem to be at odds over fundamental issues: the origin of the universe; our planet, and life on it;
Astronomy

Have you ever stood outside on a clear night and looked at the stars? How many could you count? Though there are a lot, there are not more than can be counted, at least with the naked eye, which is how the Bible writers saw them.

Read Jeremiah 33:22. How many stars does he say are out there?

Ptolemy many centuries ago counted about 1,056 stars; Tycho Brahe counted up to 777; Kepler, 1,005. Before the invention of the telescope in the seventeenth century, people believed that the number of stars was 5,119. The telescope, of course, changed all this dramatically. Today, especially with the Hubble Space Telescope, the number of stars seems beyond counting. It is estimated that there are hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy alone. Astronomers have estimated that there are about $10^{22}$ (that is, 10 thousand billion billion) stars in the universe. If one could count even as many as 10 different numbers per second, it would take at least 100 million billion years to count up to $10^{22}$. And over time, who knows how many more will be discovered?

Read Job 22:12. What else is Eliphaz saying about the stars?

Many ancient people believed the stars were various distances away, from a few kilometers to a few hundred at most. Science over the past few centuries has shown just how far they really are. The sun is 93 million miles away, our closest star; others, even if we traveled at the speed of light (300,000 kilometers per second), would take us hundreds, thousands, even millions of years to reach! And though Eliphaz probably wasn’t thinking about astronomy, he, nevertheless, made a statement that science certainly has proven correct.

Though it’s good when science seems to affirm our faith, why must we be careful in not putting too much stock in science when it comes to matters of faith? Why, too, is it important to remember that science is still only a human endeavor? See Jer. 17:9, 1 Cor. 1:21, 3:19.
the nature of the human animal; the problem of evil; and the ultimate destiny of the universe and the human race.

The disagreement and misunderstanding continue on the human level as well. Scientists view religionists—and Christians in particular—as unthinking sheep and their leaders as slick talkers with something to hide. Religionists view the scientifically minded as cold-hearted, arrogant know-it-alls who are subtly or not-so-subtly trying to destroy or steal their faith.

Here is the worst part: Both sides are right at least some of the time. Religious leaders and institutions do have a history of attempting to sweep scientific findings under the rug when they conflict with their interpretation of their Scriptures. And scientific materialists have a gift for extolling the miraculous qualities of the rational human brain while displaying the most blatant contempt for the beliefs of actual owners of human brains.

Many of you have probably been tempted to believe that science is indeed separate from, or hostile to, the Christian faith. However, much in science actually supports many of our core beliefs: an intelligent Creator, a benevolent universe, and the uniqueness of the human person. Many atheists and agnostics have been led to faith by studying science and nature. Maybe it is time for a second opinion.

STEP 2—Explore!

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Bible Commentary

I. The Beginning of Knowledge
(Review Proverbs 1:7 with your class.)

Most scientific inquiry is based upon assumptions about the nature of knowledge that the Bible does not share. The idea is that knowledge results from the individual human brain attempting to come to grips with all the random stuff out here, without reference to any law above itself.

The Bible, however, regards knowledge as stemming from acknowledging God and as having moral, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions.
Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Though possibly a bit overstated, the following quote tells us something about the complexity of the human brain. “There are trillions of neurons in a human brain; the number of possible ways of connecting them is greater than the number of atoms in the universe.”—Ian Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), p. 62.

**With** that above quote in mind, read Psalm 139:14. How has science affirmed the truth of this text?

As we said in Sunday’s lesson, more and more science has been moving away from the chance argument to explain the existence of human life. And no wonder. Over the years, as science has advanced steadily, as we learn more and more about the wonders of creation, the evidence for design gets only stronger and stronger. It’s so strong, in fact, that recently one vocal opponent of intelligent design (and the implications of a Creator behind it) argued that the universe is a thing that simply appears to be designed even though, of course, it isn’t. In other words, it just looks that way.

Meanwhile Francis Crick, probably the most famous biologist of the twentieth century and a vehement atheist, concluded that life was too complicated to have arisen in the supposed billions of years between the cooling off of the earth and the rapid emergence of life forms. Crick speculated, therefore, that life must have started somewhere else and was then brought here, perhaps by space aliens who wanted to see the earth (*see again 1 Cor. 3:19 and Ps. 14:1*).

Another exciting development came from the work of biochemist Michael Behe. Charles Darwin partially based his theory of evolution on the idea that changes came over time to species through a series of small, successive modifications. If, Darwin said, any complex organ could be shown not to have gone through these steps, his theory would break down.

Behe, not a biblical creationist, showed various aspects of the human body—the cilia, the eye, and blood clotting—that could not have arisen according to the basic evolutionary schema. According to Behe, they couldn’t have arisen over time because, in order for the organ to function at all, all the pieces already had to be in place at once. If one part, or even one step, wasn’t there from the beginning, the organ or process could not exist at all. His evidence presents a strong challenge to the evolutionary model of creation. The question, therefore, remains: If these things didn’t come by chance, through the evolutionary processes, then how did they arise (*John 1:1-4, Acts 17:28*)?
Consider This: The eleventh-century scholar Anselm of Canterbury, wrote, “Nor do I seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand. For this too I believe, that unless I first believe, I shall not understand.” How does belief help us to understand? Can it be said that even the most seemingly skeptical person starts from a point of belief in something?

What else do the following Bible texts suggest about the nature of true or false wisdom? (Gen. 3:6, Job 38:37, Ps. 37:30, 1 Cor. 1:21, 2:6.)

II. Creation or Coincidence?
(Review Isaiah 45:18, John 1:1 with your class.)

Consider This: The Bible takes it as a matter of course that the earth was created by God. Why do the authors of the Bible regard this as self-evident, whereas science does not?

“Creation is the landscape of the Bible. It sees God as ‘the maker of heaven and earth,’ the Creator of all things. There is activity, ‘creation’ where things happen. The energy of God’s will, not just the energy of the sun, sustains the biosphere where grass grows and animals feed, and man depends on them for his own food.”—James M. Houston, I Believe in the Creator (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 15.

In spite of occasional scientific or philosophical arguments for the randomness of the visible cosmos, most people continue to behave as if the universe and their lives in it have purpose. How does the Bible support this intuitive sense? See Jeremiah 1:5. How do you see God’s plan or purpose manifested in your experience?

III. Evidence of Design
(Review Romans 1:20, 21 with your class.)

“Being a scientist, trained in the habits of thought and language of the twentieth century rather than the eighteenth, I do not claim that the architecture of the universe proves the existence of God. I claim only that the architecture of the universe is consistent with the hypothesis that mind plays an essential role in its functioning.”—Freeman Dyson, Disturbing the Universe (New York: Harper Colophon, 1979), p. 251.

Consider This: Knowledge of the design inherent in the universe often does not lead to the belief in the God of the Bible, or indeed of any
A Merry Heart, a Broken Spirit

Read Proverbs 17:22. What simple and yet, at the same time, profound message is found in this text? In what ways have you yourself experienced the truth of these principles?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Is it really true that a merry heart does good like a medicine? Over the years scientists more and more understand the inseparable link between the mind and the body. What impacts one impacts the other. Research shows that, for instance, something as simple as a hearty laugh exercises the lungs, stimulates the circulatory system, and increases oxygen intake. It also stimulates the sympathetic nervous system to make endorphins, the body’s natural opiates, which can soothe and relax the mind and may even increase the activity of the immune cells.

On the other hand, there’s the last half of the text, which implies that depression can impact the body in a negative manner.

“In recent years, however, evidence has accumulated that psychology can indeed affect biology. Studies have found, for example, that people who suffer from depression are at higher risk for heart disease and other illnesses. Other research has shown that wounds take longer to heal in women who care for patients with Alzheimer’s disease than in other women who are not similarly stressed. And people under stress have been found to be more susceptible to colds and flu, and to have more severe symptoms after they fall ill.”—Erica Goode, “Power of Positive Thinking May Have a Health Benefit, Study Says,” New York Times, Sept. 2, 2003.

Moreover, a recent study from the University of Wisconsin shows that “the activation of brain regions associated with negative emotions appears to weaken people’s immune response to a flu vaccine.”—Ibid.

What’s the message for us in Philippians 4:6-8? Though we often tend to view these passages in light of the spiritual aspect only, what kind of physical benefits can we get from Paul’s words here, as well? What changes do you need to make in the things you read and watch and listen to in order to better realize the promises found in these texts?
God at all. What is necessary for this knowledge to become saving faith?

STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

Thought Questions:
Some believe that scientific inquiry should be informed by the Word of God, and that when our observations conflict with the Bible, we should discard them. Is this compatible with the idea of science as an unbiased search for truth? Is there such a thing as an unbiased search for truth? What kind of assumptions might many supposedly objective scientists bring to their research?

Application Questions:
1. Seventh-day Adventists view the Sabbath as a memorial to Creation and partially attribute the pervasiveness of evolutionary theory to the disregard of the seventh-day Sabbath. Do you think this is true? Would increased awareness of the biblical seventh-day Sabbath lead to increased awareness/acceptance of biblical Creation? Explain your answers.

   Many creationists attribute the immorality, amorality, and despair of modern life to the acceptance of evolutionary teachings that reduce humankind to the level of animals. Is this true? Explain your answer. Conversely, how does awareness of God’s role as Creator affect your conduct of life, your self-concept, and your treatment of creation and fellow humans?

Witnessing
Belief in biblical Creation has become a hot-button issue. Those of us who believe in it find ourselves associated with a raft of political/social views that we may or may not adhere to and that automatically invalidate our witness to many otherwise thoughtful people. What can we do to help others hear our beliefs on their own merits?

Consider This: Many of us who interact with secular people find it hard to explain our belief in creationism. Scientists, however, are finding the idea of intelligent design ever more credible, with even many avowed atheists admitting the religious implications of their discover-
Science and the Flood

Read Genesis 7:11-24. What kind of devastation would this Flood have wreaked on the earth?

If the Hebrew phrase “the great deep” (Gen. 7:11, NIV) refers to the ocean(s), then the implication is that on the first day of the Flood, when the rain began to fall, the ocean floor may have been disrupted by the bursting forth of “all the springs” (vs. 11, NIV). Such a catastrophic global event as the Flood should have left worldwide evidence of its occurrence. Science shows that, indeed, it did. There are global deposits in the layers of rock quite consistent with (though not proof of) the Genesis Flood. These deposits contribute to the way in which the rock layers are identified and defined. Gigantic sequences of sandstone covered by shale and limestone in what are called Cambrian rocks; massive, transported limestone found in certain rock levels; as well as coal and oil deposits found throughout these levels—all these deposits are consistent with the Flood.

Furthermore, the destruction of life on this earth during the Genesis Flood was extensive, as described in Genesis 7:21 and 22. In our modern world there is little preservation of plants and animals that die. These organisms are decomposed and recycled to provide the nutrients necessary for life to continue. However, buried within the earth are extensive fossil concentrations with evidence of a wide variety of plants and animals that do not exist in our world today, again evidence consistent with the Flood story.

Other evidence is the rapid, massive deposition of rocks, sands, and muds. There are layers of rock throughout the earth that have been deposited so quickly that there is no evidence of erosion between the layers. And though the geologic community often argues that these layers needed millions of years to form, the rocks show no direct evidence that such time has passed. These rock layers do not, however, resolve all of the time issues; thus, the dating methods and sequences of fossils in the rock record remain debatable, at least for now.

Though God gives us reasons for our faith, there is always room for doubt. How can you live in a way that feeds faith rather than doubt? That is, what practical daily things can you do to help strengthen yourself in what we believe?
ies. As a confidence-building exercise, try to familiarize yourself with such writers as Michael Behe (author of *Darwin’s Black Box*).

**STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

“God is the foundation of everything. All true science is in harmony with His works; all true education leads to obedience to His government. Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation. Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science; but the book of nature and the written Word do not disagree; each sheds light on the other. Rightly understood, they make us acquainted with God and His character by teaching us something of the wise and beneficient laws through which He works.”—Ellen White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 916.

**Consider This:** Not everyone needs or desires a deep acquaintance with the latest discoveries in subatomic physics to appreciate God’s presence in nature and in the harmony of the universe. Offer the following practical suggestions to help your students deepen their acquaintance with God’s natural creation:

1. **What are the major plants and animals found in your area?** What are the major environmental threats or issues in your country? After all, you live there.

2. **God intended for us, His creatures, to be sustained by the complex web of interrelationships we call nature.** In other words, food does not originate in the supermarket. Get a guide to wild edible plants. Forage for, say, greens for a salad. Exercise caution, but prepare to be surprised by how many things God created that are not poisonous.

3. **If you watch television, devote some of that time to watching nature/science programs or videos.** There are many excellent Creation-oriented videos available at your local Adventist Book Center or Christian bookstore. Programs on mainstream channels may be problematic but are also excellent opportunities to clarify your own beliefs.

4. **The Bible’s authors saw God’s reflection in the order and harmony of the heavens.** You can too. Find a place where you can see the sun rise and note the regularity of its movement through the skies as the seasons change. How else can you see God’s reflection in nature?

“He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God’s word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself. He does not test the Bible by men’s ideas of science; he brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that in true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word; since both have the same Author, a correct understanding of both will prove them to be in harmony. Whatever in so-called scientific teaching contradicts the testimony of God’s word is mere human guesswork.”—Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing, p. 462.

“God is the foundation of everything. All true science is in harmony with His works; all true education leads to obedience to His government. Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high, and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation. Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science, but the book of nature and the written word shed light upon each other. We are thus led to adore the Creator and to have an intelligent trust in His word.”—Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 115, 116.

Discussion Questions:

1. As a class, share your answers to Sunday’s final question. What can you learn from each other’s examples?

2. What can be done to help someone who, swayed by the arguments of science, finds it very hard to believe in the Bible? How can you help?

3. If willing, share with the class some of your own personal experiences with the power of the mind over the body and health. What have you learned that could help others? What role can prayer, Bible study, witnessing, and ministering to the needs of others play in helping you heal mentally and even physically?
The Word in Our Lives

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Pss. 19:7-11; 119:105; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 2:24.

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

Key Thought: The Bible must change how we live our lives.

Sam Tannyhill was sentenced to death for murder. While in prison he was visited by two Seventh-day Adventists who gave him a Bible. Sam, angry, threw it against the wall. But one night, filled with guilt, fear, and bitterness, he wanted something to divert his thoughts, and so he picked up the Bible. At first, not understanding what he read, he tore it apart. But then he started reading again, and the more he read the more he came to know the Christ of the Bible. Sam found Jesus Christ as his Savior in a lonely prison cell as he read the Scriptures. His life completely turned around, right there in jail. The bitterness and anger that dogged him his whole life left. Sam knelt and sobbed. He said, “God, if You’ll have me, I’m Yours. Tonight I come. I want Your forgiveness, Your peace, Your power. Lord, change me.” He did, and Sam went with peace and assurance to his death.

