Contents

1 Revival: Our Great Need—June 29–July 5
2 Prayer: The Heartbeat of Revival—July 6–12
3 The Word: The Foundation of Revival—July 13–19
4 Witness and Service: The Fruit of Revival—July 20–26
5 Obedience: The Fruit of Revival—July 27–August 2
6 Confession and Repentance: The Conditions of Revival—August 3–9
7 Unity: The Bond of Revival—August 10–16
8 Discernment: The Safeguard of Revival—August 17–23
9 Reformation: The Outgrowth of Revival—August 24–30
10 Reformation: The Willingness to Grow and Change—August 31–September 6
11 Reformation: Thinking New Thoughts—September 7–13
12 Reformation: Healing Broken Relationships—September 14–20
13 The Promised Revival: God’s Mission Completed—September 21–27

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

Principal Contributor
Mark Finley

Associate Editor
Soraya Homayouni

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Wendy Marcum

Publication Manager
Lea Alexander Greve

Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Editorial Assistant
Sharon Thomas-Crews

Design
Justinen Creative Group

The teachers edition components were written by the following:
The Lesson in Brief, Lessons 1-13, and The Learning Cycles 1-13: Mark Finley, assistant to
the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Md., 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).
I

n every generation, God’s Spirit strives to bring revival into the hearts of His people. Revival is an ongoing, daily experience. Each of us should identify with an old hymn that says: “Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, / Prone to leave the God I love” (From “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” by Robert Robinson). Deep within, we know these words are true.

Our hearts are, indeed, prone to wander. Our minds drift from the eternal to the mundane. Our thoughts turn so easily from the heavenly to the earthly. Too often, we seem to be in bondage to deeply entrenched habits. At times, our own attitudes and reactions baffle us.

That’s because our natures are fallen (Jer. 17:9) as the result of sin. Our natural tendency is to turn from God’s way to our own (Isa. 53:6). With the apostle Paul we cry out, “O wretched man that I am” (Rom. 7:24), and with David we plead, “Revive me, O LORD, according to your lovingkindness” (Ps. 119:159, NKJV).

Revival is all about a God of lovingkindness seeking to deepen His relationship with us. The initiative in revival is His. His Spirit creates longings within us. His Spirit convicts us of our need. His Spirit reveals Jesus’ goodness and grace.

Throughout history, God’s Spirit has moved mightily in revival. When Israel drifted from God’s plan and purposes, God used the young King Josiah to lead the nation back to Him, and a mighty revival followed. At the dedication of the temple, God said to Solomon: “ ‘If My people who are called by My name will humble
themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land’” (2 Chron. 7:14, NKJV). The longing of God’s heart was for Israel to meet the conditions of revival, experience the power of revival, and reveal the light of His love to the entire world.

When God’s people responded to His appeals for revival, He worked mightily in their behalf. This was true for the New Testament Christian church, the Reformation, and the Advent Movement. It will also be true for God’s end-time people. His Holy Spirit will be poured out in its fullness and the earth will be “illuminated with his glory” (Rev. 18:1, NKJV).

This quarter’s lessons focus on the varied aspects of revival and reformation. Together we will probe such questions as, What are the conditions that God has given for the outpouring of His Spirit? Is God waiting for some magical moment to pour out His Spirit on His last-day church? What does it mean to live a Spirit-filled life? Is there anything we can do to cooperate with God in order to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit now? Where does revival and reformation begin?

Ellen G. White describes the importance of revival in these words: “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”—Selected Messages, book 1, p. 121. Heaven places priority on revival. What could be more important? This quarter, as we study such topics as prayer and revival, the Word and revival, witnessing and revival, a finished work and revival, and other related subjects, let us pray that God will powerfully speak to our hearts and draw us closer to Him.

Why not open your heart to the moving of His Spirit right now? Why not ask Him to do something extra special in your life today? He will answer your prayers, and heavenly blessings will flow in ways that you have not yet imagined.

A native of Connecticut, U.S.A., and an internationally known evangelist, Mark Finley, was a vice president at the General Conference from 2005 to 2010. After retiring from full-time employment, he became an assistant to the president of the General Conference to work part-time with the Revival and Reformation initiative. Pastor Finley and his wife, Ernestine, have three children and two grandchildren.
How to Use
This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. 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? (Apply); 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 Lesson in Brief” 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 to 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 to answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Apply: 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 to grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Create: 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 to 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.
Lesson 1  
*June 29–July 5
(page 6 of Standard Edition)

Revival: Our Great Need

Sabbath Afternoon


Memory Text: “‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me’” (Revelation 3:20, NKJV).

Laodicea is the last church in Revelation’s sequence of seven churches. The name means “a people judged.” It is also a fitting symbol for God’s last-day people.

Laodicea was located in an open valley in southwestern Turkey. It was an important financial capital, a fashion mecca, and an educational and medical center. Its inhabitants were independent, self-confident, and rich.

The one vital natural resource that the city lacked, however, was water. The water was piped in via Roman aqueducts from a spring that was five miles south of the city. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm. Jesus uses that symbolism to represent the lukewarm condition of His last-day church, described as self-confident, complacent, apathetic, and spiritually indifferent. It is a church that has lost its passion. It is a church that needs a spiritual revival.

Nevertheless, the Laodicean message is filled with hope. Christ speaks to His people in love, offering to meet the needs of their heart and revive their deepest spiritual longings.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 6.
Hope for Lukewarm Laodiceans

Jesus addresses each of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 with a title of Himself that is appropriate for their spiritual condition. The titles He uses in His message to the church of Laodicea ring with the assurance of spiritual renewal for all those who will heed His call.

Read the following Bible passages (Rev. 3:14, 15; 2 Cor. 1:20; John 3:10, 11; Col. 1:13–17). Why do you think that Jesus uses the titles “the Amen,” “the faithful and true witness,” and “the beginning of the creation of God” to address the Laodicean church?

In Revelation 3:14, the Greek word for “beginning” is arche. It can mean “beginning,” in the sense that the one to whom it refers is the beginner of the event or action. In this context, arche refers to Jesus as the Beginner, or the first cause of all creation. In other words, He is the Creator (John 1:1–3; Eph. 3:8, 9).

This is extremely significant. Jesus, the One who spoke and worlds came into being, the One who created the earth, the One who spoke life into existence—this same Jesus speaks hope to Laodicea. The all-powerful Creator can create new life. He can re-create new spiritual longings in our hearts. He can transform our spiritual lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:14, 15. What do these texts mean to you?

Why is the Laodicean message a message of hope? What is it about the introduction to this message of strong rebuke that encourages you? Which of the three titles of Jesus do you identify with the most, and why?
A Loving Rebuke

Read Revelation 3:15, 16. Why does Jesus give the Laodicean church such a strong rebuke? What does it mean to be lukewarm? What other words might Jesus have used in place of “lukewarm”?

Commenting on Revelation 3:15 and 16, Ellen G. White states: “The message to the Laodicean church applies most decidedly to those whose religious experience is insipid, who do not bear decided witness in favor of the truth.”—The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 962. This is a fascinating statement. An insipid religious experience is one that is lifeless. It has the outer husk of Christianity but lacks the substance. It has the external form but lacks the living power. The Laodiceans are not heretics or fiery fanatics; they are, simply, spiritually indifferent. The Laodiceans appear to be good moral people. They have what Paul calls “a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Tim. 3:5, NKJV). Jesus speaks of religious people in His day who “draw near to [Him] with their mouth and honor [Him] with their lips, but their heart is far from [Him]” (Matt. 15:8, NKJV).

Read Hebrews 12:7–11; Job 5:17–19; Psalm 94:12; and Proverbs 29:15, 17, and describe God’s purpose in His rebukes.

Our Lord loves His people too much to let them go easily to perdition. He will do whatever it takes to rekindle a spiritual flame in their hearts. His strong rebuke is because of a stronger love. His chastisement is only because of His longing to heal us. The prophet Hosea echoes this sentiment with this call to repentance: “Come, and let us return to the L ORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up” (Hos. 6:1, NKJV).

Has God ever used painful, even embarrassing, experiences to humble you and draw you closer to Him? What did you learn from these experiences that, ideally, ensures you won’t have to go through them again?
Perception and Reality

There is a gap between what Laodicea says and does. There is an even greater gap between the spiritual experience that Laodicea thinks she has and what she actually does have.

Read Revelation 3:17. What is Laodicea’s evaluation of herself? What is our Lord’s assessment of her? How do you think a people could be so blinded to their true spiritual condition? In what ways might we be blind regarding our own spiritual condition?

One of Satan’s fatal deceptions is to blind us to the reality of our spiritual needs. Some of the religious leaders of Jesus’ day were blind to their own spiritual poverty. They were Bible-reading, Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying “church” members looking for the coming of the Messiah. Yet, many were in darkness regarding the type of spiritual kingdom that He would usher in. Jesus called them “blind guides” (Matt. 23:24). Paul writes to the church at Corinth about those “whose minds the god of this age has blinded” (2 Cor. 4:4, NKJV). This is why Jesus said that He came for the “recovery of sight to the blind” (Luke 4:18, NKJV). Jesus will restore the spiritual eyesight that we have lost if we allow Him. Every time that Jesus opened blind eyes in the New Testament, He was revealing His desire to open the eyes of our minds in order to enable us to see Him clearly.

Read Matthew 25:1–13. What are the similarities between the foolish virgins and the members of the church at Laodicea?

What ways have you found to keep spiritually alert? Why do you think it is so easy to become spiritually indifferent? What are some ways to counteract religious apathy?
The Divine Remedy

There is hope for Laodicea, just as there is hope for all who are afflicted with spiritual apathy and indifference. Our Lord has the divine remedy. The fact that the Lord speaks to this church shows that hope for the church exists if His people accept and follow His counsel.

Reflect on Jesus’ counsel in Revelation 3:18, 19. What does Jesus mean when He talks about “gold refined in the fire,” being clothed in “white garments,” and our eyes being anointed with “eye salve”? See also 1 Pet. 1:7, Zech. 3:1–5, Rev. 19:7–9, Eph. 4:30.

“Jesus is going from door to door, standing in front of every soul-temple, proclaiming, ‘I stand at the door, and knock.’ As a heavenly merchantman, he opens his treasures, and cries, ‘Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.’ The gold he offers is without alloy, more precious than that of Ophir; for it is faith and love.

“The white raiment he invites the soul to wear is his own robes of righteousness, and the oil for anointing is the oil of his grace, which will give spiritual eyesight to the soul in blindness and darkness, that he may distinguish between the workings of the Spirit of God and the spirit of the enemy. Open your doors, says the great Merchantman, the possessor of spiritual riches, and transact your business with me. It is I, your Redeemer, who counsels you to buy of me.”—Ellen G. White, The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Aug. 7, 1894.

Ellen G. White quotes Revelation 3:20, saying of Jesus, “‘I stand at the door, and knock.’” Jesus knocks; He doesn’t break down the door and force His way in. What this means is that, in the end, regardless of what God is willing to do for us, we must make the choice to let Him in. Ask yourself, “How resistant am I to opening the door to Him?” If you are resistant, ask yourself, “Why?” What is holding you back? What sin, what indulgence, don’t you want to let go of, or what is it that you find so hard to let go of?
A Relentless Love

**Compare** Revelation 3:20 to Song of Solomon 5:2–5. What similarities do you find in both instances? What do these passages reveal about God’s love?

The evening meal in the Middle East was and still is extremely important. When the work of the day was over and the men returned from the fields for the evening meal, the entire family gathered around the table. In most instances the extended family lived together. The number at the evening meal often would be quite large. Grandfather and grandmother, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces and cousins, adults and children might be present. In this grand reunion after a hard day’s work, stories were told, experiences shared, and counsel given. It was a time of fellowship. It was a time of warmth and family intimacy. Jesus longs to have fellowship like this with us, as well.

**How** does Christ’s promise in Revelation 3:21 reveal His heartfelt desire for each one of us?

The book of Revelation mentions God’s throne more than forty times. This is more than in any other book of the Bible. At God’s throne, we join in with the heavenly chorus and joyously proclaim: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev. 5:12, NKJV). He promises that we can participate in this grand festive scene of rejoicing once the long saga of sin ends.

Christ uses His greatest motivation for His indifferent end-time people. The greatest motivation to wake us from spiritual slumber is Jesus’ endless love, for He longs to spend all eternity with us. If that is not enough to shake us out of our spiritual apathy, what is? If that is not enough to bring us to our knees, seeking revival, what will? His love has provided eternity for us. We have royal blood running through our veins. We are sons and daughters of the King of the universe. We can reign with Him, seated upon His throne forever.

Christ longs to be in fellowship with you. How much do you want to be in fellowship with Him? The answer is simple. How much time do you spend in prayer and fellowship with the Lord? What does your answer tell you about yourself and, perhaps, just how lukewarm you might be?
Further Study: “A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”—Ellen G. White, The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Feb. 25, 1902.

“The counsel of the True Witness is full of encouragement and comfort. The churches may yet obtain the gold of truth, faith, and love, and be rich in heavenly treasure. ‘Buy of me gold that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.’ The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ that may be wrought into the character. Purity of heart, purity of motive, will characterize every one who is washing his robe, and making it white in the blood of the Lamb.”—Ellen G. White, The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, July 24, 1888.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is so dangerous about being lukewarm? Why can it lead us so easily to spiritual self-deception?

2. Why do some Christians seem so radiant and others so indifferent? Is it a matter of different personality types, or is there something deeper? If so, what?

3. Discuss with your class ways in which to avoid becoming spiritually indifferent. How can we keep our spiritual experience vibrant and growing? What are things that we can do as a church body, as a whole, to protect ourselves from becoming “lukewarm”?

4. Why do you think God would rather have us be “cold” than “lukewarm”? Why isn’t being lukewarm better than being flat-out cold? Hint: what’s more comfortable, being lukewarm or being cold?
The Lesson in Brief

►Key Text: Revelation 3:14–22

►The Student Will:

Know: (1) Understand the historical circumstances and spiritual condition of the first-century Christian church at Laodicea and apply these lessons to his or her own spiritual journey. (2) Discern the effects that apathy and indifference have on his or her spiritual life.

Feel: Experience an attitude of complete dependence on, and surrender to, Jesus, rather than one of pride, complacency, and independence.

Do: Choose to allow Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, to break down any barrier to knowing Him more fully and loving Him more completely.

►Learning Outline:

I. Know: Understanding Laodicea’s Great Need

A. What is the Laodicean condition? How can an individual develop an attitude of spiritual indifference without recognizing it?

B. What are the consequences of spiritual apathy in the life and witness of the church?

II. Feel: Dependence Versus Independence

A. Why is it easy to fall into the same spiritual condition as the one that the church at Laodicea was in? What is our only hope?

B. How can we foster both an attitude of openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and a total dependence on Jesus’ righteousness rather than our own?

III. Do: Experiencing Revival Daily

A. Given that revival is a daily process of knowing Jesus intimately, in what ways can our spiritual lives be revitalized daily?

B. What are the steps that God is personally leading you to take in your spiritual life in order that you may know Him better?

►Summary: When we respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to know Jesus more intimately and consent to have Him fill our hearts with His love, He will break down every barrier that hinders this relationship, drawing us into an intimate relationship with Him in ways that we may not imagine are even possible.
Learning Cycle

**STEP 1—Motivate**

**Spotlight on Scripture:** Revelation 3:17–21

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** Christianity is much more than the acceptance of a certain set of doctrines and the attempt to avoid overtly sinful behaviors. Being a committed Christian involves an intimate experience with Jesus through prayer, Bible study, and transformation of character.

**Just for Teachers:** This week’s lesson opens our quarter’s study on revival, reformation, and mission. Revival is the reawakening of the spiritual longings of the soul. Without a daily infilling of the Holy Spirit, we easily may become spiritually complacent. Reformation has to do with the corresponding change in our thinking and lifestyle that follows revival. Witnessing is the logical outgrowth of both revival and reformation.

Emphasize that the message to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3 is Heaven’s appeal to go beyond a casual Christian experience (which costs us little) to a life of total commitment to Jesus. This appeal is not merely to surrender attitudes and habits that separate us from Jesus. It is an appeal to know Christ so intimately and love Him so deeply that we would not think of displeasing the One who loves us so much.

**Opening Discussion:** If you lived in the time of Christ and had the choice to live next door to one of the following people, whom would you choose? Would you move next door to the two demoniacs? What about Mr. and Mrs. Pharisee? Do you think the Pharisees would make good neighbors? Would you feel comfortable in the presence of the Samaritan woman who previously had five husbands and just happened to be living with a sixth man? You might feel a lot more comfortable living in the neighborhood of the Laodicean church. Name some of the “admirable” qualities of the Laodiceans. Why might they make good neighbors? The point is, which of these people might show the kind of traits that would reveal the reality of being a committed believer in their lives? Look at each person before and after he or she met Jesus.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Why do God’s people need straightforward messages of rebuke at times?
How is the message to the Laodiceans one of both sharp rebuke and hope?

**STEP 2—Explore**

**Just for Teachers:** The name Laodicea means either “judging the people” or “a people judged.” The meaning of the name is significant. Laodicea is the last of the seven churches. By the time the book of Revelation was written, the Christian church at Laodicea had most likely been in existence for 40 years. It had grown fairly large and comfortable. It represents the church in existence just before the coming of Jesus. As such, it is the church of the judgment hour. The first of the three angels who fly in the midst of heaven with God’s last-day message for “every nation, tribe, tongue, or people” proclaims, “‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come’” (Rev. 14:7, NKJV). Emphasize to your class the extreme relevance of the message that we are studying this week. It is Heaven’s urgent end-time message for God’s end-time church. Its message speaks powerfully to each one of us.

**Bible Commentary**

I. A Faith That Works by Love (*Review Galatians 5:6 with your class.*)

The church of Laodicea has a triple need: she needs riches to hide her poverty, clothing to cover her nakedness, and healing to take away her blindness. It is remarkable that wealth, raiment, and eye salve are the three things for which the city of Laodicea in antiquity is famous. This wealthy, cultured city seems to have need of nothing. Our Lord offers her heavenly riches, spiritual covering, and divine eyesight. The gold represents heaven’s most precious treasure—a faith that works by love. (*See Gal. 5:6.*) The white raiment is offered in contrast to Laodicea’s nakedness. Although the fashions of Laodicea were renowned throughout the Roman Empire, she was spiritually naked. Just as God provided garments to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve in Eden (*Gen. 3:21*), He offers garments to His last-day people to cover their spiritual nakedness. These garments are not of their own making. John the revelator identifies these garments as “fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (*Rev. 19:8, NKJV*). There is not one thread of human devising in the garment that Jesus offers. It represents His grace, His pardon, His righteousness, and His perfect character. It covers our sinfulness
and works a miraculous change in our lives. (See also Matt. 22:1–14 and Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, pp. 88, 89.)

Not far from Laodicea there was a temple dedicated to the Phrygian god, Men Karou. A famous school of medicine was established in harmony with this temple. People with eye problems traveled for days to this temple to secure this Phrygian eye salve. Christ offers something far better for His people’s spiritual blindness. He offers the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment so that spiritual eyes darkened by sin and blinded by Satan may be opened (John 8:12; 16:8–11; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4).

Consider This: For what three commodities was ancient Laodicea famous? By extension, what three things does the end-time church of Laodicea need, and why? How are they to obtain them?

II. A Message of Hope (Review Revelation 3:19 with your class.)

Christ’s message to the church of Laodicea is a message from His great heart of love. In Revelation 3:19, our Lord gives us the reason for His strong rebuke: “‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten’” (NKJV). The Greek word for “love” is philēo, which means “a strong bond of affection for” and “to love as a close friend or brother.” Christ does not cast off the Laodicean church; He loves her with a deep, affectionate, unbroken love. He loves her so much that He died for her and is coming again for her. There is no bond of affection greater than Christ’s love for His people. He will never cast her off nor forsake her. A mighty revival will come to His people, and He will sanctify and cleanse His church so that she can appear before Him “not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing” and so that He can present her as “a glorious church” before the throne of God.

Discussion Questions:

The question is not, will the church survive? God has promised repeatedly in His Word that He will guide His last-day church through the stormy waters ahead and bring her home safely. Our Lord will do whatever is necessary to preserve and protect His people in earth’s final crisis. The question instead is, Will we avail ourselves of all that He has offered in preparation for His coming?

1 How can each one of us be certain that we are not spiritually blind to our condition?

2 How can we be sure we are not spiritually naked before God and trusting in our own works rather than in His perfect righteousness?

3 How can we be certain that His eternal riches of faith and love fill our hearts daily?
STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Our society is filled with superficial religiosity. Discuss with your class members what is involved in the cultivation of an authentic spiritual life and the ways in which they can deepen their relationships with Jesus.

Thought Questions:
1. How can we have an intimate relationship with God on a daily basis that does not fade with the passing of time?

2. How can we have a relationship with God that is not “up” today and “down” tomorrow?

Application Question:
What are some of the specific things that keep us from having the relationship with God that we long for deep down in our hearts?

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Revelation 3:14–21 is Christ’s accurate description of our weak spiritual condition; but it is also a message of hope from Christ, our Almighty Creator, who is endowed with the creative power to change our lives. The Christ of Genesis is the Christ of Revelation. Help the class members to see that, no matter the spiritual condition in which they find themselves, Jesus, through His Holy Spirit, gives new life.

Activity 1: Invite your class to spend a few moments meditating on Revelation 3:20: “‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me’” (NKJV).

Activity 2: Encourage each class member to examine his or her heart to see if there is any door not open to Jesus. Invite each member to open that door today as he or she spends a few moments in silent prayer.
Prayer: The Heartbeat of Revival

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Acts 1:4, 8, 14; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Matt. 18:19, 20; 2 Cor. 10:3–5; Ps. 50:23.

Memory Text: “‘If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!’” (Matthew 7:11, NKJV).