What is it about the Bible that can so change even the worst among us? Maybe not all stories are so dramatic, but millions can testify to the impact that this Book has had in turning around their lives.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 19.
The Bible, Agent of Change

**Read** 2 Corinthians 5:17. How have you experienced the promise found in that text?

The Bible paints a pretty dim picture of human nature in general (Isa. 59:2-4; Jer. 13:23; Rom. 3:10-12). And though that view often comes under attack by critics of the Bible, even the most cursory review of history proves the assertion right. Even worse, so often well-meaning attempts to improve our lot fail. Many of the great “isms” of the past few centuries, often predicated on the idea of changing humanity for the better, make things worse.

But there is hope, hope for us as individuals, hope for anyone who wants to be changed. And that’s because the Bible points us to Jesus Christ, our Creator and Redeemer, and in Him we have been given wonderful life-changing promises.

By studying the Bible, a sinner can get acquainted with Jesus, who is the Truth and who has the creative and redemptive and healing power to change us.

**Read** Psalm 19:7, John 17:17, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 4:24, Hebrews 4:12, and 1 Peter 2:24. What promises are found in here for us?

There’s no question: God’s Word can change our lives. Scripture pours out a flood of light on us, pushing back spiritual darkness and revealing to the world the truth about a loving, powerful God who seeks to transform the lives of all who come to Him in faith. Millions of people can testify to the power of the Word of God and what it has done to their lives. All who surrender themselves in faith and obedience to the God revealed in the Bible will experience for themselves just what a dramatic change can be wrought, even in the worst of sinners.

Pick one specific area in which your life has been changed through reading the Word. What is that area, what changes have come, and what changes are you still hoping to see?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

**Key Text:** 2 Timothy 3:16

**Teach the Class to:**

**Know:** God’s Word is truth.
**Feel:** The need to apply Bible principles to everyday living.
**Do:** Live a life of example based on Bible guidelines.

**Lesson Outline:**

I. The Word of God Brings About Change (*Ps. 19:7*)

- **A** How does Bible study produce change?
- **B** Discuss how the Bible reveals the transforming power of God.

II. Obedience to God’s Word (*Heb. 4:12*)

- **A** We must study the Bible with an open heart and a teachable spirit.
- **B** We should study the Word of God with the willingness to obey.

III. The Word of Truth (*Ps. 119:105*)

- **A** The Bible will guide us into all truth.
- **B** The Bible gives principles for daily living.

**Summary:** The Bible serves as a guide for instructing the church as a whole. It also gives principles for a Christian living day by day.

**Learning Cycle**

**STEP 1—Motivate!**

**Just for Teachers:** Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

Sin placed a barrier between God and humanity. Satan tries to outsmart God’s communication with us by providing us with misinformation. Invite class members to discuss how God overcame Satan’s roadblocks. How does He communicate His love and salvation to us? How does He communicate His plan for your life to you? What has He asked you to do as His disciple?
Doers of the Word

Who of us hasn’t, at one time or another, echoed the words of Paul: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24, NIV). Fortunately, in the next verse, Paul provides the answer: Jesus Christ alone will rescue us.

Jesus is the Source of our salvation. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9, NIV). And though faith is a gift of God, how do we receive it?

Read Romans 10:17. What role does the Bible have in the way we receive faith?

The more we read the Bible, the more we know Jesus and the more faith we shall have. The more we listen to the Words of God, the more our faith in Him will increase and the more we will experience the power of God to change our lives.

Many, though, read the Bible, and it does nothing for them. Some scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ time were well versed in Scripture, but what good did it do them?

Read John 5:39, 40. What important spiritual principle is seen here?

Knowledge, even of biblical truth, doesn’t automatically change us for the good. A teachable spirit and a heart open to the leading of the Holy Spirit are crucial in the study of the Scriptures. It’s not more information we need, not even more information about the Bible; it’s instead a willingness to obey the Bible’s teaching. It is not those who hear the Word of God who will be blessed but those who follow it (Matt. 7:24-29). We need to approach the Bible with a desire to apply it to our lives and to adjust our lives according to its teaching. If we come to the Scriptures with humility and the desire to do His will, God will give us a life-changing faith that will permeate all that we do.

Do you pick up the Bible with a humble and teachable heart or with a critical eye, an attitude of resistance, or a lack of trust? If the latter, why not begin right now, opening the Word with a prayerful heart, pleading for the Lord to reveal to you His will and to give you faith and power to follow it? That’s the only way your life will change for the better.
STEP 2—Explore!

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Bible Commentary

Consider These Stories:

1. Rahab was a harlot living in a home on the walls of Jericho (Josh. 2:1-21). She and her people had heard about Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land. Rahab voiced the feelings of the people of Canaan as Israel advanced under God’s direction, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you” (Josh. 2:9, NKJV).

As a class discuss why the people of Canaan were defeated. Together read Hebrews 11:3 and James 2:25. How did Rahab find faith in Israel’s God?

2. Ruth was a Moabitess maiden, who became the wife of an Israelite refugee and part of Christ’s family heritage (see Ruth 1:1-16, 4:17). Her journey of faith through caring for her mother-in-law is a testimony of honoring a parent, although not her own except through marriage.

As a class discuss why this unlikely candidate became part of Jesus’ genealogy (Matt. 1:6). Why did God not find a godly woman in Israel to fill this role? (Read Ruth 1:16 together.) What about Ruth’s life and faith prepared her for this responsibility?

3. The Pharisees were a conservative religious party of Judaism during the time of Christ. They were Israel’s religious leaders. Their position could have allowed them to bear a positive role in proclaiming the Messiah. Instead the testimony in Scripture spoken by Jesus is “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in” (Matt. 23:13, NKJV).
Principles of Life

Read Psalms 19:7-11; 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. What promises are found here regarding how the Bible should guide how we live?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Every day we are confronted with difficult decisions on how to live. How do we know how to make the right choices, especially when so many moral theories exist? One ethicist even has developed a morality urging that we kill old people who have become a burden, even though he also argues against killing animals for food!

God, though, has given us His Word as a guide for how we should live. Whether sacred biographies, the life and teachings of Jesus, or specific direct biblical instructions—the Word gives us principles to guide our lives.

Read Genesis 39:7-14; John 8:3-11; and Philippians 2:3, 4. How might one take the principles found in these texts and apply them to real-life situations today? Be prepared to share your answers in class on Sabbath.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Though the Bible does not pretend to give instruction on every problem known to humanity, it does give us wonderful principles that we can apply to our daily lives. Using these principles, along with sanctified common sense and guided by the Holy Spirit, we can learn to walk in the Spirit and be sensitive to the leading of God. Learning the example of biblical heroes or following the guidelines of the Bible will change our lives.

We must see the Bible as more than a compilation of historical or even spiritual facts. We need to see it as the will of God, who desires the best for our lives. For that reason the Bible can educate our ethics and tell us what God expects us to do. God has shown us in His Word how to live. When we follow divine guidance for our happiness, our lives will be changed by His divine power.
Compare and Contrast the Response in These Stories:

Why are such starkly different stories recorded in Scripture? How do the stories of Rahab, Ruth, and the Pharisees reflect the options we have in the choices we can make for or against God?

“The advancing hosts of Israel found that knowledge of the mighty workings of the God of the Hebrews had gone before them, and that some among the heathen were learning that He alone was the true God. In wicked Jericho the testimony of a heathen woman was, ‘The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.’ Joshua 2:11. The knowledge of Jehovah that had thus come to her, proved her salvation.”—Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 369.

Read Matthew 5:20, 12:38, 22:15, and Luke 7:30 together as a class. What do these passages tell you about the Pharisees’ choices in comparison with God’s purpose for them? How can our own life stories become testimonies of faith like those of Rahab and Ruth? What life decisions and practices can prevent us from becoming stumbling blocks to others like the Pharisees were?

List and discuss other stories in the Bible that have impacted the lives of your class members in terms of choosing to have faith in God.

STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

Thought Questions:

1. If your teacher in grade school gave you an English assignment to write a paragraph using the words living and active, what would you use as the subject of those two adjectives?

2. Hebrews 5:12 uses the words living and active to describe the Word of God. (Review Ps. 33:6, 9; 51:10; John 1:4, 12; 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:23.) In what way has the Bible been a motivating force in your life?
What Saith the Word of God?

Yesterday we looked at some Bible texts that offered principles on how the Lord would have us live. Today let’s look at situations people might find themselves in and ask, What help does the Bible offer, if any, in these situations? Which texts could you use to give guidance in the following scenarios?

A fellow co-worker, in desperate straits, is stealing money from the place where you both work. What should you do? Ignore it? Turn the person in? What saith the Word of God?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

A young woman, unmarried, gets pregnant. She and her boyfriend are unable to take care of the child even if they were to marry, which she wants to do. He wants her to get an abortion. What saith the Word of God?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

A beggar stands on the sidewalk and holds out his hand for money. What saith the Word of God?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

A person you are witnessing to invites you over for a meal and places pork on the table before you. What saith the Word of God?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

An elderly parent is comatose, kept alive only through very expensive medical procedures that are draining the family income. Should she be kept alive as long as possible, or do you pull the plug? What saith the Word of God?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

How easy did you find these things to answer? Was the Bible very clear in providing answers for all the situations? Also, if you didn’t have the Bible as your guide, how different might your answers have been? Be prepared to share your answers in class on Sabbath.
Application Questions:

Has anyone said to you, “That really gets to the heart of the matter”? What did they mean? What does it take to get to the essence of a situation in a way that makes the next steps clear? Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) also describes God’s Word as “sharper than any double-edged sword.” Divide your class into groups of not more than three or four people. Have the groups read Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17; and Isaiah 30:21; 46:9, 10; 55:10, 11. Their task will be to use these passages as the basis of a skit about the Bible that could be used as a sermon illustration about the effectiveness of God’s Word.

Consider This: As you think about the potential benefit of allowing Scripture to guide in your life, why is it so difficult to schedule time for personal devotion?

Witnessing

Think of a time when a passage of Scripture impacted a decision you had to make or in some other way had a direct influence leading to a positive, unexpected outcome. Plan to share that experience with a friend or neighbor in a way that would cause them to look at the Bible as a resource for valuable information.

STEP 4—Apply!

Just for Teachers: In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

First Peter 2:22-25, NIV, uses two thought-provoking phrases, “for you were like sheep going astray” (vs. 25) and “by His wounds you have been healed” (vs. 24). The Godhead created everything. When we turned our backs on our Creator, God sent His Son to pay the price to turn us around. Given this short synopsis of our sordid history, why do we turn our backs on the owner’s manual that makes possible an abundant future?

Schedule an hour during your most creative and productive time of the day. Take your Bible, a tablet of paper, and a pen or pencil to a quiet place. Ask God to help you visualize your normal weekly schedule to discern distractions that take you away from Him. Make two lists. First list those
Revival and Reformation

So far we’ve been looking at the power of God’s Word to work in our individual lives. But what about us as a church? What should the Word of God do for us corporately?

Read 2 Kings 22:8–23:25. What happened here? What role did the Bible have in the unfolding of this story?

There was a great reformation in Judah based on the Word of God. It was a corporate experience, something that impacted the entire nation.

“Thus Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God’s holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the book of the law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in the light of its counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven.”—Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 398.

Another example can be found in the time of King Jehoshaphat, who sent Bible teachers to teach the law of God. “And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people” (2 Chron. 17:9). Although the Bible doesn’t say which specific book or books were used, the point is that the Written Word, the Scriptures, was at the basis of this revival and reformation.

Jehoshaphat himself brought about the judicial reforms in harmony with the moral values expressed in the Bible. By studying 2 Chronicles 19:4-11, we can see the reformation being made in the judicial system of Jehoshaphat: “‘Consider carefully what you do’” (2 Chron. 19:6, NIV), “‘judge carefully’” (vs. 7, NIV), “‘no injustice or partiality or bribery’” (vs. 7, NIV), “‘serve faithfully’” (vs. 9, NIV), “‘warn them not to sin against the Lord’” (vs. 10, NIV), and “‘act with courage’” (vs. 11, NIV). All these principles are found in the Bible.

How easily apostasy from God’s Word can come to the church as a whole! What can we do to protect our church from making the same mistakes as ancient Israel did?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

distractions (example: TV, computer games) on the left side of the paper. On the right side of the paper next to the distractions, write a promise from the Bible that will help you rearrange your priorities to allow time in God’s Word. Consider Lamentations 3:20-24. Keep this paper in the front of your Bible as a reminder of God’s willingness to redirect your life into a more intentional relationship with Him.

Consider This: Identify a person in your class who would function as an accountability partner. Ask that person to help you be more intentional about spending time in God’s Word and in prayer by calling you each week to ask two questions: “What did you learn about God from His Word this week?” and “With whom have you shared this new discovery?”

“When the heart is brought into harmony with the word, a new life will spring up within you, a new light will shine upon every line of the word, and it will become the voice of God to your soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 183.

“In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an expression of divine wisdom. It opens to man’s understanding the great problems of life, and to all who heed its precepts it will prove an unerring guide, keeping them from wasting their lives in misdirected effort.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 506.

Discussion Questions:

1. Knowing the importance of studying the Bible in order to bring change to our lives and to promote revival and reformation among God’s people, how can we renew our emphasis on Bible study? How can we bring the revival and reformation that we need as individuals and as a church?

2. As a class go over the questions presented in Tuesday’s and Wednesday’s lesson. How similar were your answers to the others? How different? What can we learn from one another’s responses?

3. Do you sense a need for the Word of God to have a greater impact in our lives, not just as individuals, but as a church? As a class, put together a midweek Bible study and invite as many members as possible.

4. Let members of the class give a testimony to the power of the Word and what it has done in each of their lives.

5. How can you help someone who seeks to have the Bible change their life and yet nothing seems to be happening? What counsel would you give?
Revelation of Hope

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for this Week’s Study: Pss. 34:7, 91:4, Rom. 3:26, 1 Cor. 15:51-58, Col. 1:14, 2:13, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 1 Pet. 3:18, 1 John 1:9, 2:12.

Memory Text: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, NIV).

Key Thought: The Bible reveals to us a world of hope and promise.

Four World War II fliers, shot down, floated for 21 days on a small life raft in the middle of the Pacific. They had no water or food. However, when their thirst got so bad, it rained, and they caught the rain and drank it; when their hunger became unbearable, seagulls landed on the rafts, and they caught the birds and ate them.

When finally rescued, they were interviewed, separately, and each was asked the same question: “To whom do you attribute your survival?” All the men gave basically the same answer: There was a New Testament in the raft, which they read every day. And that book gave them the hope to press on, even when things looked hopeless.

In the Bible, hope isn’t used in the popular sense of the word, a wish with little basis in fact. In the Word, hope is presented as the truth about a loving, omnipotent God who cares about us, who will provide for us, and who offers us the promise of new existence in a new world.