God moves powerfully as His people pray. Alfred Lord Tennyson was certainly correct when he said, “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” The great revivals throughout Scripture were bathed in prayer. The Old Testament records the intercession of the patriarchs and prophets as they sought for revival. Moses, David, and Daniel petitioned the Almighty for power. The book of Acts reveals New Testament believers on their knees storming heaven, seeking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus’ prayer life reveals a constant dependence on His heavenly Father. The gospels give us glimpses of the source of His spiritual power. It was on His knees alone with the Father that the Savior received His greatest strength.

“A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer.”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 121. During this week’s lesson, we will explore the role that prayer played in some of the great revivals in the Bible.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 13.
Prayer and Revival in Acts

The believers in Acts were filled with power from on high. The Holy Spirit was poured out in a marked way. Hearts were touched, lives changed. The gospel penetrated the most difficult places, and thousands were converted. In Acts 2, three thousand were added to the church (Acts 2:41). Acts 4:4 records that the number of men alone who believed “was about five thousand.” Even many of the religious leaders, who opposed Jesus during His lifetime, became “obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). The story of this phenomenal growth continues in Acts 9, which said that churches throughout “all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria” were “multiplied” (Acts 9:31, NKJV). By Acts 10 to 12 the gospel spanned cultural and geographical boundaries. The Roman centurion and the treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia were baptized. Acts 1 says that about one hundred twenty believers met in the upper room (Acts 1:13, 15). The best estimates are that by the end of the first century there were at least one million Christians in the Roman Empire. This is remarkable growth by any standard.

What was the secret?

Look up the following texts. What was a major reason for the growth of the New Testament church? Acts 1:4, 8, 14; 2:42; 4:31, 33; 6:3, 4.

Pastor R. A. Torrey was a powerful revival preacher in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He conducted revival meetings in Great Britain from 1903–1905 and throughout North America in 1906 and 1907. Lamenting the busyness of Christians, he stated, “We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions, much machinery but few results.”

Are you too busy to pray? Who can’t relate to that? How can you slow down enough to take the time you need to pray? Think about all the excuses that you have to put it off, the reasons that you give to do other things. In the end, what is it that you are losing by not spending time in prayer?
Jesus’ Prayer Life

Compare the following texts: Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, 9:18. What three specific things do these passages reveal about Jesus’ prayer life?

“Christ was continually receiving from the Father, that he might communicate to us. ‘The word which ye hear,’ he said, ‘is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.’ ‘The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.’ Not for himself, but for others, he lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God he came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily he received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened him from his slumbers, and his soul and his lips were anointed with grace, that he might impart to others.” —Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 11, 1910.

Examine the passages below. Identify each of the things for which Jesus prayed. How do Jesus’ prayers reveal His most important concerns? What is the most distinctive component of each of Jesus’ prayers?

John 17:20–24____________________________________________

Luke 22:31, 32 ___________________________________________

Matt. 26:36–44____________________________________________

Prayer was a vital part of Jesus’ life. It was His lifeline to the Father. Daily, the Savior renewed His relationship with His Father through prayer. Jesus’ prayer life gave Him the courage and strength to face the temptations of the enemy. He came from these prayer sessions with a deepened commitment to do the Father’s will. They provided Him with a spiritual freshness and power. Describing one of Jesus’ times of prayer, Luke adds, “As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening” (*Luke* 9:29, *NKJV*). Jesus experienced spiritual refreshing and a renewed experience with the Father each day through His prayer life.

Spend a few moments reflecting on some specific times that God powerfully answered your prayers. How can recalling and reflecting on these experiences deepen your prayer life today?
Although Jesus often spent time alone in prayer, there were multiple occasions when He encouraged His closest disciples to pray with Him. Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus to the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1, 2). He urged them to unite with Him in prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39–46). There is unusual power in united prayer.

Carefully analyze Matthew 18:19, 20. Summarize Jesus’ statement regarding united prayer.

“The promise is made on condition that the united prayers of God’s people are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer. The power given will be proportionate to the unity of the members and their love for God and for one another.” —Ellen G. White, The Central Advance, Feb. 25, 1903.

John Bunyan once commented, “You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.”

As we enter into earnest and heartfelt intercession, the Holy Spirit powerfully works in miraculous ways through our united prayers.

Read Acts 12:1–16. What was Peter’s situation? What was the attitude of the church? What does this passage tell us about the power of united prayer?

No question, in this case, Peter had a miraculous deliverance. It was so intense that Peter wasn’t even sure it was real and that he wasn’t in a vision. Only afterward did he realize what had happened. It’s important to note that these texts stated twice that people were praying together. Considering the tough circumstances, it is no wonder. There is no question that we should do the same, especially when we face challenges as a community, such as they did there.
Our Freedom

Have you ever wondered why prayer is so vital? Why do we have to ask Him for the Holy Spirit? Isn’t He willing to give the Holy Spirit to us?

The answer to these questions lies in understanding God’s respect for our freedom of choice. He has created us with the ability to make moral choices. God is doing everything He can for us and through us before we pray, but He is limited by our choices (Ps. 78:41, 42).

In prayer we freely acknowledge our total dependency upon God and give Him the freedom to intervene in our lives. The more we pray, the more we acknowledge His all sufficiency. When we pray, His Holy Spirit prepares our hearts to receive more of Him. The more we pray, the more we allow the Holy Spirit to “crucify” our sinful desires. In the great controversy between good and evil, prayer enables God to work more powerfully in our lives.

**Analyze** 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. How would you define the expression “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God” (NKJV)? What are these weapons? What kind of warfare is Paul talking about here, and why would he use this kind of imagery? How are we to understand the battle in which we are engaged?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we understand the reality of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. We know that it is real and that we all are involved in it. Left alone, we would be hopeless against Satan. Our only hope is our connection with Jesus, and central to that connection is our prayer life—a spiritual weapon for a spiritual battle, a weapon that none of us can do without. If Jesus needed to pray, how much more so do we?

“We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should. Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509.

**In what ways have you experienced in your own life the harsh reality of the great controversy between Christ and Satan? How has prayer aided you in this struggle? Where would you be without it?**

21
Effective Prayer

There are many effective ways to pray. Some people have found it helpful to kneel before God with their Bibles open. Then they read a few verses and commune with God about what they are reading. The Psalms are particularly inspirational as subject matter for prayer. Try meditating upon a particular psalm during your prayer times. Take one verse at a time. Read it aloud, and then talk to God about what the text is saying to you.

Others have found that their most meaningful prayer times are alone with God in some quiet natural setting. Still others have blended singing and prayer.

What do we learn about effective prayer from the following verses? Pss. 34:1, 50:23, 67:3, 71:6.

David’s prayers were filled with adoration and praise. When we meditate upon God’s goodness and matchless love, our hearts overflow with praise.

Read Daniel 9:8–13. What kind of prayer is this?

What feature does Paul add to an effective prayer life? Eph. 5:20.

What is the meaning of supplication in Ephesians 6:18 and Philippians 4:6, and why is this an important component of prayer?

Though we don’t want to give a formula for prayer, a broad outline could be as follows: we start with praise and adoration, thanking God for His goodness to us. We then confess our faults and shortcomings, and then thank God for His forgiveness. We conclude with supplications, making our requests known to Him, all the while seeking an attitude of submission and trust in His divine power.

Has your prayer life not been what it should or could be? What do you need to do differently? Why not make a more concentrated effort to spend more time in prayer? It can change your life.
Further Study: “Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. ‘The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.’ James 5:11. His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. ‘He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.’ Psalm 147:3. The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watch care, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.”—Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 100.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do we need to pray if God knows everything? Though many answers can be given, perhaps the most important one is that we have been told, time and again in the Bible, to pray. Even if we don’t understand how it works, those who pray effectively know that it does work. You might take a medicine that helps to bring healing to your body, even though you don’t know how that medication works. It’s the same with prayer. What other reasons can you give for the importance of prayer, especially as we seek revival and reformation?

2. Read over prayerfully the Ellen G. White statement found in Friday’s Further Study. Look at all the encouragement that is found in there, especially in the last line that addresses the relationship between God and the praying supplicant. What can you do, what choices can you make, to enter into the kind of close communion with the Lord that is described here?

3. In class, talk about the reality of the great controversy and how it’s being manifested in your own church community. Talk about how praying together can help you all work through whatever challenges you are facing.
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Luke 9:28; Matthew 18:19, 20

The Student Will:

Know: (1) Recognize the utter impossibility of developing an intimate experience with Jesus without prayer, and realize the enormous privilege of knowing Him deeply through prayer. (2) Reveal the intimate link between prayer and revival.

Feel: Experience a deep need to spend regular time with Jesus in prayer.

Do: Grasp the privilege of prayer and set aside specific times daily to get to know Jesus better through prayer.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Spiritual Vitality

A Why is prayer such an integral aspect of spiritual revival?
B Why is it so important to recognize that without prayer our spiritual lives are empty, spiritually barren, and weak? Why are we powerless to face Satan’s temptations in our own strength?

II. Feel: Spiritual Satisfaction

A How do you feel when you have just finished a time of deep, meaningful spiritual communion with God? How do you feel when you start your day without such communion?
B What is it about spending time alone with God that is so meaningful in your life? Why is this fellowship with God important to you?

III. Do: Spiritual Discipline

A Prayer requires a certain spiritual discipline. Determine to set aside a specific time to pray each day. How can this be a blessing to you?
B Often it is a blessing to pray with a close friend. In what ways have you been blessed by taking part in a prayer group of church members or close friends? If you are not part of such a group, why not start your own or consider joining one?
C If you have a prayer list, consider the specific things for which you are praying. What are the benefits of praying for these things in a systematic way?

Summary: Through prayer, we understand God’s heart more, know His will more fully, and experience His presence more powerfully.
**Learning Cycle**

**STEP 1—Motivate**

**Spotlight on Scripture:** *Acts 4:31*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** The disciples faced overwhelming challenges in their attempts to reach their generation for Christ. The Roman Empire was bathed in Greek philosophy, dominated by military might, obsessed with pleasure seeking, and consumed with political intrigue. Hardened hearts and callous minds were almost impossible to penetrate with the gospel. The disciples recognized this reality and opened their lives to the power of the Holy Spirit. What seemed impossible became possible through the divine power of God. The experience of the disciples speaks to us of the almighty power of God to use His praying people in order to reach twenty-first-century society, as well.

**Just for Teachers:** This week’s lesson focuses on prayer. We will study the prayer life of Jesus and the disciples, as well as the value of united prayer. Additionally, we will look at the role of prayer in the great controversy between good and evil. Throughout the Bible, prayer is at the heart of the Christian life. Prayer is also at the heart of each revival mentioned in Scripture. Without prayer, revival will not come. Jesus’ example in prayer, as well as the disciples’ emphasis on prayer, provides a model for the church today.

**Opening Discussion:** Jesus regularly found quiet places for prayer and communion with His Father. It is difficult to be quiet in today’s media-saturated culture. Even in societies where media does not dominate, often it is difficult to find time alone among the thronging masses. What are the places you have discovered where you may be alone with God? Be practical.

Ask your class to list at least ten places where they have found their “Gethsemane” or “wilderness” to spend time alone with God.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. What can we learn from Jesus’ prayer life that applies to our own prayer experience?
Why are we too busy to pray? What is it that makes prayer such a low priority in our lives at times?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: Jesus often invited His disciples to join Him in prayer. Following His example, the disciples prayed together throughout the book of Acts. There is unusual strength that comes from praying together. By asking this penetrating question, Ellen G. White underlines the importance of united prayer: “Why do not believers feel a deeper, more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another?”—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 21. Small groups of praying people are at the heart of the church’s growth, spirituality, and revival.

Bible Commentary

I. When We Kneel to Pray (Review Matthew 18:19, 20 with your class.)

Jesus urges His disciples to pray together in union with their hearts in one accord. He admonishes, “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them’” (Matt. 18:19, 20, NKJV). The original Greek word for “agreement” used here means “in complete accord.” It also may be used to refer to an orchestral piece that has no discordant notes. It is perfect harmony with varied voices blended together in a symphony of song. United prayer with hearts in one accord is a chorus of praise in Christ’s ears and a testimony to the power of the gospel. It is a joyful melody bringing gladness to His heart. Here one member’s shortsightedness is aided by another’s strong faith, one’s weakness is helped by another’s strength, one’s straightforwardness is balanced by another’s meekness, and one’s frailty by another’s might. United in prayer, members share common joys and sorrows, strengths and weaknesses, joys and heartaches. In our passage, Christ promises two specific things for those who are united in prayer with their common praise and petitions.
1. When we approach Him in united prayer, with hearts desiring only His glory, He will answer. When we come jointly in prayer, seeking His will, longing to know Him better, asking for the outpouring of His Spirit on our lives and the lives of those special ones for whom we are praying, He will respond powerfully. Miracles will be wrought beyond our comprehension. God especially honors the petitions of “‘two or three . . . gathered together in [His] name.’”

2. When we approach Him in prayer with united hearts in His name, He is “‘there’” in our midst. The expression “in My name” could also be translated as “into My name.” It implies that the prayers offered are not only offered by those united with one another but by those who are united with Christ. These praying believers are seeking more of His love, yearning for His presence, and desiring His glory. Christ’s praying disciples have the joy of knowing that His real presence is with them. The ancient rabbis had a saying that something special occurred if two of them sat together at a common table, discussing the law of God. They believed that the same Shekinah glory, which manifests itself between the golden cherubim over the ark of the covenant and represents the presence of God, rested over the table in the room where they discussed the law and filled it with the glory of God. Although there is a real temple or sanctuary in heaven where God’s glory is manifest, in a real sense we are the temple of God, fashioned to manifest His glory to the world (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20). When we pray with unified hearts, Christ’s presence is apparent among us, and His glory is revealed.

**Consider This:** When we kneel to pray with others, Christ promises to be in our midst. We are not praying to Someone who is so far distant that to imagine His closeness is almost impossible. Through His Holy Spirit, Christ is, in reality, in our midst. Why is it that sometimes He seems so far away? What can we do to experience His presence more fully in prayer?

**STEP 3—Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** Lead your class in a practical discussion of how to be more effective in united prayer. Make a list of the benefits of praying together in unity. What pitfalls might there be in united prayer? What are some of the things that may rob the blessings of prayer groups?

**HINT:** These can include talking too much rather than praying, long drawn-out prayers, negative prayers, one person dominating the prayer session, et cetera. What guidelines can the class develop for united prayer sessions?
Thought/Application Questions:

1. What can we do to make united prayer an integral part of our spiritual lives?

____________________________________________________________

2. What can our church do to initiate a greater emphasis on united prayer?

____________________________________________________________

3. How might our local Sabbath School class place greater priority on united prayer?

____________________________________________________________

**STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** Personal prayer and corporate or group prayer are powerful spiritual weapons as we face the enemy. They open our hearts to the rich blessings of God. God respects our freedom of choice. Although He graciously works in our lives, even before we approach Him in prayer, it is in prayer that we give our all-powerful Creator, our loving Redeemer, and our Coming King—Jesus Christ—permission to use us in order to glorify His name in any way He desires. Prayer is our acknowledgment that we are completely dependent upon Him and that knowing Him is the top priority of our lives.

**Activity 1:** This week, just as you have designated time for your meals or work assignments, set aside a specific uninterrupted time to pray. Find a place where you can be alone with God, and share your thoughts aloud with Him.

**Activity 2:** This week ask God to help you find one or two others with whom you can pray. Invite them to join you in united prayer.

Next week we will spend a little time in our Sabbath School class sharing our prayer experiences that happened during the week.
The Word: The Foundation of Revival

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study:  Ps. 119:50, 74, 116; Heb. 4:12; 11:3; John 5:39; Heb. 4:1, 2; Acts 20:27–32.

Memory Text: “Plead my cause and redeem me; revive me according to Your word” (Psalm 119:154, NKJV).

*July 13–19

Just as serious Bible study spawned past revival movements, we believe that it will happen again in the last days. The Holy Spirit will move upon a generation of committed Adventist Christians who have discovered His will in His Word and are passionate about proclaiming it to the world.

They will have found grace and strength and hope in His Word; they will have come face-to-face with the matchless charms of Christ in His Word. Thus, God will honor their commitment by pouring out His Holy Spirit in abundance, and the whole world will be lightened with the glory of the three angels’ messages. The Holy Spirit will be poured out beyond measure, and the gospel will be carried to the ends of the earth, and Jesus Christ will return (Matt. 24:14).

In this week’s lesson we will study the role of the Bible in revival and how God’s Word can make a life-changing difference in us if we surrender ourselves in faith and obedience to its precepts and truths.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 20.
Revived Through the Word

Look up each of the verses below. On the first line write the plea. On the second line write the circumstance that led David to make the plea.

Ps. 119:25 (Plea) __________________________________________
(Circumstance) __________________________________________

Ps. 119:107 (Plea) ________________________________________
(Circumstance) __________________________________________

Ps. 119:153, 154 (Plea) ___________________________________
(Circumstance) __________________________________________

In the Psalms, David talks about the blessings of the Word in his own spiritual life. Read the following verses from Psalm 119 and choose a word from each verse that best summarizes the blessings that the psalmist discovered in that Word. Ps. 119:50, 74, 116, 130, 160, 169, 170.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

David found courage and strength in God’s Word. He discovered hope and divine guidance in God’s Word. The Word of God brought light to his darkened mind (Ps. 119:130). It nourished his famished heart and quenched his thirsty soul (Ps. 119:81). When Saul threatened to kill him, he clung to God’s promise of deliverance (Ps. 34:4). Plagued with guilt after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, he clung to God’s promise of forgiveness (Ps. 32:1, 2). Perplexed regarding the future, he clung to God’s promise of guidance (Ps. 32:8). David jubilantly exclaimed, “Your word has given me life” (Ps. 119:50, NKJV). The foundation of revival is all about finding new life in God’s Word.

How can you learn to draw hope, strength, assurance, and light from the Word of God? That is, how can you have a deeper experience with the Lord through coming to know Him as He is revealed in the Bible?
The Word’s Creative Power

Read Hebrews 4:12. The passage states that God’s Word is living, powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing our inmost being. How is God’s Word alive? What does that mean?

In what way is God’s Word different from the intelligent counsel of any other wise teacher, pastor, or counselor? What do the following texts say about the power of God’s Word? Ps. 33:6, 9; Heb. 11:3; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

There is value in wise human counsel. We have all been helped by the advice of others. The problem is that human counsel does not carry with it the power to accomplish the kind of change that God’s Word can. God’s Word is a living, dynamic, powerful agent of change. The same power that was in God’s spoken word at Creation is in the Written Word of God. Accepting God’s commands and promises by faith, we receive the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish that which Christ commands.

“The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature, and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”—Ellen G. White, Education, p. 126.

A casual reading of God’s Word very seldom produces spiritual revival. Studying the Bible to prove one’s own position, or to convince someone else of his or her mistakes, does very little good for our own spiritual life. Change comes when we prayerfully read God’s Word, asking the Holy Spirit to give us the power to be more like Jesus. Real transformation takes place when we ask the God of creation to re-create us in His image. Change comes when Jesus’ teachings in Scripture become part of our lives, and we live “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4, NKJV).

In what ways has the power of God’s Word changed your life? In which areas do you need to see more of that change?
Jesus and the Word

How are the functions of the Word of God and the Spirit of God similar? Read John 5:39; 16:14, 15.

The Word of God bears witness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit also bears witness of Jesus. The Spirit leads us to a deeper experience with Jesus through His Word. The purpose of the Holy Spirit in revival is not primarily to manifest Himself through supernatural signs and wonders but to exalt Jesus through His Word. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not about our power to accomplish great miracles. It is about God’s power to transform our lives—and that’s what revival and reformation are all about.

The Word of God provides the foundation or the basis for all genuine revival. Our experience flows out of an understanding of God’s Word. Our praise and worship spring from minds saturated with the Word. A transformed life is the greatest testimony of true revival.

Positive feelings of praise may accompany revival, but they are never the basis for revival. Any so-called “revival” based solely on external feelings or experience is shallow at best, deceptive at worst. It is an illusion of spirituality, not genuine godliness. When revival is rooted in the Word of God, it is an experience that lasts and makes a difference in our lives and in the lives of the people around us.

The story of Jesus’ appearance to the two disciples on the Emmaus road reveals the role that the Bible plays in initiating true revival. These followers of Christ were filled with confusion. Gradually, however, He “expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27, NKJV). He repeated the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. Jesus could have worked a miracle to prove His identity or shown the scars in His hands. He did not. Instead, He gave them a Bible study.

Notice their response as they reflected on what had happened that day: “They said to one another, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’ ” (Luke 24:32, NKJV).

What an example of genuine revival!

Why can’t we trust our feelings? How can our feelings deceive us? What role do feelings have in our walk with the Lord, and what role do they not have?
Revival, Faith, and the Word

Speaking of the time just before His return, Jesus said, “‘When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’” (Luke 18:8, NKJV). Evidently, faith will be in short supply in the last days.

How might we define biblical faith? Is faith believing that God will give us anything we want? Is faith centered in our desires? Is faith about asking God for what we want and believing we will receive it if we only believe hard enough?

We should know the answers to those rhetorical questions, shouldn’t we?

Faith, true faith, is always focused on God’s will, not on our wishes. It is trusting in God, believing in His promises, and acting on His Word. Our faith grows as we listen to God’s Word and put it into practice (Rom. 10:17; James 2:17, 18). Opening our minds to the teachings of God’s Word builds faith; and doing what God says—even if it is contrary to our personal desires—prepares us to receive the fullness of the Spirit’s power.

Why do some people receive little benefit from reading the Bible?

Heb. 4:1, 2.

Our spiritual experience is revived when we accept and claim God’s Word by faith. There is little benefit derived from hastily reading the Bible out of a sense of obligation or duty. We are changed as we internalize what we read, and allow the teachings of the Bible to mold our thoughts and our lives.