This week we’ll look at the revelation of hope given to us in the Word of God.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 26.*
The “Comfort of the Scriptures”

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

Paul, in the above verse, talked about the “comfort of the scriptures” that would lead to hope. What particular things have you found in the Bible that give you, personally, hope?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

The Bible speaks about the condition of humanity, that we all are sinners (Rom. 3:10) and that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The struggle for humanity’s salvation is expressed by Paul when he said, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24, NIV). The answer is found in Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23). Because of His love, Christ was willing to come to this world, live as a human being, and die the death that we should die. The Bible points us to the hope of salvation that we can have in Jesus because of His sacrifice in our behalf.

What hope is presented to us in these texts?

Rom. 3:26, 1 Pet. 3:18
____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

John 16:13, 2 Tim. 3:16
____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Luke 18:29, 30; 1 John 5:13
____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

At the cross, Jesus, the One through whom all things were made (Col. 1:16), bore in Himself the penalty for our sins. Jesus died in our place, suffered in our stead, all for us. Why would Christ have gone through so much, for us, if there wasn’t something incredibly worthwhile at the end of it for us? What is at the end, and what hope does it offer to us?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: Romans 15:4

Teach the Class to:

Know: That we can be assured of salvation in Christ.
Feel: Experience confidence in the power of God to keep us from sin and temptation.
Do: Pray for the indwelling Spirit so that others may see the power of God in our lives.

Lesson Outline:

I. Our Hope in Christ (Rom. 3:26)

A Does justification come at the moment we accept Christ, or is it developed over time? Explain your answer.
B What does the Bible mean when it says we were sealed by the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22, Eph. 4:30)?

II. Christ Our Atonement (1 John 1:9)

A Jesus died to make atonement for the sins of the whole world. What does this mean to an individual sinner?
B In Christ we have forgiveness, victory over temptation, and freedom from guilt. What can this mean to our daily lives?

III. Hope for the Future (Ps. 91:4)

A What can it mean to the twenty-first century Christian that God has promised to be with us always?
B What does the promise of God’s protection and provision mean to your class members?

Summary: Christ our hope gives us the assurance of salvation and the promise of His presence in this life and for eternity.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the
continued
Hope of Forgiveness

A woman had been brutally murdered. Police psychologists, after examining the case, devised a plan to catch the killer. They placed a hidden microphone and video camera in the ground at her grave. And they waited. One night a man came to the grave, got on his knees, and begged the woman for forgiveness. The police got it all on tape.

What drove the man back to his victim? There’s only one answer: guilt.

As fallen beings, as sinners, we all have done wrong. Even people who don’t believe in the Bible, who don’t understand the concept of sin as we do, have a sense of right and wrong, and often feel guilty when they do wrong. For some people the sense of guilt is overwhelming. It’s the foundational emotion that drives all that they do. For many it has led to incredible despair, not only for themselves but for those who often suffer because of the guilty one’s aberrant behavior.

But there’s hope, and it’s revealed to us in the Scriptures, because in the Scriptures we are given the story of Jesus and His death on our behalf.

**What** do Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:7, 4:32, Colossians 1:14, 2:13, and 1 John 1:9, 2:12 tell us about the forgiveness offered to everyone through Jesus?

Yes, the Bible is clear that through Jesus we have forgiveness. As to the extent of forgiveness, Scripture represents God as saying that He has removed our sins from us as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12); that He has cast them into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19) or behind His back (Isa. 38:17); that He has blotted them out or swept them away (Ps. 51:1, 9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22) and that He will remember them no more (Jer. 31:34). Indeed, it was for the sins of the whole world that Christ died as an atoning sacrifice, efficacious through faith (Rom. 3:25, NIV). No matter who you are or what you have done, your sins can be forgiven by God if you just claim His promises of forgiveness for yourself.

Are you still struggling with guilt? If so, go back over some of the texts presented today. Read them, pray over them, and pour out your heart to God, asking Him to give you the assurance that these promises are for you, regardless of whatever you might have done.
learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

In Psalm 91:4, 14, the psalmist portrays God as ready to shelter and deliver those who call on Him. If you are, or have ever been, in a difficult situation without apparent avenues of escape, how might these verses keep you from despair?

When you look in the Bible for stories of God’s deliverance, how do you see hope becoming a reality?

**STEP 2—Explore!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

**Bible Commentary**

I. Communication of Hope: God’s Word

Arrange to have someone who has experienced a miraculous rescue share that experience as an introduction to your class time.

**Consider This:** Read Genesis 1 together in class. Count the times the words good or very good appear. After God created the world, He said it was “very good!” Discuss what perfect harmony with God is like. Then contrast that harmony with rebellion and its consequences.

**Compare and Contrast:** Review what God has done throughout history to provide hope and assurance. Contrast this with the results of human efforts. What keeps us from choosing what God offers? Since our situation is beyond human repair, what do you think it will take for us to learn to rely on the hope God offers?
Hope to Overcome Sin

Read Proverbs 24:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:57. What hope is found in those verses?

Although we may fall, there is hope—hope that we can rise again and again if need be, hope that we are not cast away by God. And though we might sin, Jesus will defend us as our Mediator (Heb. 7:25, 1 John 2:1). Moreover, the Bible also says that through the power of Jesus we can have victory over sin.

It’s one thing to claim God’s promises of forgiveness. And there are many. But what about His promises of victory over sin? Are they not just as real? Are they not just as important? How crucial, then, that we make these promises our own and experience their reality in our own walk with Jesus.

Some members may be struggling to overcome their weaknesses, whatever they are. The following Scripture-based steps can lead us to victory:

1. Recognize your weaknesses and that you can’t overcome them in your own strength (see John 15:5).
2. Claim God’s promises of victory; make them your own (see Phil. 4:13).
3. Believe that the Lord has given you the victory to overcome those weaknesses and thank Him for the victory (see 1 Cor. 10:13).
4. Claim the promise of “death” to self in Christ (see Rom. 6:11).
5. Take concrete and practical steps to avoid the things that lead you into sin (see Rom. 13:14).
6. Live your life in an attitude of praise and prayer to the Lord, who gives you the power to overcome your weaknesses (see 1 Cor. 15:57).

What about you? You have claimed the Bible promises of forgiveness, but now are you struggling to get victory? Are you failing despite all the promises of victory found in the Bible? What changes do you need to make in order to better apply these above steps in your own walk with the Lord?
II. The Hope in Which We Live

**Consider This:** Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” *(John 16:33, NKJV)*. How can you reconcile the Savior’s words with the reality of the world in which we live? Wars, plots for destruction, super viruses and ineffective antibiotics, child abductions, and murders might be some of the things you would include on a list to describe the condition of our society. How does Christ’s dialogue with His disciples in Matthew 24 give us hope?

III. The Conclusion of Hope—Here and Now

**Consider This:** The disciples walked and talked with Jesus. Although they did not believe He would die on the cross, they found out His words were true and trustworthy. His commission for them was very specific: “you shall be witnesses to Me” *(Acts 1:8, NKJV)*. They saw Him go into heaven in the same manner He will return. Then they followed the angels’ instruction to go and tell the world about their anticipation of that return *(Acts 1:11)*. How can we reclaim this same perspective of hope?

- **Paul’s admonition to the early Christian believers** was, “Be steadfast, immovable . . . knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” *(1 Cor. 15:58, NASB)*. What about his personal experience led him to have such confidence in Jesus Christ and the hope He offered?

- **Why does Paul call it “the blessed hope” in Titus 2:13?** How does this hope move from being a corporate expectation to a personal anticipation?

IV. Hope Acted Out as a Life Priority

**Consider This:** What are false hopes based on? Have someone who is willing share a personal experience with the class. What is the difference between false hope and hope soon to be realized? How certain is the hope of Jesus’ second coming? How would you explain the reality of that hope with someone who is skeptical? What personal experience could you share that might help him or her find faith?
Provision and Protection

“I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread” (Ps. 37:25, NIV).

Read Matthew 6:25-34. What hope does Jesus offer us in these verses? What is He saying to each of us?

As Creator of the universe, the Lord certainly has filled the earth with His wonderful bounties. The ravages of sin, however, have taken their loathsome toll, and so not everyone has access to these bounties. Yet, even amid rampant wealth or abject poverty, we have the promises of God that He will provide what we need.

At the same time, God also gives us the hope of protection. We are not under what has been called “the tyranny of chance,” meaning that our life is ruled by unconscious forces that have no purpose in mind. Though bad things do happen, those who love God have wonderful promises that can give us great hope despite calamity.

Read Psalms 46:1-3, 34:7, 91:4, 125:2, and Matthew 28:20. What hope do you find in these texts?

The Lord has given us wonderful promises regarding His loving care and protection. We can find many examples in the Bible of just how wonderfully, even miraculously, the Lord protected His people. Yet, we can also find examples of God’s people suffering, even dying, while faithful (see Matt. 14:10, Acts 7:59, Heb. 11:35-39). Did the promise of God fail in those examples? Or, instead, can we—because of these promises—know that when bad things happen we can trust that the Lord is still in control and can have hope for the future despite trials and suffering?

How have you experienced the reality of these promises in your own life? What have you learned from your own trials and suffering that could help someone going through a hard situation right now?
Compare and Contrast: The very purpose of our existence as Adventists rests in the knowledge of the imminent return of Christ. See Revelation 14:7-12. He has made a way of escape for us through His perfect work of redemption. This hope is unlike any other hope we could possibly have. It is the culmination of all we believe. In the hope of the Second Advent, our faith is vindicated. All humanity needs to share in the hope of the Second Coming. Its foundation rests in a totally reliable God. This hope is a life-or-death matter. Keeping hope in the Second Coming alive despite the cares and needs of this life demands our constant attention. Expressing this hope is the goal and motivation of our faith. As a class, list activities that would help keep the hope of Jesus’ return a priority of daily life.

Consider This: Read John 14:3. How do you react to the personal nature of Jesus’ plan to return and take you home? If you knew that He was coming next week, who would you tell and how would you tell them?

STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

Thought Questions:
What does it mean to be reliable? Many people live exemplary lives without having a personal relationship with Jesus. (Read Rom. 8:32, Col. 2:13, and 1 John 1:9.) Why is it important to have a reliable Savior when our human efforts can look so good?

Application Questions:
In John 10:10, Jesus says, “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (NASB). How does accepting God’s forgiveness make abundant, hopeful life possible? Put your name in this text in place of “they.” How has God given you a life of anticipation and purpose? If you are struggling with doubts about your acceptance with God, share this with a trusted friend. Invite that person to study the Bible with you, looking for
Hope of Everlasting Life

No matter who we are, how rich, how powerful, how beautiful, how famous, we all face death. Medicine, diet, and exercise only can delay the inevitable. No matter our backgrounds, our education, our race, creed, or color, death always gets us. Life here, in and of itself, is always a losing proposition. Kind of tough, if you think about it: going through life, struggling with trials, tragedy, sickness, disappointment, only to have the one thing we fear the most, death, be the only sure way to end those trials.

Fortunately, the Bible shows us what nature, science, history, and philosophy never can: that death does not have the final word. On the contrary, thanks to Jesus, life, eternal life, is how the story ends for those who accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In your own words, write down what promise and hope are found for us in these verses.

____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________ 
_____________________________________________________________________

In this world, itself offering no answer to death, it’s nice to know that there is an answer, and it’s found in Jesus. It’s nice to know that death is not the end; it’s not a long dreaded night that never comes to a morning. The grave is not a prison from which there’s no deliverance. Jesus Christ went into the grave and came out triumphant; and, thanks to His triumph over death, we will triumph over it too. That’s how powerful Christ’s ministry was, that’s how efficacious it is for us; even death can’t beat it.

This is the hope that we find in the Bible, where the story of Jesus and what He has done for us, and what He will do for us, is found. In the Bible we find the answer to life’s hardest question, and that is death. Even more so, in the Bible we find the hope that death doesn’t have to be the last stop.

Imagine what life would be like if you believed that everything ended, forever, at death. How differently would your life be now? How differently would you act? What reasons could you give for going on living if, in the end, you knew it would all come to nothing? How should the hope of eternal life influence how you live now?
texts about God’s gift of salvation. Also ask that person to pray that you will develop assurance in God.

Witnessing
Chances are, you know at least one neighbor, friend, or work associate who is struggling with hopelessness and despair. Ask God to tune your hearing to recognize the Holy Spirit’s direction in guiding you to that person. Covenant with Him to be ready to share your testimony of hope with that person as He provides the setting and opportunity.

STEP 4—Apply!

Just for Teachers: In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

Consider This: How would you paint a picture of hope? What kind of musical piece could you compose or structure could you build that would depict hope to the world? (Read these texts together: Gen. 12:1-3, Ps. 130:7, and John 14:9.) How can we live these texts in such a way that makes hope a reality in the community where our church buildings exist and in the neighborhoods where we live and work? As a class decide on one activity or project that you will do together in the next month to be living, visible agents of hope.

“In the word of God there are gracious promises, from which those who are suffering, whether in body or in mind, may receive comfort and hope and encouragement.”—Ellen G. White, Counsels on Health, p. 213.

“We need to appreciate more fully the meaning of the words, ‘I sat down under His shadow with great delight.’ Song of Solomon 2:3. These words do not bring to our minds the picture of hasty transit, but of quiet rest. There are many professing Christians who are anxious and depressed, many who are so full of busy activity that they cannot find time to rest quietly in the promises of God, who act as if they could not afford to have peace and quietness. To all such Christ’s invitation is, ‘Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28.”—Page 251.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why, despite the promises in the Bible, are there still so many suffering people? Why does the Lord allow all these things to happen? How can we use the Bible to give comfort and hope to those who are suffering?

2. As a class, discuss the role of the church and how the Lord uses it to help bring to people the hope found in the promises of God. How can your local church be better used by the Lord to bring some of these promises to pass in the lives of those who claim them in the name of Jesus?

3. Despite so many clear and unambiguous promises about victory over sin, why do church members often have so much trouble overcoming? As a class, talk about what steps can be taken to help each other find the victories that can be so elusive.

4. Have people go around the class and share a Bible text that gives them hope and let each one explain why that text means so much to him or her.
The Bible and Health

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 4:23; Luke 4:16-21; Rom. 6:4, 9-11; Phil. 4:4-9; Col. 1:20, 21; 3:8-10.

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

Key Thought: The Word of God gives us good reasons to take care of our health.

The Bible endorses the value of the physical body; after all, it was created by God. The believer should, therefore, seek to understand and intentionally put into practice measures that enhance health. Care for one’s health is a moral matter, evidence of loyalty and responsible service to God. At the practical level the condition of one’s health largely determines whether a person can carry out effective service for the Lord or for anyone they feel called to serve.

Although the foundational goals and values of health from a biblical perspective are conveyed through God’s Word, the exact means of achieving these goals has come largely from medical science, which often validates many of the principles of health found in the Bible.