Compare the faith of the Roman centurion, the paralytic at Bethesda, and the disciples on the stormy Sea of Galilee (Matt. 8:8–10, John 5:6–9, Matt. 14:29–33). What can we learn from each account?

Faith does not grow merely by reading or listening to God’s Word. It comes as we claim His promises as our own and when we believe that what He said applies to us personally. God has given each one of us a measure of faith. It is one of Heaven’s gifts (Rom. 12:3). When we exercise the faith that He has already placed in our hearts, that faith cannot help but grow.
The Holy Spirit mightily moved through the teaching and preaching of the apostle Paul as he established the Christian church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a city of approximately two hundred fifty thousand people. It was considered the marketplace of Asia. As ships brought their wares from throughout Asia, people flocked to Ephesus to buy fine silk, rare jewels, flavorful spices, hand-woven carpets, exquisite art objects, and exotic foods. It was also the center for the worship of the goddess Diana and the future home of the famed Celsus Library, with 12,000 volumes. The city had a magnificent amphitheater seating 15,000 people. It was used for massive concerts and theatrical productions. Sexual promiscuity was commonplace. If there ever was an unlikely place for Christianity to take root, grow, and flourish, it was Ephesus.

Read Acts 20:27–32. What was Paul’s concern for the believers at Ephesus? What was his counsel to the church members in Ephesus? What role did he give to the Word of God?

Read 1 Peter 1:22, 23; James 1:21, 22; 1 John 2:14. Summarize the teachings of Peter, James, and John regarding the importance of the Bible in the life of each Christian. Especially notice the disciples’ teaching regarding the impact of the Bible in our spiritual lives.

What similarities do you see in all of the above texts regarding the role of the Word of God? Why, then, must the Word of God be central to spiritual revival, both on a personal and on a corporate level?
Further Study: “‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God’s work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.

“Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read carefully the Ellen G. White statements in Friday’s Further Study. What role does she give to the Word of God, especially in the context of the last days and the final deceptions? Dwell on the implications of this line: “So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures.” What does this tell us about how we need to be careful about judging truth based only on personal experience or on the way that we feel?

2. During the week we read James 1:22, where we are told to be “doers of the Word.” What does that mean, and why is that so essential for us if we are to have any kind of true spiritual revival in our lives? Why is reading about faith and teaching about faith and talking about faith so much easier than living it? Think through your week: how much of a “doer of the Word” were you?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Hebrews 4:12

The Student Will:

**Know:** (1) Understand more deeply the vital importance of knowing God through His Word. (2) Comprehend more fully the significance of the Word in both the nurturing of spiritual growth and the preserving of each believer from the deceptions of the evil one.

**Feel:** Foster the desire to study God’s Word with a receptive mind and a joyful heart.

**Do:** Commit to spending time with Jesus in His Word each day and seek to apply the biblical principles, studied in practical situations, to his or her daily life.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: The Life-Transforming Power of God’s Word

A Why is God’s Word dramatically different from other inspirational books? What sets it apart from all other literature?

B What role does the Bible play in revival, and why?

II. Feel: The Word’s Impact on One’s Life

A In order to appreciate God’s Word fully, what do we need to realize about our own need?

B How does the study, or lack of study, of God’s Word affect our relationships with God?

C Share a time when you felt personally close to God as you studied His Word. Think of a passage of Scripture that particularly moved you and share why.

III. Do: Receive God’s Richest Blessing From the Word

A What steps do we need to take in order to make Bible study more meaningful and spiritually productive?

B How can we make God’s Word the center of our lives as Jesus did?

C In what practical events/seminars/retreats can a local congregation participate in order to experience the revivifying, sanctifying power of the Word?

Summary: When we spend time with God in His Word, we will know Him better, depend on Him more, and witness for Him more effectively.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *Hebrews 4:12*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** The Word of God reveals the will of God. In His Word we are brought into contact with the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Word. As the Holy Spirit ministers to our hearts through the Word, we become more like Jesus.

**Just for Teachers:** This week’s lesson should help the members of your class to recognize that God’s Word is not merely a source of true doctrine, although it is certainly that. More than anything, it is a revelation of Jesus Christ (*John 5:39*). As the Holy Spirit impresses our minds with Jesus’ love and power through the Word, our spiritual lives are revived (*2 Cor. 3:18*). Without a thoughtful study of God’s Word, our spiritual lives will be barren. The fruit of genuine spirituality flourishes when our lives are rooted in God’s Word. God’s Word is the foundation of all true revival (*Ps. 119:25*). Without it, revival will either degenerate into emotional fanaticism, be vulnerable to doctrinal deceptions, or be stalled in the doldrums of complacency. The purpose of this week’s lesson is not only to emphasize the importance of God’s Word but also to stimulate a greater love for the study of God’s Word.

**Opening Discussion:** In this week’s lesson we will study the relationship between God’s Word—the Bible—and spiritual revival. Throughout history, great revival movements have been birthed through the study of God’s Word. Men and women of prayer, their minds saturated with the Word of God, have changed the world as the Holy Spirit changed them through the Word. One such earthshaker was Martin Luther. Luther, however, had difficulty believing that God actually loved him. His picture of God was one of a vindictive judge and a wrathful tyrant. One day while examining some books in the library at the University of Erfurt where he was a monk, Luther discovered a Latin Bible. This was the first time he had ever held a copy of the entire Bible in his hands. Ellen G. White describes his reaction this way: “With mingled awe and wonder he [Luther] turned the sacred pages; with quickened pulse and throbbing heart he read for himself the words of life, pausing now and then to exclaim: ‘O that God would give me such a book for myself!’ . . . Angels of heaven were by his side, and rays of light from the throne of God revealed the treasures of truth to his understanding.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 122. The revival in
Luther’s heart that sparked the flames of the Reformation was ignited that day in the monastery library as he discovered the matchless charms of Christ’s grace through His Word.

**Question for Discussion:**
Why does God’s Word contain such life-changing, revival-generating power?

**STEP 2—Explore**

**Just for Teachers:** Emphasize that revival is not rooted in our human emotions or feelings. It is not some warm fuzzy emotion that we experience in prayer, during a particularly moving sermon, or in a wave of ecstasy during a popular praise song. Revival is the renewal of God’s grace in the soul as we fellowship with Him in prayer and through His Word. There is no substitute for the role of the Bible in revival.

**Bible Commentary**

1. **The Living Word** *(Review Hebrews 4:12 with your class.)*

Hebrews chapter 4 is packed with meaning, especially verse 12. Each phrase is significant. Each word is full of riches. Let’s study it phrase by phrase, sensing its practical impact on our lives today. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” *(NKJV).* The Bible is the Written Word, and Jesus is the Living Word *(John 1:1, 14).* Jesus is the Word made flesh. If you want to see what the Word looks like lived out in human life, look at Jesus. His Word is living and imparts life. It is a creative Word *(Ps. 33:6, 9).* In the Word we meet the living Christ through His Spirit, and He transforms our lives. His Word is powerful. The Greek word for “powerful” is *energes,* from which we get the English word *energy.* As Ellen G. White so aptly states, “The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”—*Education,* p. 126. Re-creation requires the power of creation, and that power is found in God’s Word.

The image of a “sharp sword,” or of a “two-edged sword,” is a com-
mon expression for God’s Word (see Eph. 6:17, Rev. 1:16, 19:13–15). This expression is followed in Hebrews 4:12 by three pairings—soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and thoughts and intents. A careful study of these pairings reveals the depth of their meaning. The soul and spirit represent our spiritual faculties, the joints and marrow represent our physical abilities, and the thoughts and intents represent our mental capacities. The point of our text is that the Word of God has the creative ability to transform our entire nature. It governs every aspect of human life and behavior.

**Consider This:** The Bible is different from all other literature. Other books may be inspiring, but the Bible is inspired. It is God’s message to our hearts. It speaks to us personally. Its message is both universal and eternal. Of the many evidences of the Bible’s inspiration, which one impresses you the most?

II. Hearing the Word *(Review Romans 10:17 with your class.)*

Genuine, authentic, spiritually renewing faith comes through hearing the Word of God. In the New Testament, the word for “hearing,” *akoe*, implies not only hearing with your ears but hearing with your heart. Have you ever talked with someone who heard what you said but was really not listening and had little comprehension of what you meant? In this passage, Paul urges us to listen to God’s Word, truly hear what is being said, and let it change our lives.

**Consider This:** When the Bible becomes the “word of God” speaking to us just as though we could hear Him speaking with His own voice, our lives will never be the same again. Share a time that you have felt the deep conviction of the Holy Spirit as you read God’s Word or a time when you sensed His presence as you meditated on a passage of Scripture.

►**STEP 3—Apply**

**Thought Questions:**

1. What are some of the obstacles to revival in my own life?

2. Is the busyness of my life sapping my spiritual power and quenching the sparks of revival?
Application Questions:

1. Share some practical ways that you have found to make Bible study more meaningful in your own life.

2. Have you experienced a spiritual revival on an academy or college campus; at a camp meeting or evangelistic meeting; or in your local church? What characterized that revival? Did its influence extend for any length of time? Why do revivals tend to be short-lived at times?

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: The devil will keep us so busy and occupied with the things of time that the things of eternity are crowded out. The earthly strangles the heavenly. When we spend time alone with God in His Word, we may not sense that we are growing at all. We may discern little change in our lives. We may seem to be making little progress in the Christian life. Growth may seem slow, but it is occurring. Gradually, imperceptibly, the Holy Spirit is changing us.

1. How many of you have ever had a child who seemed to be growing extremely slowly and then entered a growth spurt and really grew rapidly in a short time? Describe this growth spurt. When did it occur? How much did the child grow?

2. Did this growth spurt merely take place at a certain point of time, or did the body prepare for it for years? Compare our growth in Christ to the growth in our physical bodies. Although parents cannot make their child grow any taller, what can they do to cooperate in this growth process? How does this apply to our Christian growth? What can we do to cooperate with God in the growth process?

Suggestion: Is there a teenager who has just experienced a growth spurt whom you could interview about his or her experience and then compare that to the Christian life? If that is not possible, have members discuss their own growth spurts or those of their children or grandchildren. The point you want to leave with your class is that growth will occur if we have fellowship with Christ through prayer and the study of God’s Word.
Witness and Service: The Fruit of Revival

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “‘You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth’” (Acts 1:8, NKJV).

The purpose of revival is to fill our hearts with such a love for Jesus that we long to share this love with every person possible. In genuine revival, our own hearts are wakened to God’s goodness, compassion, forgiveness, and power. We are so charmed by His love and transformed by His grace that we cannot be silent.

In contrast, a “revival” that focuses on one’s “spiritual experience alone” misses the mark. If it develops attitudes critical of others who do not measure up to one’s “standard of holiness,” it is certainly not heaven inspired. If the emphasis of revival is to merely change external behavior rather than to change hearts, then something is wrong.

Changed hearts lead to changed behavior. Genuine revival never leads to self-centeredness or, especially, to self-sufficiency or self-exaltation. Instead, it always leads to a selfless concern for others. When our hearts are renewed by God’s grace, we long to bless and serve those who are in need. All genuine revival leads to a renewed emphasis on mission and service.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 27.
Christ’s Parting Commission and Promise

Christ did not establish His church in order for it to simply care for itself. Jesus’ parting words focused upon the church’s mission. Christ’s intention is for His church to look beyond itself. He established it to share the light of His love and the message of His salvation with the world.

Read and summarize the following texts. How does each passage reveal the desire of Jesus’ heart for His church?

**Matt. 28:19, 20**

**Mark 16:15**

**Luke 24:45–49**

**John 20:21**

Once Christ ascended to heaven, His church was to be a visible manifestation of His love and grace to the world. The disciples had a mission. They had a message to share. They had a task to complete. They were to carry on the work that He had begun.

“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

The burden of Jesus’ heart is the salvation of the human race. The apostle Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy that it is the Savior’s desire that “all . . . be saved and . . . come to the knowledge of the truth” *(1 Tim. 2:4, NKJV)*. The apostle Peter adds that the Lord is “longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” *(2 Pet. 3:9, NKJV)*.

What in your life shows your interest in outreach to others? Or does anything show it? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your priorities?
Receiving the Promise

The mission of sharing His love and truth with the entire world must have seemed overwhelming to this small group of disciples. The challenge was enormous, the task immense. Its accomplishment in their lifetime might certainly have seemed impossible (as it can in ours). The best estimates are that the population of the Roman Empire in the first century was approximately sixty to seventy million. According to the first chapter of Acts, 120 believers met in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost. This is a ratio of 1 Christian to approximately every 500,000 to 580,000 people in the empire. From a human standpoint, Jesus’ command to preach the gospel to the world seemed unthinkable.

Read Acts 2. What were the results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the mission of the early church?

The results were astounding. The Christian church exploded in growth. Tens of thousands were converted. The message of Jesus’ love was carried to the remotest parts of the empire.

Pliny the Younger, governor of the Roman province of Bithynia on the northern coast of modern Turkey, wrote to Emperor Trajan around A.D. 110. Pliny described the official trials he was conducting to find and execute Christians. “Many of every age, of every social class, even of both sexes, are being called to trial and will be called. Not cities alone but villages in even rural areas have been invaded by the infection of this superstition” (Christianity).

This quote is remarkable. It reveals that in a few generations Christianity had invaded nearly every level of society, even in the remote provinces.

Ninety years later, around A.D. 200, Tertullian, a Roman lawyer turned Christian, wrote a defiant letter to the Roman magistrates defending Christianity. He boasted that “nearly all the citizens of all the cities are Christians.”

The story of the book of Acts is the story of a revived church committed to witness for its Lord. Spiritual revival always leads to passionate witness. Sharing is the natural outgrowth of a transformed life. Jesus said to His disciples, “‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’” (Matt. 4:19). The closer we follow Jesus, the more we care about what He cares about. If we have little interest in sharing His love with others, it may be because we are following Him at a distance and need a personal spiritual revival.
The Power of Personal Testimony

Religious ritual has little power to change lives. Religious formalism leaves people spiritually barren. Doctrine alone will not transform hearts. The power of New Testament witnessing was rooted in the genuineness of lives changed by the gospel. The disciples were not play-acting. They were not going through the motions. Theirs was not some form of artificial spirituality. An encounter with the living Christ had changed them, and they could not be silent any longer.

What common thread runs through the experiences of Paul and John that made them such powerful witnesses? Acts 22:1–14, Phil. 3:1–7, 1 John 1:1–4.

At Pentecost, the disciples were changed people. Something happened to them so that the Spirit could do something through them. The Holy Spirit had done something for them so that He could do something with them. The Spirit overflowed from their lives to refresh the lives of others.

Jesus put it this way: “‘He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38, NKJV). The root word for “believes” in the Greek here is pistor. It means much more than a superficial belief or mere intellectual assent. It is a rock-solid belief or confident trust. It is a dynamic, life-transforming faith in Christ, who poured out His life on the cross for the sins of humanity. Jesus’ point is that when His love quenches our spiritual thirst, this love flows from our hearts to the people around us.

“Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 347.

The most powerful witness is one of a Christian who knows Jesus personally. There is no substitute for the testimony that springs naturally from a heart immersed in Jesus’ love.

What kind of personal testimony do you have that tells of what the Lord has done for you? How can you learn to share it better with others?
A Witnessing Faith Is a Growing Faith

Activity is a law of life. In order to be healthy, our bodies need consistent exercise. Every organ, muscle, and tissue is strengthened and invigorated through exercise. When we neglect exercise, our immune system is compromised, and we become more susceptible to disease.

Something similar happens to us spiritually when we do not exercise our faith through witnessing. The words of Jesus, that “‘it is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35), work themselves out in our own spiritual lives. When we share God’s Word with others, we grow spiritually. The more we love Jesus, the more we will desire to witness of His love. The more we witness of His love, the more we will love Him. Sharing our faith strengthens our faith.

What does Jesus’ miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes teach us about the sharing of our faith? John 6:1–11.

The more that we give away our faith, the more our faith multiplies. This law of multiplication is a divine principle of spiritual life. Give and grow, or withhold and wither. Jesus increases our faith as we share it with others, even if our faith is quite small. As we share the Bread of Life with spiritually hungry people around us, Jesus multiplies in our hands, and we end up with more than we started.

When Jesus began, He had five loaves and two fish. After five thousand people were completely satisfied with their meal that day, Jesus had more left over than when He started. There were still twelve baskets remaining.

Jesus’ instructions to His New Testament church are too clear to be misunderstood. He declared, “‘Freely you have received, freely give’” (Matt. 10:8, NKJV). Witnessing is the gentle breeze that fans the sparks of revival into Pentecostal flames. When witness and service do not accompany a revival of prayer and Bible study, the flames of revival are extinguished, and the embers soon grow cold.

It’s true, isn’t it? The more that we witness, the more our faith grows. What has been your own experience with this crucial spiritual truth?
Revival, Witnessing, and Divine Intervention

The thrilling story of the rapid growth of New Testament Christianity in Acts is the story of a revived church witnessing of Jesus’ love. It is the story of a church that regularly experienced divine intervention. Witnessing was a way of life for these early believers.

“Daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42, NKJV). Persecution even furthered the cause of the gospel. When persecution scattered the members of the church at Jerusalem, they “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4, NKJV).

One of the more remarkable examples of divine intervention in Acts is the story of Philip and an Ethiopian government official.

Read the story of Philip instructing the Ethiopian and his response in Acts 8:26–38. What can we take from this story about revival and witnessing?

“An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God’s way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.”—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109.

There are three essential elements in revival, and they are prayer, the study of God’s Word, and witnessing. When God’s people seek Him in earnest, heartfelt intercession, and when they saturate their minds with the truths of His Word, and when they passionately witness of His love and truth to others—God divinely intervenes and opens unusual doors for the proclamation of truth.

Be honest with yourself: what do you do when witnessing opportunities come? Do you witness, or do you find some excuse not to? What does your answer tell you about your own need of revival and reformation?
Further Study: “In His wisdom the Lord brings those who are seeking for truth into touch with fellow beings who know the truth. It is the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness. Humanity, drawing its efficiency from the great Source of wisdom, is made the instrumentality, the working agency, through which the gospel exercises its transforming power on mind and heart.”—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 134.

“God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy,—the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice,—we must participate in His labors for their redemption.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 142.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the main idea of this week’s lesson? Are there changes that God is calling you to make in your life? Do your priorities need to be readjusted in any way? What actions might God be calling you to take?

2. Dwell more on this amazing spiritual truth that the more we witness for our faith, the more our faith grows. Why do you think this is true? Why does this principle make so much sense?

3. How often do you witness for your Jesus? If not a lot, ask yourself, Why not? Are you afraid of rejection? If so, think about Jesus and how often He was rejected. If rejection didn’t deter Him, it shouldn’t us. Or do you fail to witness because you are not sure of what to say? If so, what does that tell you about your need for a deeper walk with the Lord?

4. During the week we talked a bit about how religious ritual alone cannot bring about a change of the heart. That is so true. At the same time, what is the place of ritual and tradition in our faith and church? In what ways, if any, can ritual and tradition be of value in revival and reformation?

5. Why do we get so much satisfaction from being used by God to reach souls for Him?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Matthew 28:19, 20

The Student Will:

Know: Analyze the relationship between knowing Christ personally and sharing Christ passionately. The purpose of this lesson is to reveal that the fruit of knowing Christ is sharing Christ. Healthy Christians pray, study, and witness. Without witness, prayer and Bible study can easily degenerate into empty formalism or pharisaic ritual.

Feel: Nurture the natural desire to witness, which overflows from a converted heart.

Do: Resolve to take advantage of the witnessing opportunities that Christ provides daily, and decide to set aside time each week for unselfish service and outreach for Christ.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Understanding Christ’s Final Words
   A Why are Christ’s parting words to His disciples in Matthew 28:18–28 so vitally important for the church today?
   B What two aspects of the disciples’ witness make it so powerfully effective?

II. Feel: Experiencing the Impact of the Holy Spirit’s Power
   A How would you feel if you were part of a very small group of New Testament believers whose Master had just ascended to heaven, leaving you with the daunting task of reaching the world with the message of His love?
   B What gave these disciples such confidence? What gives us confidence that the task can be completed in our day?
   C What role do the Holy Spirit and angels play in soul winning? What role do we play?

III. Do: Carrying Out Christ’s Mission
   A What does the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20 mean to you personally?
   B In what practical ways have you attempted to share Jesus’ love with others?

Summary: Witnessing and living an unselfish life of blessing to others is the fruit of an intimate experience with Jesus.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: Matthew 28:18–20

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Authentic, New Testament Christianity always manifests itself in lives of witness and service. When we know Christ, we long to share Christ. Revival is accompanied by a burst of witnessing activity. This was true in the book of Acts, and it is true in the church today.

Just for Teachers: The focus of this week’s lesson is that all genuine revival must manifest itself in witness. Witness is not only the outgrowth of revival; it is also at the heart of why revival happens. Help your class to understand that the more we are actively involved in Christ’s service, the more we will draw closer to Him.

Opening Activity: If possible, print out enough copies of the following statement from Steps to Christ, page 80, to distribute among the members of your class. Read the statement together, then answer the questions below.

“If you will go to work as Christ designs that His disciples shall, and win souls for Him, you will feel the need of a deeper experience and a greater knowledge in divine things, and will hunger and thirst after righteousness. You will plead with God, and your faith will be strengthened, and your soul will drink deeper drafts at the well of salvation. Encountering opposition and trials will drive you to the Bible and prayer. You will grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and will develop a rich experience.”—Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 80.