It is incumbent on all Christians to do what they can to take care of their health. Health-building activities, including exercise, wholesome diet, proper systematic rest, practical satisfying work, avoidance of damaging substances or practices, good habits of cleanliness, cultivated efforts to live in peace with and help others, and a profound trust in God make the best possible use of the life God has given us. Our bodies are sacred gifts to us from God; we have the responsibility to take care of them the best we know how.

This week let’s take a look at what the Bible says about health and the principles found in its pages.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 2.*
To Be in Health

“Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2).

We tend to think of the Bible as dealing only with the spiritual side, yet, that’s not the case. Scripture shows that God cares also about our physical being and that our spiritual side is linked with the physical. We can find in the Bible good reasons for taking care of our health.

Look up the following texts and write out what reasons you can find in them that would call us to take care of our health:

Rom. 12:1
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Rom. 14:7
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

1 Cor. 3:16, 17
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

1 Cor. 6:19, 20
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Eph. 5:29
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3 John 2
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Scripture makes it clear that God does care about health, our physical well-being. That makes sense, of course. After all, what loving parent doesn’t care about the health, mental and physical, of their child? How much more so would the Lord care about ours?

It’s been said that we never care about our health until we lose it. If healthy, do you take your health for granted? Talk to someone struggling with health problems. More than likely, you’ll better understand why our health should be carefully guarded.
**I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .**

*Key Text:* 3 John 2

*Teach the Class to:*
- **Know:** That the body is the Lord’s temple, and we are responsible for our good health.
- **Feel:** That God is concerned about our health and wants us to live healthfully.
- **Do:** Seek to be temperate in all things.

*Lesson Outline:*

I. Caring for Our Health *(1 Cor. 6:19, 20)*

How does good health enable the Christian to be a more effective servant of the Lord?

II. Newness of Life *(1 John 3:2)*

In Christ we have newness of life. Explain how this includes temperance in all areas of life.

III. Healthy Bodies, Healthy Relationships *(Matt. 4:23)*

A. Why was healing the sick so important in the Lord’s earthly ministry?

B. Positive attitudes and thinking help us to keep good health. Show how it is also true that good health can have a positive effect on our attitudes and thinking.

*Summary:* “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” *(3 John 2).*

**Learning Cycle**

*STEP 1—Motivate!*

*Just for Teachers:* Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

When Jesus walked on this earth, He went about “healing every disease and sickness” *(Matt. 4:23, NIV).* Why are we still confronted with these challenges? What has been your experience with emotional uncertainty and illness? How do we maintain faith when faced with such profound hurt?
Health and Restoration

In the beginning God, our Creator, created us healthy, without sickness and disease. The plan of salvation is God’s divine way to bring us back to what we originally lost. He wants to restore us to what we once had.

**Read** Romans 6:4; 9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Colossians 1:20, 21; 3:8-10; 1 John 3:2. What essential message is given to us from these texts? What hope do they offer?

Healing and restoration often are talked about in the Bible. God’s promises to restore Israel spill forth in language filled with healing and curative terms (Jer. 30:12-17, 33:6, Ezek. 47:12, Mal. 4:2). So clear is the affinity in the New Testament that one of its principal words for healing (*soteria*) may be translated as either “healing” or “salvation.” Salvation, then, may include not only rescue from sin and its consequences but also restoration, healing of the whole person.

All biblical teachings are predicated on the basis that, in the end, what was lost when sin entered will be restored when the One who created becomes the One who restores His creation. Having healed our wounds and borne our transgressions at Calvary, He appears at last in the book of Revelation as Christus Victor, in triumph over Satan and the forces of evil (Rev. 20:14, 21:8). Those who love and serve God will be restored to the perfect condition that once was; all that is evil, meanwhile, will be destroyed, never to rise again. In both Old Testament and New Testament prophecies this new earth is foreseen as free from sickness, pain, and death (Isa. 33:24, Rev. 21:4). The apostle Paul rejoices in Christ’s resurrection as proof that He is Victor over all evil forces. Christ’s victory has become ours (1 Thess. 4:14-17).

As Adventists we have been given precious light on health and health principles, all designed to give us a lifestyle that will prevent disease. How seriously do you follow these principles? How well do you even know them? Why wait until you get sick to start following principles that could help prevent sickness to begin with?
As a class, list those who are facing illness in your congregation or its extended family. Decide what practical things you might do to minister to those who are suffering.

**STEP 2—Explore!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

### Bible Commentary

#### I. Rejoice—Always

**Consider This:** When a biblical author wants to emphasize a concept, he uses repetition to highlight it. Using a Bible concordance, discover how many times Paul uses the word *rejoice* or *rejoicing* in the book of Philippians. As a class look up those passages. What was Paul’s situation when he wrote this letter? (*The SDA Bible Commentary* is a good resource to find out more about the historical background for the writing of the books of the Bible.) How was Paul able to rejoice while in prison, separated from his church family?

Read Philippians 4:4-9 (NKJV) out loud from as many versions of the Bible as class members have with them. Paul asks the Philippians (and us) to “rejoice . . . always” (vs. 4), “let your gentleness be known” (vs. 5), “be anxious for nothing” and “let your requests be made known to God” (vs. 6), “meditate on these things” (vs. 8), and “the things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do” (vs. 9). Discuss the results of following his directives.

#### II. Peace Beyond Comprehension

**Consider This:** In Philippians 4:8, Paul asks the Philippian church members to think on certain things. What are those things? As a class, using your concordance, find Bible passages that give greater understanding of each concept (for example, things that are true, noble, etc.). What did you discover?
Jesus, the Great Healer

We often hear of Jesus as the Great Physician. And no wonder. Roughly calculated, approximately 20 percent of the Gospels is dedicated to His restoring sick people to health. Although in some cases duplication occurs, the four Gospels report 35 specific instances, alongside the general reports.

**How central was healing to Jesus’ earthly ministry?** *(Matt. 4:23, Luke 6:7-19, 9:11).*

Through the miraculous healings Jesus gave great evidence regarding His role as the Savior. But He did so much more, as well. As humans, we have been damaged spiritually, emotionally, and physically by sin. The whole plan of salvation centers on *restoring* to us what we had once lost. In the beginning there was no sickness and no death; in the end there won’t be either *(see Rev. 21:4).* By healing, Jesus was showing the world the power of God to bring about restoration, to bring about what was lost by sin. The healings weren’t an end in themselves; they were all to point to something greater: salvation in Jesus.

**Read** Luke 4:16-21. What do these texts reveal to us about the purpose and ministry of Jesus?

Jesus’ primary task was to proclaim that God is receiving His sinful, suffering creatures in a sweeping act of grace and love. His actions were evidence of final deliverance from a world of sin. He had come to deliver, to seek and to save, to forgive, to proclaim the day of God’s mercy, to confer life everlasting, and to be the Restorer of all that was lost. He was first of all the Savior, and physical healings were evidences of His authority.

**Whatever our illness, whatever our sicknesses, we have wonderful promises in the Bible of healing and restoration; that is, complete healing and complete restoration. Dwell on this, our greatest hope. Pray for more faith to believe in those promises. If you know someone struggling with sickness, point that person to this hope.**
In Hebrews 12:2, Paul admonishes us “to fix our eyes on Jesus” (NIV). In what ways are his directives in Philippians 4:8 and Hebrews 12:2 similar? How does Jesus embody all that is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy? Discuss how these can become characteristics of your life.

**Compare and Contrast:** In our world, many institutions, belief systems, and products invite our trust. Find an example of one in a local newspaper and share it with your class. How trustworthy are the things of this world? Read Philippians 2:1-11 and John 14:6, 17:3. Contrast what God offers us through Jesus Christ with what the world offers.

**Bible Examples of Peace:** Divide your class into two groups (or do this as a group if you have a smaller class). Ask one group to look in the Old Testament for stories of people who were peaceful in trying circumstances. Have the other group do the same in the New Testament. Call the class back together to share what they found. Discuss the principles in each story that made peace possible. Discuss how these stories impact the members of the class. Be prepared to spend time in prayer if personal challenges are expressed.

►**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

**Consider This:**
As practical steps we can take to have a better quality of life, eight natural remedies have been outlined below. Have the class think of them. As they do, list them on a flip chart or white board. Which ones were hardest to remember? See Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 127.

*The natural remedies:* exercise, fresh air, sunshine, rest, self-control (temperance in all things), nutritious food, pure water, trust in God.
Moderation in All Things

Read Philippians 4:4-9. What practical principles can you find in these texts that can have a positive impact on our physical well-being?
____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Read 1 Corinthians 9:25, Galatians 5:23, and Titus 1:8, 2:2. What practical admonitions are found in these texts that can have a definite bearing on our physical health?
____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

The Greek word used in many of these verses for “temperate” comes from a word often used in the context of athletic training, of an athlete who, in preparation for an event such as a race, takes special care to abstain from that which can hurt his or her body. How much more so should this principle apply to us as Christians in the race that we are running (1 Cor. 9:24-27, Heb. 12:1)?

We all know about health problems that can come from the use of liquor, illegal drugs, and so forth. Those are the obvious ones. Yet, so often bad health comes by overindulging in the gifts that God has given us to enjoy. Contrary to popular caricatures of biblical religion, it’s not sinful to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh. God made us to enjoy these things, but only in their proper sphere, and in moderation and with temperance, as so clearly shown in the Bible.

“True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful, and to use judiciously that which is healthful. There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers.”—Ellen G. White, Child Guidance, p. 398. How much sense Ellen White’s words make! Examine yourself. How moderate and temperate are you, even with that which is good? What changes might you need to make?
Thought Questions:

1. Science is highly focused on health issues and the consequences of life choices. What are some of the latest headlines you have seen regarding this? How do recent discoveries affirm or contradict biblical health principles?

2. Discuss this statement: Our society is information rich and application poor. What avenues do we have to information on better lifestyle practices? What hurdles or pressures keep us from applying healthy practices to our daily lives?

3. What are the benefits of positive lifestyle practices? Are there any drawbacks? As a class, recall some of the advertisements you have seen that encourage questionable health practices or fads. How might our positive health practices be a witness to our neighbors and work associates?

Application Questions:

1. If the class dynamic allows, take a poll to see how well members incorporate the eight natural remedies into their daily lifestyle. Why is it more difficult to be consistent with some than with others? How can these barriers be overcome?

2. If the remedies are a new concept to some class members, how can you help them gain greater understanding without making them feel uncomfortable?

3. Plan a worship service with your pastor that incorporates the eight health principles. Consider using all the senses to remind your congregation of how these blessings can improve their lives. Examples: the children’s story could include an opportunity to taste a healthy food; banners could be made that list the eight principles; or a slide program could augment the pastor’s sermon.

Witnessing

How might your class take the discussion of the eight natural remedies from thought into positive action? Divide the class into groups (if your class is small, do this as a group). Assign each group two of the remedies. Ask them
Healthy Relationships

Again and again the Bible speaks about the need of loving one another. Jesus said that it is the greatest of all commandments (Matt. 22:37-40). When Paul speaks about Christian virtues, such as faith, hope, and love, he says that the greatest is love (1 Cor. 13:13, NIV). No wonder Jesus said that one significant characteristic of His followers is that they love one another (John 13:35).

**How do the following texts characterize Christian love?**

1 Cor. 13:4-7

1 John 4:7

1 John 4:18

Study after study shows how family love—a close loving relationship between parents and children—can stem a tide of evils in young people, evils that can bear terrible fruit in adulthood.

As God’s people we need to love one another (1 Thess. 3:2), serve one another (Gal. 5:13), bear with one another (Eph. 4:2), be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32), admonish one another (Rom. 15:14), be tender-hearted and forgiving to one another (Eph. 4:32), comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18), show compassion to one another (1 Pet. 3:8), be hospitable to one another (1 Pet. 4:9), and pray for one another (James 5:16). These commands, so clearly outlined in the Word, will help us to be connected with one another as God’s people and will strengthen family relationships, which ultimately protect our youth from high-risk behavior. Through forming close bonds and thus giving and receiving love and care and concern, we can have such a positive moral, spiritual, and physical influence on one another. The Scriptures are so right in showing how important good relationships are for us, not just spiritually but physically, as well.

Review some of your most basic relationships. From your end, what motivates these relationships: self-serving or self-giving, greed or love, a desire for personal gain or a desire to be a blessing? Think about the good you have done for others. Were the principles elucidated in today’s lesson the motivating force behind your relationships?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

to build a course outline complete with illustrations and demonstrations in preparation for an evening health series. (Consider gathering information from previously developed series from your conference, AdventSource, etc.) Plan to share your series with your church in preparation for sharing it with your community. Assign dates for both series, for your church and for the community.

STEP 4—Apply!

Just for Teachers: In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

Consider This: The eight natural remedies are simple, practical tools for an improved quality of life. As a class, decide which remedy you will first become more intentional about making part of your life. Covenant with each other to be accountability partners to encourage each other in this endeavor. (Suggestion: you might include five deep breaths as a part of the opening exercises for each class period or serve fresh water during every class.)

New physical maladies seem to be discovered every week, while our society has difficulty even discussing the emotional illnesses that are rampant in our world. (As a class, read Rom. 6:4 and Col. 1:20 together) Discuss how the ministry of reconciliation and redemption in Jesus Christ addresses emotional health. How does complete trust in God help people to proactively deal with stressful, demanding lives? When is it a good idea to seek help from qualified Christian counselors?

“The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death. . . .

“Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 344.

“Many of those who came to Christ for help had brought disease upon themselves, yet He did not refuse to heal them. And when virtue from Him entered into these souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease as well as of their physical maladies.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 73.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Jesus’ healing ministry formed a crucial component of His work of leading people to salvation. How can your local church better use the light we have on health and healing as part of its outreach to the world?

2. As a class, talk about what the Bible says about such things as diet, use of alcohol, rest, and so forth. What health principles on these topics do you find in the Bible? To the best of your knowledge, how has modern science validated these principles? How have members personally benefited from following what the Bible has to say on these things?

3. As a class, take time to visit any members who are sick or hurting. Bring Bible promises to share with them. At the same time, in what practical ways can you minister to them and help relieve their sufferings?
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Luke 21:36, John 8:32, 1 Cor. 10:13, Phil. 2:3, Col. 3:13, 1 Pet. 3:15, 4:12-14, 1 John 1:4.

Memory Text: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Key Thought: The Bible offers us answers for one of life’s most elusive goals: happiness.

Everybody wants to be happy, yet, few know how to achieve it. The world offers all sorts of enticements that promise happiness but always prove in the end to be shallow, fleeting, and empty.

Can we find happiness in this sinful world? We can, but only by going back to the Source of all happiness: God. Pain, suffering, and unhappiness are the result of our separation from God; only to the degree, then, that we return to Him can we find the happiness that we all long for but that the world itself doesn’t offer.