1. What does this Ellen G. White statement tell us about the relationship between our own spiritual lives and sharing our faith?
2. In what ways does witnessing contribute to our spiritual growth?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: Emphasize the importance of a person’s final words. Matthew 28:18–20 is Christ’s parting commission to His disciples. Ask your class members if they have ever received a letter or an e-mail from someone who knew he or she was dying. Possibly someone in your class remembers a child’s final night at home just before he or she went off to college or was married. Maybe someone
can recall an experience with an adult child who was going overseas on a military assignment. What were these moments like?

Bible Commentary

I. Christ’s Final Words *(Review Matthew 28:18–20 with your class.)*

Our passage begins with the promise of power. Jesus says, “‘All authority [power] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore . . .’” *(NKJV)*. The word *authority* is *exousia* in the Greek. It is the same power that Jesus freely exercised over the forces of evil throughout His ministry. It is upon the basis of Christ’s authority and through Christ’s power that His disciples are sent out. The Great Commission is accompanied by a great promise. The disciples do not go in their strength; they go in His.

The commission “Go” includes each believer. Our Lord does not call the qualified. He calls all believers and qualifies them. The priority is to make disciples of all nations. Christianity was the first truly international religion. Jesus’ words eliminate national boundaries. Christ’s followers are members of His church, comprising people from “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” *(Rev. 14:6, NKJV)*. Their mission is to reach the world with the message of Jesus and His truth. For those who commit their lives to Him, He promises His presence. He declares, “‘I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” *(Matt. 28:20, NKJV)*. Although Christ was no longer physically present with His disciples, He was closer to them through the ministry of His Holy Spirit than if He had never left. The promise of His presence will sustain His witnessing church until the day He returns.

**Consider This:** When we share God’s Word with others, we are doing so with the authority of Jesus Christ. We are participating with Him in His mission to a lost world. How does this make you feel?

II. Christ’s Promise of Power *(Review Acts 1:8; 2:38, 39 with your class.)*

The word for “power” in Acts 1:8 is *dunamis*, the word from which our English word *dynamite* is derived. This is the power of the Holy Spirit that comes upon those who surrender their lives to Jesus, as Acts 2:38, 39 promises. It is the power to overcome the forces of hell and proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth. The gift of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential in receiving power to witness. The Acts revival came as the disciples committed their lives to reaching the world with the gospel. When Christ’s church obeys His command to proclaim the good news of His grace to the world, His Spirit will fall with Pentecostal power so that they are strengthened and can accomplish the task He has assigned them.
According to Acts 2, the promise of the Holy Spirit was not only for the New Testament church; it was for His people until the end of time. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter assures the newly baptized converts that “the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39, NKJV). The promise of the Holy Spirit is for every generation of believers. It is especially needed by His last-day church to finish the work of God on earth. Without the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the task of proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth is impossible. But through the power of Jesus, manifest in His Spirit, the impossible becomes possible (Matt. 19:26). Our greatest need as a people is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; but God will not pour out His Holy Spirit for a witness to a church that has little interest in witnessing.

Consider This: Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised to send heaven’s richest gift to His earthly church—the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we witness for Jesus, we witness in His authority and in the Holy Spirit’s power. Why, then, are we so powerless in our witness at times?

III. Christ’s Divine Encounters (Review Acts 8–10 with your class.)

When you are discussing Thursday’s daily study on the experience of Philip and the Ethiopian, remind your class of God’s miraculous working power, as depicted in Acts 8–10. The Holy Spirit rapidly opens doors to three people groups in a very short time. In Acts 8, the continent of Africa opens to the gospel. The treasurer of Ethiopia receives Christ as the Holy Spirit providentially leads Philip to him. In Acts 9, Saul is converted. Both his name and life are changed. Paul proclaims the gospel throughout Asia Minor, and churches are raised up throughout the Mediterranean world. In Acts 10, God gives dreams to both Cornelius and Peter to prepare them for their divine encounter. Cornelius, a leader in the Roman army, accepts Christ and no doubt influences his Roman associates. Remind your class that when we take advantage of the opportunities that Christ provides, He will open doors that we cannot even imagine.

Consider This: God prepares people for our witness before we ever meet them. What are some of the ways in which God prepares people to receive His Word?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Use the following questions to emphasize the need for each believer to be actively involved in witnessing.
Thought Questions:
1. Why isn’t revival possible without a commitment to witnessing?
2. What role does revival play in witnessing? What role does witnessing play in revival?

Application Questions:
1. What witnessing activities can we launch as a class?
2. What things can we do weekly or monthly?

Witnessing Activity: Spend time discussing with your class various witnessing/mission projects that you can participate in together. Here are a few possibilities.

1. Develop a list of former and missing members. Begin to pray for them and set aside one Sabbath a month to visit them.
2. Make a list of people who are in the hospital or in nursing homes and visit them monthly.
3. Set aside one Sabbath each quarter to pass out literature in the neighborhood of the church.
4. What other things can you think of? Make your list and then choose a few class-witnessing activities.

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: The key point in this week’s lesson is that without witness there can be no revival. The Holy Spirit comes to empower our witness so that we may reach others with the gospel. Praying for revival includes praying for lost people and doing everything we can to reach them for Jesus.

Thought Questions:
1. How has your own experience with Jesus deepened your desire to witness of His love to others?
2. Think back on a time in your life when you were actively involved in service for Christ. Did you feel closer to Jesus then? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. It is possible to become so actively involved that we become “burned out,” neglecting prayer and Bible study. How can we prevent this from happening?
Lesson 5 *July 27–August 2
(page 38 of Standard Edition)

Obedience: The Fruit of Revival

Sabbath Afternoon


Memory Text: “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5, NKJV).

An illustration of the impact of revival on daily life can be seen in the Welsh Revival of 1904. Evan Roberts and some of his friends began earnestly praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They interceded, studied Scripture, and shared their faith.

The Spirit was poured out in response. Lives were changed. In six months there were one hundred thousand conversions in the small country of Wales. The results of this revival were seen throughout the country. Throughout the day, people flocked to churches by the thousands for prayer. The rough, cursing coal miners were transformed into kind, courteous gentlemen. Even the pit ponies in the coal mines had to learn new commands because the miners were not cursing at them anymore! Transformed, obedient lives sprang from converted hearts. This is irrefutable evidence of a true revival.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 3.
The Transformed Life

Revival does not simply result in some warm, fuzzy feeling of supposed closeness to Jesus. It results in a changed life. There were times when the Bible writers felt extremely close to Jesus, and at other times they felt distant. There were times when their spirits soared in ecstasy, and they delighted in the joy of His presence. At other times, they did not feel the nearness of His presence at all.

The results of revival are not necessarily positive feelings. They are a changed life. Our feelings are not the fruit of revival. Obedience is. This is evident in the lives of the disciples after Pentecost.

**Analyze** Peter’s reactions before the Cross, after the Resurrection, and after Pentecost. What do you notice? What difference did the Cross, the Resurrection, and Pentecost make in Peter’s attitudes?

---

*Matt. 26:69–74:* Peter’s reaction before the Cross.

---

*John 21:15–19:* Peter’s reaction after the Resurrection.

---

*Acts 5:28–32:* Peter’s reaction after Pentecost.

---

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost made a dramatic difference in Peter’s life. It transformed him from a weak, vacillating believer to a faith-filled, obedient disciple. Once full of brash words and empty promises, Peter now became filled with faith, courage, and a zeal for witnessing. It is a powerful example of what the Holy Spirit can do for anyone surrendered in faith and obedience to our Lord.
The High Cost of Obedience

One of the early examples of faith, and the cost of faith, can be seen in the life of Stephen.


The infilling of the Holy Spirit led the disciples to live unselfish, godly lives. Their faith led them to obedience. At times the spiritual warfare was fierce, but Jesus, their Savior and Lord, was by their side to strengthen their faith. They were stoned, imprisoned, burned at the stake, and shipwrecked. Their obedience often came with an unusually high price. Many of the disciples suffered a martyr’s death.

In Acts 7, Stephen preaches a magnificent sermon outlining the history of Israel. He describes the experience of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon. Throughout his appeal, Stephen describes God’s faithfulness in the light of Israel’s unfaithfulness. Stephen concludes his sermon by charging that the religious leaders of Israel violated God’s covenant and resisted the influence of the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51, 52).

What happened to Stephen because of His witness for Jesus? What does this teach us about what the cost of faithfulness can be? Acts 7:54–60.

Stephen was obedient to the call of God and faithful to the mission of God, even to the point of death. Though we might not all be called to die for our faith, we need to be so committed to our Lord that, if we were called to that, we would not back off but, like Stephen, remain faithful to the end. It’s not out of the realm of possibility that someone reading these words right now will one day have to give up his or her life in the cause of the Lord.

What would happen were you to face a life-threatening situation because of your powerful witness? Though you might not be able now to predict what you would do, how have your past actions revealed the way in which you might react if one day you were brought into such a situation?
When the Spirit Surprises

Although Saul was misguided in his fierce persecution of Christians, he thought he was doing God’s will in confronting what he believed to be a fanatical sect. As Saul journeyed to Damascus to capture Christians and drag them back to Jerusalem, Jesus dramatically surprised him. Saul’s Damascus road experience changed not only his life, but it changed the world, as well.

Read the account of Paul’s conversion experience in Acts 9:1–9. Why did the Lord send him immediately to Ananias after this experience? What important lesson is here for us?

“Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world.

“When, in the midst of his blind error and prejudice, Saul was given a revelation of the Christ whom he was persecuting, he was placed in direct communication with the church, which is the light of the world.”—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 122.

How did Jesus surprise Ananias? What attitude must Ananias have had in order to follow the Savior’s instructions? Acts 9:10–16.

Try to put yourself in the position of Paul after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. What a shock to him. Also, try to put yourself in Ananias’ position. What a shock it must have been to him, as well. What do these accounts teach us about the ways in which we might be called by the Lord to face and do things that, at the time, we don’t understand? Why, though, must we obey the Lord regardless?
Sensitivity to the Spirit’s Call

Throughout his ministry, Paul was guided by the Spirit, convicted by the Spirit, instructed by the Spirit, and empowered by the Spirit. In his defense before King Agrippa, he described the heavenly vision on the Damascus Road. He then testified that the purpose of his ministry to both the Jews and Gentiles was “‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me’” (Acts 26:18, NKJV).


In direct contrast to Paul, King Agrippa did not yield to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. His own self-inflated importance and egotistical desires were in conflict with the Spirit’s prompting for a new life in Christ.

Jesus stated it clearly: “‘A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light’” (John 12:35, 36, NKJV).

As we obediently follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and walk in the light of God’s truth, He will continually reveal more light and truth. At the same time, the more that we push away the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the more that we resist Him, the harder our hearts will become.

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Those are some of the most poignant, powerful, and sad words in all the Bible. In what ways can we be in danger of harboring a similar attitude? For instance, how does compromise in our walk with the Lord reveal the same principle that is seen in Agrippa’s words?
Spirit-Led Obedience

The Holy Spirit played a major role in every aspect of Jesus’ life. He was “conceived of the Holy Spirit” (NKJV) and “anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and with power” (NKJV) at baptism—the birth of His ministry (Matt. 1:20; 3:16, 17; Acts 10:34–38). Throughout Christ’s life, He was obedient to the Father’s will (John 8:29, Heb. 10:7).