This week we’ll look at some biblical principles regarding happiness. We’ll also focus, at least for a few days, on the family unit itself, for here is where so much of our happiness or unhappiness originates. The Bible offers us wonderful principles that, if applied, can protect our families from so many things that all but guarantee misery and suffering. And regardless of the past, regardless of the mistakes made that have hurt us or that we have made that have hurt others, God, through His Word, offers us promises that can bring healing and happiness. “They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away” (Isa. 35:10, NIV).

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 9.*
Life, Abundantly

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Read the above text. What is Jesus saying to us? How do we understand the idea of having life “more abundantly”? What do you think that includes? What does it not include?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

At the foundation of all that we believe and hope for as Christians is the promise of eternal life (1 John 2:25). Without that, whatever else Jesus does for us, even now, is all in vain (1 Cor. 15:16-19).

Yet, the promises that God has given to us in the Bible aren’t all other-worldly; they don’t all pertain to life in a new heaven and a new earth without sin, suffering, and death. The Word of God promises us many things here and now, things that can greatly help us know now what Jesus means when He talked about giving us life “more abundantly.”

Look up John 8:32, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Ephesians 2:8, 1 Peter 3:15, and 1 John 1:4. What promises are found in these texts? What do they offer us in this life, here and now?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

God loves us; and because He loves us, He wants us to be happy. He wants what’s best for us. Through His Word, God has revealed Himself to us and has shown us what He is willing to do for us if we will but allow Him to. How often we, ourselves, are the biggest hindrance to our own happiness.

What things of your own doing stand in the way of your “more abundantly” enjoying life offered to us through Jesus? Once you admit what these things are, how can you get rid of them?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: John 10:10

Teach the Class to:
Know: That knowledge of God’s Word brings freedom and everlasting joy.
Feel: The desire to better understand the truth found in the Bible.
Do: Teach others to live according to God’s Word.

Lesson Outline:
I. Knowing God’s Word (John 8:32)
   A. How can knowledge of the truth bring freedom and power over temptation?
   B. How can knowledge of the truth bring joy?

II. Rejoicing in the Lord (1 John 1:4)
   A. Have class members share specific promises that have brought them happiness.
   B. What means has God given us to achieve joy even in a sinful world?

III. Everlasting Joy (1 Thess. 5:16)
   A. How does the world define happiness? Why is such happiness temporary and unstable?
   B. Our happiness in Christ is based on the hope of heavenly things. What heavenly things bring you joy, and why?

Summary: “I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me” (Ps. 13:6).

Learning Cycle

Step 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?
Rejoice Before the Lord

“God created the earth to be the abode of holy, happy beings.” —Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 540. That happiness, of course, was disrupted by sin (Gen. 3:16-18); and not until sin finally is eradicated will we enjoy the full happiness that only sinless beings in a sinless world can enjoy.

Meanwhile, even in this sinful world, God has provided the means by which we can achieve a certain amount of happiness, contentment, and joy in this life.

**What promises did God make to Israel, provided, of course, they were obedient?** *Lev. 23:40; Deut. 12:7, 12, 18; 16:11.*

Study after study shows that in regard to the kinds of factors that give an indication of “happiness,” those who have faith in God come out better than those who live with no faith. After all, as Christians, think about what the Word has revealed to us: that we have a loving, caring God who loved us so much that He came down to earth, took on human flesh (*Rom. 8:3*), and in that flesh died for our sin (*Rom. 5:8*), and that because of His death we have the promise of eternal life in a world made new (*Rev. 21:1*). We have the hope that this life isn’t all that there is. Meanwhile, we have from Him many precious promises about Him being with us (*Matt. 28:20*), guiding us (*John 16:13*), helping us (*Heb. 4:16*), never leaving or forsaking us (*Heb. 13:5*), and so forth. No wonder we should be happier than those who know nothing about these promises.

**Look up** Exodus 20:1-17; Proverbs 3:5; Luke 21:36; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:13; 1 Peter 4:1, 2; and 2 John 1:5, and note the principles found in them. How would each one, in its own way, add to our happiness here if we were to obey what they say? Ask yourself, too: “How well am I seeking to follow the principles found in these texts?”
Motivate your class members to focus on today’s lesson as essential for their everyday living. Begin from what is known and move toward what is to be learned. Be careful not to get sidetracked by the enthusiasm or indifference of some members.

To be happy is everyone’s desire. Rich or poor, employed or unemployed, man, woman, or child, literate or illiterate—we all seek happiness. In fact, if someone were to say that he or she does not want to be happy but is content to be sad, miserable, or depressed, we would think of such a person as not being normal. Wanting to be happy, therefore, is a normal part of human life.

But there is a problem. How can one be happy? What contributes to life’s happiness? Can one be happy by what one can attain—education, a good job, a beautiful house, wealth, a loving family? Encourage your class members to discuss this question.

**STEP 2—Explore!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

The Bible has much to say about happiness. The Bible is God’s Word on how humans can live happily on earth and on how they can receive the happiness of life eternal. As you explore biblical principles of happiness, encourage class members to participate by reading the texts, asking questions, or making helpful comments.

**Bible Commentary**

I. Happiness and God as Our Creator

We are not our own, but God’s. We belong to God by creation (Gen. 1:26, 27) and by redemption (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). A sense of God’s ownership of us is perhaps the first step we need to take to be stripped of any self-delusion that we can find our own happiness. The Bible begins with God’s creating the world and ends with His restoring it. In between
The Family Foundation: Part 1

The Bible says the world was created by the word of God and that He created humankind in His own image (Gen. 1:26, 27). He designed man and woman, He blessed the first marriage, and He made marriage the foundation of the family. And, as we all know so well, a strong, stable family is a crucial component in creating happy lives. As the psalmist says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain” (Ps. 127:1, NIV). In the family we can experience love and happiness. It is for this reason that the Word clearly says, “‘Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate’” (Matt. 19:6, NIV). The Lord desires His children to understand that if they marry, they have made a covenant to be faithful to each other for as long as they live. The Word also explains how this marriage relationship can be strengthened: marry only another believer (2 Cor. 6:14-16), be completely loyal to each other (Heb. 13:4), and express love and appreciation for each other (Song of Sol. 7:1-9). The family that abides by the Word of God will experience the joy of His presence as they follow His commandments.

What principles for a strong family can be found in the following texts?

Rom. 12:1

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Rom. 14:7

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

1 Cor. 3:16, 17

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

1 Cor. 6:19, 20

____________________________________________________________________

How can you apply the principles stated in the above texts and strengthen your own family relationships? Meanwhile, what can you do to help heal the wounds from past family relationships that have gone sour?
is the story of life, its struggles, its temptations, and its possibility of victory when it falls in line with God’s expectations. Casting ourselves upon God as the One who saves us through Jesus opens the possibility of happiness.

**Consider Matthew 11:28:** How does the biblical use of “eternal life” and “rest” have a bearing on human happiness?

**Right relationships.** The biblical concept of happiness demands that through Christ we be in right relationship with God (Rom. 5:1, 2) and with each other (Eph. 2:14-16). Hence the psalmist’s joyful declaration, “What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record” (Ps. 32:1, 2, TLB).

**Consider Philippians 1:18-21:** What is the basis of Paul’s joy and happiness even in adverse circumstances?

**Neighbors.** The command to love our neighbor is closely knit with the command to love our God (Matt. 22:37-39). Loving God and humans are two sides of the same redemptive coin that ensures our joy in Christ. Take away one, and we destroy our basis of Christian happiness.

### II. Happiness and Love

“The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

**Love begins with God and embraces our fellow humans.** The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), and the description of the final judgment (Matt. 25:31-46) show that Christian existence and happiness are inseparably tied to our unconditional love for God and our fellow humans.

**Consider Luke 10:25-28:** Why did Jesus say that loving God and
The Family Foundation: Part 2

The family is the foundation of everything human; destroy or even weaken that foundation, and so much else crumbles with it. How crucial, as Christians, that we do everything we can to protect the sanctity of our homes (and “home” includes everything from living by ourselves to being part of a large family).

Go back over the Ten Commandments. How many of those commandments are directly related to family concerns, and how are they related? Why would families be stronger and more secure if all these commands were followed?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

A crucial aspect of family life deals with responsibility. The Bible says that each person—husband, wife, or child—must bear responsibility for the choices they make (2 Cor. 5:10). If each individual knows and accepts his or her responsibility as spelled out by the Word, the family ties will be greatly strengthened. The Word gives guidelines about the responsibility of each individual. The Word says that Abraham commanded “his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19, NIV). To parents, the Word says, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6, NIV). The Word also admonishes parents to avoid treating their children in a way that will cause them to become discouraged (Col. 3:21). To the children, the Word says, “‘Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you’” (Exod. 20:12, NIV), and “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Eph. 6:1, NIV). To the husbands, the Word says, “love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25, NIV), and to the wives, “Submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body” (vss. 22, 23, NIV).

What are your own responsibilities in regard to your family? How well are you meeting those responsibilities? Are you doing anything that can damage the happiness and sanctity of your family? Which areas in your family relationships need improvement?
our fellow humans is at the core of “eternal life” and leads to a life of happiness? How does God show His love toward us? How does He expect us to show our love toward Him?

**Consider 1 John 5:16-19:** Can we love God and at the same time not love our fellow humans? Failure to love exposes a lack of confidence in ourselves, as well as reveals a life of fear and falsehood.

**Family.** By two pre-Fall institutions, God revealed two principles that contribute to human happiness. The Sabbath shows the need for rest and worship (Gen. 2:1-3). Marriage and family (Gen. 2:18-25) foster happiness between individuals based on mutual love, respect, stewardship, and dignity. Home is not a human institution where anything is permissible. It is a divine altar before which the entire family bows in worship to the Creator and in affirmation of love and service for each other. That altar is the sacred refuge where every family member can find true happiness.

**Consider Ephesians 5:22–6:4:** You may have this passage read by various class members. As they read, note the great principles that mark a happy Christian home.

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

**Thought Questions:**
Job lived a righteous life (Job 1:1). He loved God and his family (Job 1:8) and had a confident hope in Christ’s second coming (Job 19:25-27). Yet his life was filled with sorrow. How do you explain why good people suffer and bad people prosper? Is it a matter of definition or a testing of one’s resolution?

**Application Question:**
Joy. When we are of service to others and to God, we experience Christian happiness. Read John 5:11-13 and note how Jesus links God, others, and us
“Not As the World Giveth”

As we’ve said all week, God loves us and wants us to be happy. At the same time, we must remember that we are in a world of sin, of death, of suffering, a world in the midst of a war between good and evil. And as in all wars, there are casualties. In fact, we all have suffered in this war, one way or another. Thus, despite the many promises that we have in the Bible, promises that offer us much comfort and hope, we all are destined to suffer in this life.

Think about the lives of Abraham, David, Jesus, and Paul. Would you characterize them as “happy”? Defend your answer.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

One of the crucial things to consider is how we understand happiness. Jesus Himself gives a key when He said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). In other words, we have to realize that worldly ideas of peace or even happiness aren’t the same as biblical ideas. Worldly happiness can be based on fleeting and temporal things, things that in their time and place can be good. But sooner or later all these things vanish, and to build our hope and happiness on them is to build on sand. For the Christian, happiness has to be based on something deeper than the fleeting and uncertain joys of this life. That we can enjoy these things, and derive some pleasure and happiness from them, is important; but we must keep our hope based “where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matt. 6:20).

Read Luke 10:20, John 14:27, Philippians 3:7-11, 4:6-13, and 1 Peter 4:12-14. What principles are found in these texts that can help us better understand what it means to be “happy” in this life, even amid inevitable suffering and sorrow? Also, as you read them, ask yourself, “How well am I applying these principles to my own life?”

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
in that order and how He defines Christian joy within that context. Under what circumstances might we miss out on this great principle?

**Witnessing**

Earlier, it was stated that true happiness is inseparably tied to our unconditional love for God and our fellow humans. Discuss how such love for others is expressed through acts of service (*Matt 25:31-40*) and how these acts of service are effective witnessing tools.

**STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

How can your class members apply the principles of this lesson to their daily living?

1. A short temper is part of your daily struggle. Because of it, you get angry every now and then, and the end result is you are unhappy. What biblical promise can you claim to overcome your anger?

2. You are unhappy because you cannot meet the economic needs of your family. What promises does the Bible have for you? “Let not your heart be troubled” said Jesus in His antidote to despair and grief (*John 14:1-3*). Jot down the comforting points Jesus conveys and imagine friends and situations in which these principles will bring the needed help.

3. What lessons can we learn from the following children’s chorus:

   “Happiness is to know the Savior,
   Living a life within His favor
   Having a change in my behavior
   Happiness is the Lord.”

“This feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross of Calvary. The sense of sinfulness has poisoned the springs of life and true happiness. Now Jesus says, ‘Lay it all on Me; I will take your sin, I will give you peace. Destroy no longer your self-respect, for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are Mine, your weakened will I will strengthen; your remorse for sin, I will remove.’ Then turn your grateful heart, trembling with uncertainty, and lay hold upon the hope set before you. God accepts your broken contrite heart. He offers you free pardon. He offers to adopt you into His family with His grace to help your weakness, and the dear Jesus will lead you on step by step, if you will only put your hand in His and let Him guide you.”—Ellen G. White, This Day With God, p. 63.

“The children of God may rejoice in all things and at all times. When troubles and difficulties come, believing in the wise providences of God, you may rejoice. You need not wait for a happy flight of feeling, but by faith you may lay hold of the promises, and lift up a hymn of thanksgiving to God. When Satan tempts you, breathe not a word of doubt or darkness.”—Ellen G. White, The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Feb. 11, 1890.

Discussion Questions:

1. As a class, talk about this whole idea of happiness. What are your definitions of happiness? Should we expect to be happy all the time? Is there something wrong with our walk with the Lord if we don’t feel happy? How can happiness be used as a ploy by Satan to deceive us? At the same time, how can God use unhappiness as a means of reaching people?

2. What do you say to a Christian who admits that he or she is not happy? What counsel would you give that person?

3. As a class, discuss this thought: Can a person in the Lord be happy even while suffering for Christ’s sake?

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

Key Thought: Scripture provides us with a lot of wisdom for our daily lives.

As we’ve been studying, though the Bible deals with grand themes of universal importance, such as the great controversy, the fall of Lucifer, and the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, it’s also a book of practical wisdom. In it, we are given guidance for daily life. Though the Bible might not be specific (how could it?), the Lord through His Word has given us wonderful principles that—if followed and obeyed—will make a great difference in how we live, because it will impact the choices we make.

How important that when confronted with choices—whether about family relationships, social relationships, work, money, or leadership responsibilities—we have divine guidance. And why not? The God who knows when a sparrow falls (Matt. 10:29) obviously cares about us and wants what’s best for us; thus, we can be sure that if we are open to His leading, if we are willing to open His Word with reverence, submission, and faith, He will guide us.

This week we’ll look more at the wisdom God shares with us through His Word.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 16.
The Source of Wisdom

Everyone, every day, is confronted with choices, with decisions that must be made. As we all know, wrong choices are made every day too. Often selfishness is at the core of these choices, because—as fallen beings—we are, above all, selfish beings. How often, too, our wrong choices bring pain and suffering upon ourselves and others.

**Think** back about some wrong choices you have made and their dreadful consequences, not to berate yourself (there is forgiveness and healing at the Cross!) but simply to enforce the point that wrong decisions can be costly.

The good news is that God has given us His Word as a light and guide for us sinful, selfish beings (Ps. 119:105). In the Bible we can find principles that can give us the wisdom we need to make the right decisions, particularly on moral issues.

**Read** Psalms 19:7-14, 119:98-105, Proverbs 3:13-16, and John 17:17. What promises and principles are found in these texts that can help us correctly make important moral decisions?

It’s one thing to read about biblical principles; it’s wholly another to follow them. As the psalmist said: “And in keeping of them there is great reward” (Ps. 19:11). The wisdom found in the Bible is useless unless applied. There are a lot of people out there who, though knowing the biblical principles, act contrary to them anyway. As Christians not only do we need to know what the Bible says; we need to obey what it says. Only then can we truly have the wisdom available to us through God’s Word. A wise person isn’t someone who simply has head knowledge or who can recite text after text; a wise person is someone who acts upon the truths given to us through Scripture.

**What important decisions are you facing?** Have you consulted the Scriptures as you face these decisions? Think through carefully the consequences of your choices. **What Bible promises can you claim as you seek to make the right decision regarding your choices?**
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: 2 Timothy 3:15

Teach the Class to:
- **Know:** Bible principles can be applied to everyday living.
- **Feel:** The need to apply biblical guidelines to each aspect of life.
- **Do:** Share with others the importance of applying God’s Word to personal living.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Wisdom of the Bible (Deut. 4:6)
- A Biblical principles give wisdom for making good moral decisions.
- B The wisdom found in the Bible must be applied in order to be useful.

II. To the Glory of God (Prov. 30:8, 9)
- A The Bible gives guidelines for social interactions.
- B The Bible gives principles that will enable us to be more effective witnesses.

III. Saved to Serve (Rom. 12:8)
- A A leader should be humble in dealing with those under his authority.
- B Christ, our Leader, came to serve.

Summary: The Bible contains instructions that can be applied to personal living. We show wisdom in applying biblical principles on a daily basis.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

The Christian walk is a commitment that never ends, and without fulfilling that commitment, the Christian has nothing but failure. Lead your class members to understand that they are not alone in their walk. There is help, and this help is in the Bible.
Social Wisdom

As humans we have our private lives, the lives we live at home behind closed doors; at the same time, we are also social creatures, living in a society with other people who do not share with us our privacy and intimacy.

Indeed, we are not only private persons but public citizens. Here, too, we can find wisdom in God’s Word on how we can best live in our various communities.

In an earlier lesson, we looked at how obedience to the Ten Commandments could impact our family relationships. Read them again (Exod. 20:1-17) and ask yourself how following these principles will contribute to better social relationships, as well.

It has been estimated that throughout the centuries humanity has enacted more than thirty-two million laws, all in an effort to regulate human conduct. Often these laws are changed and abrogated in order to be kept up to date. Not so with the Ten Commandments; the principles behind them are unchanging and eternal, principles that can guide us in our private and public lives.

The Bible gives us wisdom regarding how we can best live as citizens within the larger community. Scripture provides us with more principles that, if followed, can make us better citizens and better witnesses for the Lord in the public arena.

What wisdom do you find in Jeremiah 29:7; Romans 12:17, 18; 13:1-4; and 1 Peter 2:13, 14, 17, that will help us better function in society? What other texts can you think of? As you read these verses, ask yourself: How am I best able to apply these words to the particular society in which I live?
“Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” (Eph. 4:1, NKJV). The Christian walk is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is a privilege given to no one except to those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. It is a responsibility because it demands everything. Until we die or we see the Lord return, we are to walk in such a way that Jesus will not be ashamed of us.

Where do we find the strength needed and the promise to press on? This week’s lesson is a call to motivate your class members to accept the Word of God as the psalmist did: as “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105, NKJV).

STEP 2—Explore!

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

How does the Bible provide guidance and wisdom in our daily walk? Our walk encompasses worship, family, workplace, spiritual growth, possessions, etc. Explore what the Bible says about the mundane as well as the spiritual areas of life.

Bible Commentary

The Bible provides much counsel for the Christian’s daily walk. Out of their own experience and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the biblical writers have provided us with words of wisdom that can carry us through the struggles of each day. In the Bible, we can explore the Christian walk in terms of its spiritual foundations and its demands on our daily choices.

I. The Christian Walk: Its Spiritual Foundations
A. Ephesians 5 provides a summary of the spiritual foundations of the Christian walk. Paul has already described how Christians are saved from sin, how they are brought into one redeemed community. But being saved in Christ must be reflected in our walk with Christ. Paul provides three duties of this walk.

CONTINUED
Wisdom in the Workplace

Scripture acknowledges the reality and need of human work. Adam and Eve, as soon as they were created, were asked to dress and keep the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). Even after the devastation of sin (Gen. 3:17-19), work was designed to be a blessing for humanity (Eccles. 3:22). Furthermore, the Bible recorded the teaching of Paul, who said that if a man refused to work, he had no right to eat (2 Thess. 3:10). Jesus was no less than 30 years of age when He emerged into public life (Luke 3:23), and the Bible says that people knew Him as a carpenter (Mark 6:3).

We know that obeying God’s will is related to obeying His written Word. When we obey God’s Word, we are obeying His will. But where the Bible reflects His general will, His will for our lives is specific. Though the Lord presents general principles on how to live, we can use those principles to guide us in the more specific areas of our lives, such as in our work.

Inasmuch as the Bible speaks about the need for humans to work, and that working is a major activity of human beings, it’s no surprise that the Bible gives us wisdom regarding work.

What principles found in the following texts can apply to our work situation?

Eccles. 9:10

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Matt. 25:14-30

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Gal. 6:4

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Col. 3:23, 24

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

The Bible shows some specific attitudes and characteristics of a good worker, which includes good use of time (Matt. 25:14-28), diligence (Prov. 12:24), integrity, and respect for authority (Eph. 6:5, 6). Most important, we should be honest in all our dealings, either as an employee or as an employer (Prov. 11:1).

What areas do you struggle with the most in your job, at least as far as following biblical principles? What’s the reason for your struggles? What practical choices can you make to better follow biblical principles regarding work?
B. *Walk in love* (Eph. 5:2). The Bible is a love story, the love God has for us and the love He wants us to have for Him and our fellow humans. We are to love as Christ loved us.

**Consider This:** Christ’s love is selfless (*Rom. 5:8*), sacrificial (*Eph. 5:2*), clean and holy (*Eph. 5:2-7*). What other characteristics of Christ’s love can you think of? How can you reflect these characteristics in your life?

C. *Walk in light* (Eph. 5:8-14). The gospel is essentially a movement from the darkness of sin to the light of salvation, from the darkness of alienation to the light of Christian fellowship.

**Consider Ephesians 5:9-14:** Make two columns. In one, list how Paul defines walking in the light; in the other, list how he defines walking in darkness. What is meant by the fruit of the Spirit and the works of darkness?

II. The Christian Walk: Its Daily Choices

The Christian walk is a matter of daily choices. Hence the psalmist prayed, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (*Ps. 90:12, NKJV*). In the Scriptures we find God’s unerring guidance as to what we should do. It is God’s will that our choices follow His will for our lives. But how do we find His will for us in particular situations, such as: Whom should I marry? Should I get into this business? Should I choose that career? First, we can find from the Scriptures whether what we choose will be acceptable to the provisions God made for us in His Word. Second, we can seek the Lord’s will through an active prayer life. Take your request earnestly before God and await His guidance. The study of God’s Word combined with earnest prayer is a potent source of power for both choosing and enabling our daily walk.

**Consider Jesus’ struggle with Satan in the wilderness.** What helped Him overcome the devil? What prepared Him for the tasks ahead of Him? *Reflect on Matthew 4:1-11.*
The Bible and Wealth

“‘Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, “Who is the Lord?” Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God’” (Prov. 30:8, 9, NIV).

Read the above text. What wisdom is found here that can help us all deal with the topic of money and wealth?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Time and again we read in the Bible about how dangerous wealth can be to the spiritual well-being of the followers of the Lord. In His divine foresight the Lord saw the coming apostasy of ancient Israel, saying, “and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat” (Deut. 31:20; see also Deut. 32:15), and in that state they will turn away from Him and serve other gods. At the same time, the Bible talks about the slothfulness and laziness that can lead to poverty, which can in its own way lead to sin and ruin. Both pitfalls need to be avoided.

Read Matthew 13:22, 16:26, 19:24, and 1 Timothy 6:10. What do these texts say about the potential dangers of wealth?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Money can do strange things to people. Unlike food, water, or rest, no matter how much money people make, it never seems enough. Sometimes, in fact, the richer people are, the greedier they become. Scripture, however, gives us principles that can help us better understand how we should relate to money and the gathering of wealth. In our desire for money, how crucial that we remember that in the end, the only treasure that lasts is the “treasure in heaven” (Mark 10:21).

What do you think the Bible means when it talks about “treasure in heaven”? What is this treasure in heaven, how do we get it, and how can focusing on it help protect us from the pitfalls of seeking too much treasure here on earth?
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

STEP 3—Practice!

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, How can I practice the information I just learned?

Thought Questions:
Jesus grew up in Nazareth in an environment hardly conducive for upright living (John 1:46). What enabled Him to make right choices so that He never wavered from God’s will? What role did God’s Word play in His life? (See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.)

Application Questions:
Have three class members read the following texts: Psalm 37:11; 119:11; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

1 Encourage as many members as possible to narrate their personal experience as to how they have found these passages helpful in their daily experience.

2 Ask members to apply principles found in these verses in the following situations: (A) John is an accountant. It’s time to produce the annual statement. The company boss puts pressure on him to adjust the figures to show a larger profit than what the company has made. How can these texts help him? (B) Jill is an attractive person, a faithful Christian, and a loyal wife and mother. She is now middle-aged. The children have gone to boarding schools, and her husband travels a great deal. One day she is tempted to compromise her morality. How can the Bible and prayer help her?

3 Think on this: “The only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God. . . . Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God’s command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 121.
Wise Leadership

Let’s face it: In this world, as it exists now, there will always be a place and a role for leaders of one kind or another.

Unfortunately, oftentimes people who rise to the level of leadership will seize the opportunity to serve themselves without thinking of the people they are leading. The Bible gives examples of unselfish and successful leaders such as Moses, as well as dangerous and immoral ones, such as King Herod.

Read Matthew 20:25-27. What important principle about leadership comes from these verses?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Look at Matthew 20:28. How did Jesus manifest this principle of a leader serving others in His own life? What can we take from His example for ourselves?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

According to Robert Greenleaf, a servant-leader is one who is a servant first. “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”—The Power of Servant Leadership (San Francisco: Berrett-Kochler Publishers, Inc., 1998), p. 4.

If all leaders in the past two thousand years had followed the leadership style of Jesus, how different human history would have been!

Of course, leaders who are willing to serve are few and far between. But as Christians, we should be in the forefront of showing just how it can be done.

Are you in any kind of leadership role at all? If so, how well are you reflecting the principle about leadership revealed here today? How much selfishness and desire for power motivates you, in contrast to the desire to minister and serve?
Witnessing

**Consider Jesus’ prayer in John 17:17-19:** “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:17-19, NKJV). How are holy living, the Bible as truth, and witnessing for Jesus linked together? Can you be a witness if one of these elements is missing? If not, why not?

**STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

The Bible provides God’s wisdom and guidance to help us daily walk in His way. Encourage your class members to share how the Bible has guided them in the following situations:

A. choosing a life partner
B. deciding on the purchase or building of a house
C. relating to a difficult neighbor or church member
D. writing a will or deciding on how to dispose of property
E. other similar situations

“The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all.”—Ellen G. White, Education, p. 123.

“Those who study the Bible, counsel with God, and rely upon Christ will be enabled to act wisely at all times and under all circumstances. Good principles will be illustrated in actual life.”—Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 43.

“The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and a perfect adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart, that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while it enables the humble and uncultured to discern the way of salvation. And yet these simply stated truths lay hold upon subjects so elevated, so far-reaching, so infinitely beyond the power of human comprehension, that we can accept them only because God has declared them.”—Page 700.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can faithfulness in paying tithes and giving offerings help protect us against the dangers of greed?

2. How seriously do we in our daily lives go to the Bible for wisdom in making decisions? As a class, talk about how, in a practical way, we can do that. Pick a few examples, such as Should I marry this person? Should I take this job? Should I move? How can you find in the Bible answers to these specific questions? Or can you?

3. Discuss the question of leadership, and how easy it is for leaders to become selfish and use their power for selfish instead of selfless reasons. What have been some class members’ experiences in this area? What have you learned that could be of benefit to others?
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt 22:37, 38; Gal. 2:20; 5:14; Eph. 4:14, 15; Heb. 4:2; 5:12-14.

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

Key Thought: The Bible plays a pivotal role in our spiritual growth.

The Bible makes it clear that our walk with Christ doesn’t end on the day of conversion. On the contrary, when people give themselves totally to Christ, they begin a whole new life, a whole new existence (Rom. 6:4). It’s not that a new Christian has to work to reach salvation, as in other faiths; instead, because he or she already has salvation, already stands perfect and accepted in God, the Christian begins to live a life that reveals and reflects that salvation. Sure, we are saved by faith, but what kind of faith? A faith that is expressed in a life that reveals a commitment to Jesus Christ.

Central to our new life in Christ is spiritual growth. As Christians, we can’t remain static: We are always in the process of change as we should better reflect the image of Jesus Christ. And crucial to the whole growth process is the Word of God, which shows us how and why we must “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18, NIV).

This week we’ll study about what it means to grow in Christ, and we’ll see the pivotal role the Word of God must play in that growth.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 23.
The Need for Growth

When Nicodemus went to see Jesus by night and asked Him how to have eternal life, Jesus immediately answered by saying that we need to be born again (John 3:3, 5). This condition indicates that a Christian life begins as a baby. When the beginning of Christian life is portrayed as a new birth, and the new believer is considered a babe in Christ, it’s important for every Christian to be nurtured and have the opportunity to grow into spiritual maturity.

Peter appealed to the believers to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18, NIV). Earlier, after using a new-birth illustration (1 Pet. 1:23), Peter urged those to whom he was writing to desire the “milk of the word” by which they would grow (1 Pet. 2:1-3).

Read Hebrews 5:12-14. What point is Paul making here about spiritual growth? How does he define spiritual immaturity, and how does he contrast it to spiritual maturity?

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul shows that accepting Jesus isn’t the end of our spiritual walk but the beginning. There is a need for growth. “Perfecting holiness” means to bring it to completion. He also in Ephesians admonished followers of Christ to lead a life worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1).

It’s clear from the Word that though we are saved by faith, though our acceptance with God is based on the righteousness of Jesus credited to us by grace through faith alone, the Christian life is one of spiritual and moral progress. We are to change, and for the better; we are to reflect more and more the character of God (see 1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Look over your life as a Christian, regardless of how long you have been one. In what areas have you seen much spiritual growth and maturity? What are the weaker areas? Why, as you seek to advance in the Christian life, must your hope of salvation rest not on yourself but only on Jesus and the merits of His righteousness?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: 2 Peter 3:18

Teach the Class to:

Know: That spiritual growth is an ongoing process.
Feel: The need to grow in faith daily.
Do: Exercise faith and seek opportunities for spiritual growth.

Lesson Outline:

I. New Life in Christ (Ps. 51:10)
   A A life surrendered to Christ becomes transformed to reveal His character. How does the Bible describe His character?
   B How is spiritual growth defined by Galatians 5:16-26? Discuss how each fruit of the Spirit can assist a person in specific instances.

II. Spiritual Growth Produces Faith (Rom. 10:17)
   A Why is it crucial to seek opportunities for spiritual growth?
   B How does remembering ways in which Christ has led us in the past help us to live by faith today?

III. True Love Comes Through the Indwelling Spirit (Zech. 4:6)
   A What is the only way possible to love even those who do not love us in return?
   B Define true love. How is this a reflection of God’s character?
   C At what point does the Holy Spirit come into the heart of a new believer?

Summary: The indwelling Spirit of God brings about a change in the life of a new believer. The new Christian’s faith is strengthened by nurture and spiritual growth.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?
Growing in Faith

In Hebrews 3 and 4 Paul talked about the children of Israel, who, after escaping from Egypt, had wandered in the desert for 40 years. What’s most fascinating, however, is what Paul said about them in Hebrews 4:2.

**Read** Hebrews 4:2. What was the problem with the children of Israel? What crucial element was lacking?

What makes the answer so troubling is the fact that this generation had so much evidence of God’s leading. Go back over the story of the Exodus and of what happened to them in the desert. God performed miracle after miracle, everything from the parting of the Red Sea to the daily provision of the manna. *And yet, they still lacked faith!*

**What** lessons about faith, about what it means to have faith, can we draw from this account? *See Heb. 3:12.*

So often people think that if only they had more signs, more evidence, their faith in God would grow. But it doesn’t work that way. Faith, or the lack thereof, isn’t an intellectual matter, or even a matter of signs and wonders. It’s a matter of the heart. We can grow in faith only to the degree that we surrender our hearts and souls to the Lord; we can grow in faith only through exercising our faith; we can grow in faith only to the degree that we study God’s Word with a heart open to learn from Him.

God is the Source of faith, but we must put our trust in Him. Faith grows through study of the Word (*Rom. 10:17*), but we must take the time and put forth the effort for that study. The more we study, with a heart and mind surrendered to the Lord, the more we know about our loving God. And the more we know Him, the more we love and trust Him. The more we can trust Him, the more we do whatever He wants us to do. Study of the Word of God is absolutely essential if we want our faith to grow.

A number of years ago a scholar left Christianity. He told someone later, “Had I kept up reading my Bible, studying it, and applying it to my life, I probably wouldn’t have lost my faith.” How precious is your faith to you? You can know the answer by this simple question: How carefully do you guard and nurture that faith?
Christian growth is one of the great themes of the Bible. Lead the students to discover why growth is so important and what the Bible offers to help us grow.

A seed germinates, and the appearance of those first two leaves makes the gardener happy. A baby is born, and with its first cries, the mother forgets her pain and joins the rest of the family in celebration. But imagine: Those two leaves wither away; a year later the baby cannot take its first step.

Without growth, life has no meaning or purpose. This is so in spiritual life as well. What, then, is spiritual growth, and what does the Bible says about it?

STEP 2—Explore!

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question: What do I need to know from God’s Word?

“Desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2, NKJV). This and other scriptural passages indicate the need for spiritual growth and the role the Bible plays in that growth. Lead the class members to explore the nature of both.

Bible Commentary

To grow is a necessary part of both physical and spiritual life. Without growth life loses its meaning. What does the Bible say about growth, and what are the hallmarks of spiritual growth?

I. Spiritual Life and Growth: The Biblical Concept
The Christian life begins with the death of Christ, which frees us from the dominion of Satan (Col. 1:13, 14), the condemnation of sin (Rom. 8:1), and the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23). Christ’s death makes our new birth possible (Rom. 6:1-4). The uniqueness of God’s gift was not that He gave His Son but that He gave Him to die for our sins (John 3:16). Without the Cross there could be no forgiveness for sins, no eternal life, and no new birth.

CONTINUED
Growing in Love

The Scriptures say that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love our neighbors as ourselves. We are to love our enemies and our fellow believers. These are God’s commands, and they aren’t always easy to follow, because we are by nature selfish sinners who love self above and beyond everything else. If you love someone, usually it is someone who loves you back. But the Scriptures say that’s not enough (Matt. 5:44). It really takes growing in the Lord to be able to love, not only those who don’t love you, but those who are your enemies.

**Read** 1 Corinthians 13:8. What point is Paul making? Why is that point so important? What does that point tell us about the importance and power of love? See also Matt. 22:37, 38; Gal. 5:14; 1 John 3:14; 4:7, 8, 16.

---

The word *love* is used so often that it is easy to lose sight of what it actually means. Biblical examples show that love is something we do rather than simply an emotion. Scripture speaks about love as attitude and actions ([1 Corinthians 13](#)). We know that love will motivate us to action. The Bible clearly gives an example of what true love really is: “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” ([1 John 3:16](#), NIV). To love at this level, we need to get beyond our own rights, our own interests, and our own hurts; and we can do this only through the power of God, only as we grow in Him and His grace.

How often have you ever been wrong, wrong about theology, wrong about doctrine, wrong about the motives of other people? And yet, love never fails; that is, whatever errors and mistakes we make, we can never go wrong when we love others. We might make a million mistakes, but love can never be one, not when we are commanded to love even our enemies. It’s hard to imagine what our witness would be like if all who professed the name of Christ loved the way Christ loved.

**Look at your recent actions toward the people you frequently come in contact with. What do your actions say about how well you love these people, if at all? What do these actions say to you about your own need to learn more about how to love as God would have us love?**
New birth owes nothing to the will or the power of the human being. We are born again simply by accepting what God has made possible through Christ and letting the Holy Spirit transform the old self into a new creation (Col. 3:9, 10). “The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

Christian growth is dying daily to sin and living for righteousness (Gal. 5:19-23). Paul lays down the basic principle: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV). We are a new creation because self is no longer our master, but Christ. We are a new creation because we now reject old ways of thought, action, and relationship and accept God’s will and way; it is also new in that there emerges a reconciled and redeemed relationship, freed from sin in order to grow in righteousness (Rom. 8:1-16), and reflect Jesus “from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:17, 18).

**Consider the role of the Bible in each of the following:**
1. Revealing our sins and convicting us that we are sinners: Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 John 3:4.
3. Pointing out the way to grow and mature: Ps. 119:11; John 14:26; Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 5:12, 13.

**II. Biblical Hallmarks of Spiritual Growth**

- **Growth in faith** (Ps. 25:4). Faith has three parts: (1) believing in a set of doctrines, (2) believing in Jesus as our Savior, and (3) following His will and way. The first is intellectual, and the other two are life-changing, involving surrender to Jesus (Phil. 4:13). All three parts of faith are important for spiritual growth. Although without the second and third, the first is empty.

- **Growth in love** (1 John 3:14; 4:7, 8, 16). The love factor in Christian growth is unique to the gospel. Jesus called it the new commandment (John 13:34). However, the newness does not refer to love but to the object of love. People love, but they love the lovable. Jesus, however, introduced a new factor: “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12, NKJV). Jesus’ love is universal, sacrificial, and complete. He loves the undeserving. That is how our love should then be. To love others that way is to grow spiritually.
Growing in Christ

Read Ephesians 4:14, 15. How does Paul here describe growth in Christ?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Considering that the Bible is our final authority on all doctrine, how crucial then that studying the Word is for us to grow in Christ. Only through knowing the Word and what it teaches can we be protected from the “sleight of men.”

Yet, it’s not enough just to read the Bible. It needs to be obeyed. We need to follow what it says; otherwise, it will effect no change in us. By obeying, by seeking to be like Christ in our words, in acts, and even in our minds, we will grow in Him.

Paul wrote to the Romans that we are called to be like Christ (Rom. 8:28, 29), and that should be in every way possible, especially in our thoughts (2 Cor. 10:5), because if our thoughts are right, our words and actions and attitudes will be too. By keeping our hearts pure, our words and actions will be, as well.

Read Galatians 2:20. What crucial element about how we can grow in the Lord is revealed here?

____________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

We can never grow in Christ, into Christian maturity, without a surrender of self. Paul talked about his being crucified so that Jesus could live in him instead. We are no longer to follow the whims and the passions of the flesh but, rather, the commands of God. Our decisions are no longer based only on just what we think; rather, Christ is now Lord of our lives, and our actions should reveal His Lordship in us. This surrender is a day-by-day process, something that must be part of our walk with Christ. The moment we start letting self rule, sin lies at the door, and sin leads to death.

What are some of your own experiences with surrendering to Christ? What happens? How do you feel? What are the results? What have you learned that you could share with others who are seeking the same experience? Share your answers with your class on Sabbath.
• **Growth in the study of God’s Word** (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Food is essential for physical growth. In spiritual growth, our nutrition is found in the study of God’s Word and in prayer. Jesus showed the importance of God’s Word in spiritual growth by His reliance on it when He defeated Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4).

• **Growth in prayer** (Eph. 6:18). If God’s Word is the bread that nourishes our soul, prayer is the breath that keeps our soul alive. Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane gave Him strength to walk the way of the Cross and prepared Him for the victory of Easter morning. Without prayer, “you cannot maintain a Christian walk. It elevates, strengthens, and ennobles; it is the soul talking with God.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 313.

• **Growth in worship, witness, and service** (Acts 2:42-47; 5:41, 42; 6:7). Christian growth and maturity are not possible without active participation in worship and fellowship, in witness and service. The Christian life is lived neither in a vacuum nor a refrigerator, but in a dynamic relationship whereby a believer is moved from worship to fellowship and service until the entire community sees Jesus reflected in the believer’s life (Heb. 10:24, 25; Phil. 3:12-14).

**Consider This:** Ask your class members to add other marks of spiritual growth that the Bible points to.

**STEP 3—Practice!**

*Just for Teachers:* This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question: How can I practice the information I just learned?

**Thought Questions:**

1. The Bible has much to say about spiritual growth. Probe your class members as to how they might put these teachings into practice.

2. Ask class members what the following quotation means to them. Have them discuss the texts in the quote by commenting on how the texts apply to their lives.

   “The change of heart by which we become children of God is in the Bible..."
Growing in the Spirit

Jesus told Nicodemus that “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” *(John 3:5, NIV).* Born of water means baptism, and born of the Spirit is conversion, which means that the Holy Spirit comes within us at the moment of spiritual birth. As a baby needs to grow, the newly baptized member needs to grow in the Spirit. “When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” *(John 16:13, NIV).* This means that the Spirit has a very important role to guide every Christian into all truth by reminding us of the things that the Bible says, because the truth is the Word of God *(John 17:17).* The Spirit also has the role of convicting us about our own spiritual condition *(see John 16:8).*

As we grow in Christian living, we need to grow in the Spirit. Growing in the Spirit means that we are more and more sensitive to His leading; we know that He is talking to us because we know the Word of God, and the Spirit will guide us to the Word.

**How** can we grow in the Spirit? Read the texts listed below. What principles needed for spiritual growth are found there?

**Matt. 5:6**

**Gal. 3:11**

**Gal. 5:16**

**2 Tim. 3:15**

**1 Pet. 3:11**

**1 John 1:9**

Jesus in Luke 11:13 makes it clear how readily available the Holy Spirit is for those who want Him. Yet, God never forces Himself upon us. He has shown us who He is and what He has done for us. We, ourselves, in our hearts, have to make the daily choices—choices of faith, obedience, surrender, confession—that will enable us to grow in grace and in the Spirit or that will lead us toward eternal ruin.

Is there anything in your life, such as what you read or watch or do, that could be desensitizing you to the influence of the Holy Spirit? What might those things be? Why not let the Holy Spirit, right now, convict you about what you need to do regarding these things? After all, the longer you wait, the harder it will become even to heed His voice.
spoken of as birth. Again, it is compared to the germination of the good seed sown by the husbandman. In like manner those who are just converted to Christ are, ‘as new-born babes,’ to ‘grow up’ to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. 1 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 4:15. Or like the good seed sown in the field, they are to grow up and bring forth fruit. Isaiah says that they shall ‘be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.’ Isaiah 61:3.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 67.

**Witnessing**

Have one of the members read Matthew 20:25-28. Then have the class briefly discuss how growth is linked to service.

**STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

**Consider This:**

Ask class members what the statement below means in terms of their understanding the connection between spiritual growth and the Bible. You may suggest the following:

1. List Bible texts that support the idea of God’s matchless gift of His Son.
2. What support does the Bible give for breathing God’s grace daily and growing in it?
3. Spiritual growth demands that we die daily to self. List how this became a reality this week.
4. Spiritual growth means we grow in Christ daily. How did this happen yesterday?
5. Review the hallmarks of growth that were discussed in the commentary section. Ask class members to choose one and discuss how they can apply it to their experience.

“In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 68.

“The Author of this spiritual life is unseen, and the exact method by which that life is imparted and sustained, it is beyond the power of human philosophy to explain. Yet the operations of the Spirit are always in harmony with the written word. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world. The natural life is preserved moment by moment by divine power; yet it is not sustained by a direct miracle, but through the use of blessings placed within our reach. So the spiritual life is sustained by the use of those means that Providence has supplied. If the follower of Christ would grow up ‘unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ’ (*Ephesians 4:13*), he must eat of the bread of life and drink of the water of salvation. He must watch and pray and work, in all things giving heed to the instructions of God in His word.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 284, 285.

“The work of educating the mind and manners may be carried forward to perfection. If those who profess the truth do not now improve their privileges and opportunities to grow up to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus, they will be no honor to the cause of truth, no honor to Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 358, 359.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What practical steps can you take to help other church members who are seeking to grow in the Lord and yet feel frustrated at what they deem is a lack of progress? What hope and advice can you offer them?

2. As a class, go over your answers to Wednesday’s final question. What can you learn from each other’s experiences in surrendering to God?

3. What are some of the biggest obstacles we face regarding spiritual growth? What distinctive factors in your common culture work against spiritual growth? What are your defenses against these factors?
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Mic. 6:8, John 3:14-17, 10:10, Rom. 4:21, Eph. 2:8, Phil. 4:7, 2 Pet. 3:9.

Memory Text: “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever” (1 Peter 1:24, 25, NIV).

Key Thought: The relevance of the Bible is for us today.

Many ancient texts are still in existence, everything from the Egyptian Book of the Dead to the Ugaritic legend of Keret to the writings of Aristotle, Epictetus, and Julius Caesar. But none of these command the kind of influence, power, and authority that the Bible has had and still continues to have today.

Yes, the Word of God endures, even in a world of space shuttles, high-definition television, cell phones, and laptops. And that’s because, regardless of the many advances in science and technology, and art and culture, we are still human beings struggling with the same issues that humans have struggled with from the beginning. Issues about life, death, happiness, health, morals, family—these remain essentially unchanged across time. And the Bible’s answers to them remains essentially unchanged, as well.

This week, our final week in this quarter, we’ll look more at why the Word of God endures.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 30.
The Word of God Today

For many people, the Bible has no relevance now. Their reasons, though varied, can be boiled down to (1) the Book is so old; (2) the Book came from a relatively small group of people, the Jews; (3) the world is so different today than in the days that the Book was written that it can’t possibly be relevant anymore.

How would you answer those objections?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

The problem with those arguments can be boiled down to one thing: the premise upon which they are founded. If one believes that the Bible is merely a human book, a book composed only by humans expressing their own cultural ideas, then the argument would be valid.

However, as Christians, we reject that premise. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God; we believe that God, the Creator, has spoken to us through the Bible. We believe that He has revealed His will to all humanity through the Book. That it was written long ago or written by a small group of people or written in a world vastly different from today—all these things make no difference if we believe that God has spoken to us through the Bible.

Below are some texts that address issues found in the Bible. As you read these texts, ask yourself: (1) What issues are being addressed? (2) How relevant are those issues to us today?

Mic. 6:8

John 10:10

John 17:3

Acts 17:31

Phil. 4:7

Think about each of the topics listed above; if we didn’t have the Bible, what answers would we have to these issues? Think how different your life would be were you left without the guidance, hope, and promises offered us in the Bible. Meanwhile, what can you do to help make what the Bible offers you more real for yourself?
I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

Key Text: Deuteronomy 6:1, 2

Teach the Class to:

Know: That the Word of the Lord is applicable in each generation.
Feel: Assured that God’s Word will never fail.
Do: What it takes to remember the promises of God and share them with others.

Lesson Outline:

I. Salvation to All Generations (Ps. 33:11)

A Discuss ways in which God’s Word is still relevant for Christians today.
B Consider the news headlines of the past week. How can the Bible bring inner peace and the knowledge of the truth for the present time despite all the turmoil?
C God does not change. How can that truth make a difference in today’s world?

II. Precious Promises (2 Pet. 1:4)

A God has revealed His promises of salvation through His Word. Which promises mean the most to your class members, and why?
B Which promises can apply to specific areas of life?

III. Enduring Promises (Isa. 40:8)

A Why are all of God’s promises appropriate for all generations?
B What do you think God’s promises will mean to us once we are with Him in heaven?

Summary: God’s Word is from everlasting to everlasting. It will endure through all generations. We can be assured that whatever the Lord has said in His Word, He is also able to accomplish.

Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate!

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the
God’s Everlasting Plan

“But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (Ps. 33:11, NIV).

**What** important principle found in that text helps us understand the relevancy of the Bible today?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

**What** are the purposes of God’s heart? *See John 3:14-17, 1 Tim. 2:4, 2 Pet. 3:9.*

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

The Bible is relevant today because the plans of God are revealed in it; the plan of salvation has been made known to us through the Word, and that salvation is to be for all people in every generation. “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (Prov. 19:21, NIV).

God is an eternal God (Deut. 33:27); He has an eternal kingdom (Dan. 2:44); His will for us as expressed in the Bible has not changed with the passing of time, for He never changes: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8, NIV). “‘You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end’ ” (Heb. 1:12, NIV).

Sure, times change, cultures change, attitudes change, and people change. Change is a fact of life; we see it all around us. But God Himself and His purposes for us remain the same.

Hence, it makes no difference that the Bible was written many centuries ago, or in a different culture; what matters is that God’s love for us, and His desire for our salvation, remains the same, all through the ages.

This, then, is the secret of the Bible: It’s relevant today because the God revealed in its pages is relevant today.

Think about all the changes that take place, either in your own life or in the world around you or both. Look at how much instability there is everywhere. Amid all this, what does it mean to you that the Lord’s love for us and plan for our salvation never changes? What hope and assurance can you draw from this important truth?
learners’ experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, Why is this lesson important to me?

As you study the last lesson on the Word of God, help your class members to focus on the eternal relevance of the Bible to one’s life.

“My conscience is subject to the Word of God.” So said Martin Luther in his defense against accusations that he was preaching heresy and rebelling against the Catholic Church. His teachings were under attack. His life was at peril. But the great reformer found his faith and his future secure in God’s Word. He not only stood firm in preaching the good news of God’s salvation as found in the Bible but translated the Bible for the first time into German and made it available to common people. When people read the Word for themselves, they were amazed at its relevance for their lives. The world would never be the same again.

**Consider This:** Ask your class members, Of all the books written in the world, why is the Bible, whose first book was written some four thousand years ago, still relevant today?

**STEP 2—Explore!**

**Just for Teachers:** This lesson is both a review of what we have studied thus far and a challenge to reaffirm the Bible’s importance in our spiritual lives. Explore with the class members the question, Why is the Bible so enduring?

**Bible Commentary**

Life exists in relationship: parent and child, husband and wife, brother and sister, friend and friend, etc. Relationship is sustained through communication and conversation. How long would a relationship between husband and wife remain fruitful if they didn’t talk or write to each other, and they hardly took time to be in each other’s company?

Likewise, Christian life also demands that we maintain our relationship with God through faithful communication. We speak to God through prayer and praise, singing and worship. God speaks to us
The Eternal Cross

Perhaps the most significant reason the Bible is so relevant today is that it is God’s chosen means of revealing to us the most important truth we can ever know: Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the grave. As long as this great truth is taught to us, what does it matter how old the Bible is or who wrote it or under what circumstances? What matters is that through it God has revealed to us the great truth of salvation through Jesus, a truth that will endure through all eternity, long after this old earth has vanished and a new one created. Thus, as long as the Word of God reveals to us Christ and Him crucified, its relevance for our fallen world will never end.

**Look up the following texts. What messages do they have for us? As you read them, ask yourself, “Were it not for the Bible, where else could I have learned the truths taught here?”**

*Isa. 65:17*

*Matt. 24:30*

*1 Cor. 6:3*

*2 Cor. 5:21*

*Eph. 2:8*

*1 Thess. 4:16*

*1 Tim. 1:15*

*Titus 1:2*

*Heb. 2:14*

*Rev. 20:14*

*Rev. 21:4*

**Going over the texts listed above, write out the scenario presented to us here. Look at what has been revealed to us in the Bible. These are the promises we have been given. Why should this mean so much to each of us? Share your response with your class on Sabbath.**
Learning Cycle CONTINUED

through many ways, but the most immediate way is through the Scriptures. We hear His voice, we receive His counsel, we learn of His plan whenever we read the Bible. “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (Ps. 119:18, NKJV) is a prayer we can all pray.

I. What the Bible Is

Although the Bible’s 66 books were written by some forty men over a period of 16 centuries, it stakes its eternal worth on the basis that it is the revealed Word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” says the apostle (2 Tim. 3:16). The Greek word for “inspiration” literally means “breathed-out”—as if to suggest that the Scriptures are God’s breath, and the Bible has the origin in the mind of God. “The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life.”—Ellen G. White, Education, p. 126.

Consider these passages: Matt. 4:1-11, Rom. 15:4, 2 Pet. 1:19-21. What do these passages say about the divine origin of the Bible?

II. Why the Bible Endures and Remains Relevant

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8, NKJV). Peter agrees with Isaiah in affirming the relevance of Scripture (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Jesus adds, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24:35, NKJV; see also Matt. 5:18). It cannot be otherwise, because the Word is of God; as God is ever relevant and ever needed to make our life complete, so is His Word. Consider what the Bible means to our everyday living.

Without the Bible, our understanding of God would be incomplete and limited. “In the beginning God . . .” (Gen. 1:1). The Bible directs us to God as the ultimate reality, the cause and designer of all life. The Bible shows that His activities have structure, purpose, and order. In saying that “God is love” (1 John 4:8) and that “God so loved the world” (John 3:16), the Bible presents Him as intimate, warm, per-
Unbroken Promises

“The ‘Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses’” (1 Kings 8:56, NIV).

The Word of God exists forever because His promises never fail. Unlike human promises that are frequently broken, God always keeps His.

**Read** Romans 4:21. What hope is found in there for us? How have you experienced the reality of this text?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

**Read** John 16:33. What special promise is here for all of us? How have you experienced the reality of that promise in your own life?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

**Read** Matthew 28:20. How have you experienced the reality of this promise?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

God also has given us His promises for everlasting life (John 3:15), answers to prayer (Matt. 7:7), unlimited blessings (Mark 9:23), removal of obstacles (Luke 17:6), spiritual fullness (John 6:35), salvation (Rom. 1:16), help with temptation (Heb. 2:18), and victory (James 4:7). “It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power. They are leaves from the tree that is ‘for the healing of the nations.’ Rev. 22:2. Received, assimilated, they are to be the strength of the character, the inspiration and sustenance of the life. Nothing else can have such healing power.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 122.

**What promises are you still waiting for to see fulfilled? How can you cling to the Lord in hope and trust in the meantime?**
sonal, and intensely interested in our life and in our salvation. Other religious and philosophic systems may say that God is some distant, impersonal, absolute force or idea or principle. But the Bible presents God as our Creator—One who loves, cares, and saves (John 1:1-3, 14).

**Without the Bible, we would not know who we are.** The Bible tells us that we are created by God in His own image (Gen. 1:26, 27). We are not a cosmic accident or some evolutionary arrangement. Rather, we are God’s “workmanship” (Eph. 2:10). Says the psalmist, “Know that the Lord, He is God, / It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; / We are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (Ps. 100:3, NKJV). Further, the Bible tells us that because we have been enslaved to sin (Rom. 3:23), we are subject to death (Rom. 5:12, 6:23), but that we are not left helpless. God, through His incarnate Son Jesus, has reconciled us to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19), redeemed us from the curse of sin (Rom. 5:8, 9; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:7, 8), made us His sons and daughters (Rom. 8:14), and given us hope for a place in His eternal kingdom (Isa. 65:17, John 14:1-3, Rev. 21:1-4). Thus the Bible provides enduring and satisfying answers to humanity’s persistent questions: Who am I? What am I doing here? Where am I going?

**Without the Bible, we would not know about Jesus.** The Bible is Jesus’ book. He authored it (John 1:1-3, 14; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). He lived by it (Matt. 4:1-11, 5:17), and His life is a fulfillment of its promises (John 5:46, 47; 7:16; 12:49, 50). The gospel of salvation that He brought to this world, the Cross by which He made salvation possible, and the promise of eternal life He offers are known to us only through God’s Word (Gen. 3:15, Isa. 53:4-6, John 20:31, Eph. 1:18-23, Phil. 2:6-8).

Exchanging light for our darkness, strength for our weakness, courage for our faintheartedness, comfort for our sorrows, and hope for our despair, the Bible stands as God’s great guide to human beings.

**Consider This:** The theme of this quarter’s study was “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105, NKJV). Ask your class members to mention other areas of life, especially spiritual life, about which we would be ignorant if it were not for the Bible. Example: the Holy Spirit and its work, our spiritual gifts and responsibilities, etc.
The Bible Endures . . .

Throughout history people have made predictions about the inevitable demise of the Bible, that it would soon fade into obscurity and be seen as nothing but an interesting historical relic of a bygone era, and on and on . . .

How wrong those predictions have been!

Read Matthew 24:35. How, in a sense, did these words of Jesus predict, many centuries ago, that the Bible would be around even to the last days?

Besides all the attempts to destroy the Bible through violence, the enemy of souls has tried to use science, philosophy, and higher criticism to eradicate the influence of the Bible. And yet, today, millions and millions of people believe in the Bible as God’s Word and seek to claim its promises and live by its commands. Should this be a surprise? Of course not! After all, as we have been told: “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa. 40:8).

Meanwhile, according to the United Bible Societies: “At the start of the nineteenth century, Scriptures were available in just 68 languages. Today, Scriptures are available in no less than 2,303 languages, with the complete Bible having been translated into at least 405 languages, and the New Testament into some 1,034. In addition, portions of the Bible have been made available in some 864 languages.” (See www.biblesociety.org.)

Read 1 Peter 1:24, 25. Consider that these words were written about nearly two thousand years ago. What message is here for us, today? How should these words help us trust in the Bible, in its promises and in its warnings?

The Bible endures, now and forever. The question is, What has it done in our lives? The Word can be on our shelves, on our desks, and even in our minds, but unless we allow it into our hearts, what good does it do? Look at your life. What does it say about how you relate to the enduring Word?
**Learning Cycle Continued**

**STEP 3—Practice!**

**Just for Teachers:** This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question: How can I practice the information I just learned?

**Thought Question:**
With your class members, review the story of Jonah. Two times the word of the Lord came to him (Jon. 1:1, 3:1). Both times, the message was the same, but the results were different because Jonah’s response was different. What does this show about the need to obey God’s Word?

**Application Questions:**

1. Jesus charged the religious leaders, “‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God’” (Matt. 22:29, NKJV). Ask your class: How do you relate the power of God and the Word of God? (Refer to Ps. 33:5-9, Rom. 1:16.)

2. The Bible is called the Word of God. Jesus is also known as the Word (John 1:1-3). In what sense can you apply the term *Word* to the Bible and to Jesus? What does this mean to your daily life?

**Witnessing**

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void” (Isa. 55:11, NKJV). Ask the class to compare this promise to the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 and to share how this promise is an encouragement to witnessing.

**STEP 4—Apply!**

**Just for Teachers:** In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?

Encourage your class members to respond to the lessons learned during this quarter. What difference would it make in one’s life?

The Word of God is compared to food (see Deut. 8:3, Jer. 15:16, Matt. 4:4). What are some of the things you need to do to eat the Word of God, digest it, and assimilate it in your system?

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

“The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father’s face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary’s cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe.”—Page 651.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **As a class, go over your responses to Tuesday’s final question.** What can you learn from each other?

2. **As a church family, what areas do you need to apply with more rigor the principles found in the Bible?** How can you as a class help the church realize where it’s falling short and then help it reach a higher standard?

3. **Talk about the question of Bible promises that have yet to be fulfilled, or that look as if they can’t be fulfilled, at least as we would like.** For example: Someone prayed for a sick friend or spouse or child who didn’t recover. How do we help each other grapple with these situations in light of the Word of God and the promises that we have in it?