Read Philippians 2:5–8. What aspects of a life filled with the Holy Spirit appear in this specific description of Jesus?

He who was “in the form,” or the very essence, of God, “made Himself.” Or, as the original Greek text of the New Testament says, “emptied Himself” of His privileges and prerogatives as God’s equal and, instead, became “a servant.”

Jesus was a servant to the Father’s will. He “humbled Himself” and became “obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). Jesus provides an example of what a life filled with the Holy Spirit is like. It is a life of willing obedience and humble submission to the Father’s will. It is a prayerful life devoted to service and ministry, a life consumed with the passionate desire to see others saved in the Father’s kingdom.

The apostle Paul declares that Spirit-filled, New Testament believers have “received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name” (Rom. 1:5, NKJV). The heathen, on the other hand, “are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath” (Rom. 2:8, NKJV).

In Romans 6:15–23, Paul uses two contrasting expressions, “slaves of sin” (NKJV) and “slaves of righteousness” (NKJV). In Romans 8:12–17, he describes the “spirit of bondage” and the “Spirit of adoption.” What does your own experience with the Lord, with faith, with the struggle against sin, and with acceptance from God tell you about the meaning of these terms?
Further Study: “At the entrance gate of the path that leads to everlasting life God places faith, and He lines the whole way with the light and peace and joy of willing obedience. The traveler in this way keeps ever before him the mark of his high calling in Christ. The prize is ever in sight. To him God’s commands are righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.”—Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 183.

“The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer’s love and of His saving grace. The men and women, who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 49.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Acts 5:1–11. What can we learn from this powerful and, to some degree, frightful story? Why do you think that they faced such dire consequences for their actions?

2. Dwell on Thursday’s study, which talked about how Jesus “emptied Himself” in order to fulfill what He came here to do. How can we take that principle and apply it to ourselves, in our walk with the Lord? Why, especially, as we seek for revival and reformation in our lives and in the church, is this kind of self-denial and death to self so crucial?

3. “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). In class, talk more about the implications of those fateful words.
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Acts 5:28–32

The Student Will:

Know: Study the relationship between revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the resultant obedient life. Recognize that there is no authentic revival without a transformation of our lives. All true revival leads to the desire to do God’s will.

Feel: Delight in the reality of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power to convict, convert, and empower each believer to live a transformed life.

Do: Daily seek to please Jesus by living in harmony with His revealed will.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Understanding the Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit

A What is the greatest evidence of a Spirit-filled life?

B How can you tell if you are truly filled with the Holy Spirit?

C How did the lives of both Peter and Paul demonstrate the fruits of genuine revival?

II. Feel: Desiring to Please Him in All Things

A Why do we find it so difficult at times to live an obedient life that is in harmony with God’s will?

B Read Acts 5:28–32 aloud in class. What do these verses say to you personally about a life filled with the Holy Spirit?

III. Do: Obeying in the Power of the Spirit

A Why do we so often live such Spiritless lives when Christ offers us so freely the gift of His Holy Spirit?

B Where are you on your spiritual journey? Which situation of Peter describes your journey best: his reaction to Christ before the Cross, after the Resurrection, or after Pentecost? Describe Peter’s three reactions, and apply them to your own life.

C Does the experience of Jesus say anything about the cost of obedience in our own lives?

Summary: Revival always leads to obedience. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit results in the fruit of the Spirit manifest in the life.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: Philippians 2:5–8

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The Holy Spirit’s power is revealed in transformed lives. Our emotions or feelings do not testify to the genuineness of a revival. The real evidence is the positive changes in our lives.

Just for Teachers: Emphasize the examples set by Peter, Stephen, Paul, and especially Jesus, of spirit-filled lives seeking to do God’s will. The main point of this week’s lesson is that the Holy Spirit’s power, manifested in revival, leads to obedience to God’s will.

One of the attendees at an evangelistic meeting visited the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the very first time. A few days later she commented to the evangelist that, although she believed the new truths she was learning at the evangelistic meetings, she would not be returning to church. When he asked why, she said something like this: “Well, you see, pastor, in our church the Holy Spirit is poured out each week. People speak in tongues. They have visions, and they prophesy. I want to see and feel the power of the Holy Spirit in action, and I did not see it here.”

This lady was certainly right to expect to attend a Spirit-filled service, but her perception of the ways in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself was certainly mistaken. In this week’s lesson, we will focus especially on how the Holy Spirit is revealed in a changed life. The power of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily revealed in signs and spectacular wonders. It is always revealed in hearts that seek to do God’s will. In a future lesson in this series on revival, reformation, and mission, we will carefully study how to distinguish between the true and false manifestations of the Spirit. In this study, we will examine the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of Peter, Stephen, Paul, and Jesus.

Discuss With the Class: As you studied your lesson this week, what common thread of the Holy Spirit’s work did you see in the lives of these four major Bible characters: Peter, Stephen, Paul, and Jesus?
STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: There is no greater model of a life filled with the Holy Spirit than the life of Jesus. The life of Jesus reveals what a Spirit-filled life looks like. Jesus is the heart of all revival. Without Him there is no revival. In His life we discover what revival looks like. There probably is no passage in the Bible that demonstrates this more clearly than Philippians 2:5–8.

Bible Commentary

I. Understanding His Divine Nature (Review Philippians 2:5, 6 with your class.)

In this passage, the apostle Paul carefully explains the very essence of Christ’s divine nature. He begins by stating, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (Phil. 2:5, 6, NKJV). Paul uses the expression “Christ Jesus.” His usual way of referring to our Lord is Jesus Christ. Why the change? It is likely that He wants to emphasize the divine nature first. So, He begins with Christ. The name Jesus was given by the angel to Joseph because He would “‘save His people from their sins’” (Matt. 1:21, NKJV). It dealt with the Incarnation.

The Divine Christ was in the “form of God” or the very essence of God from the days of eternity. The Greek word for “form” is morphe. It denotes all of the characteristics and attributes of God. All of the eternal qualities that are part of the Father’s inherent nature are found in Christ. Consequently, Christ did “not consider it robbery to be equal with God.” In other words, Christ did not think it unusual in any way to exist on a level of equality with God. That is who He was. He did not have to seize or grasp equality with God. It was part of the essence of His nature.

Consider This: Jesus existed with His Father from eternity past. He never had a beginning and never will have an ending. Why is the eternal nature of Christ essential in the plan of salvation?

II. Understanding His Supreme Sacrifice (Review Philippians 2:7, 8 with your class.)

Amazingly enough, this Christ, who was equal with the Father, “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming
in the likeness of men” (vs. 7, NKJV). Jesus voluntarily emptied Himself of His privileges and prerogatives as God’s equal. He left the honor and glory of heaven and tabernacled or dwelt in human flesh in order to redeem us. The One who was in the form of God came in the form of a servant. It would have been an infinite humiliation for God to become a man (Christ), but it is unthinkable that He would become a servant. Becoming a humble, obedient servant is more amazing still. Becoming a humble, obedient servant who dies the most shameful of all deaths, the death of the cross, is even more extraordinary. Jesus descended from the exalted heights of heaven to the depths of despair so that we could ascend from the depths of despair to the exalted heights of heaven.

What does a Spirit-filled life look like? Look at the life of Jesus, and you will see a Spirit-filled life. He was born of the Spirit, filled daily with the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, and ministered in the power of the Spirit (Luke 1:35, 4:18, Matt. 3:11–17). Jesus lived in order to bring glory to the Father. In His life, He revealed what the Father was like. This is why He said, “ ‘I always do those things that please Him’ ” (John 8:29, NKJV). He was an obedient Son, committed to doing His Father’s will, living a life of glory to God (Heb. 5:8, Matt. 26:39, John 17:4). His life reflects the fruits of true revival—an obedient life.

**Consider This:** Why is it necessary to be completely committed to Christ, to be willing to please Him in anything He asks, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

**STEP 3**—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** Peter, Stephen, Paul, and especially Jesus, modeled in their lives the results of complete consecration to God. The transforming power of God’s grace leads to obedience. Here is a modern story that illustrates the same principle. Share this story and invite your class to share any similar illustrations.

Dave and Jane claimed to be committed Christians. They attended church weekly, offered a short prayer at meals, and occasionally prayed together, but something was missing in their lives. Their marriage was in deep trouble. Arguments often punctuated their discussions. The latest TV programs captivated their interest, and it seemed boring to read the Bible and pray. Through a series of unusual circumstances, they became part of a small Bible-study group. Gradually, they developed a hunger for God’s Word. Over time, significant changes took place in their lives. The things about which they once
so fiercely argued seemed to make little difference. Prayer and Bible study became precious times of fellowship with God. There was a dramatic change in their thinking. The motto of their lives became, “Jesus, the desire of my heart is to please You.”

This is the result of true spiritual revival. When our hearts are renewed by His grace and our minds are saturated with His Word, we long to please Jesus by living godly, obedient lives.

**Activity:** Ask your class members if there is anyone among them who has a similar story to share. Invite the student to share it with the class.

**STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** If obedience is the fruit of revival, what does this tell us about any so-called revival that does not lead to obedience? Encourage each class member to reflect on his or her own life through the following thought questions. Ask your class members to meditate prayerfully upon each of them for a minute or two.

**Thought Questions:**

1. In what ways am I personally experiencing spiritual renewal each day? In what ways is my heart being revived by the Holy Spirit daily?

2. In what ways does my life reflect the renewing power of the Holy Spirit? What are the areas in my life that I have not yet surrendered to Jesus? What holds me back from surrendering them?
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Acts 5:30–32, 2 Cor. 7:9–11, Lev. 5:5, 1 John 1:9, Heb. 12:17, Ps. 32:1–8.

Memory Text: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13, NKJV).

Throughout Scripture, both repentance and confession have prepared the way for spiritual revival. God has always prepared His people to do a great work for Him by leading them to godly sorrow for their sins. Once we acknowledge our sins and confess them, we are on track to have victory over them.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Repentance and confession are two prerequisites needed in order for us to receive the Spirit’s power in abundance.

In this week’s lesson, we will trace the importance of true repentance in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it is revealed in the book of Acts. We will also contrast true repentance with false repentance. Most of all, we will discover that repentance is a gift that the Holy Spirit gives in order to help us to reflect Jesus’ love to those around us.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 10.*
Repentance: God’s Gift

During the weeks before Pentecost, the disciples earnestly sought God in prayer. Acts 1:14 says that they were in “one accord in prayer and supplication.” This experience of “one accord” reveals a strong unity and harmony among Christ’s followers that would not have been possible without repentance and confession. Prayer and confession prepared them for what was going to come.

Read Acts 5:30–32. What important points can we take from what Peter said here?

Peter makes two critical points. First, repentance is a gift. As we open our hearts to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives us the gift of repentance. Second, the disciples themselves were witnesses in their own lives of the reality of repentance. They not only preached repentance, they experienced it.

“As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. . . . As they meditated upon His pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ’s character.”—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 36.

Repentance and confession are common themes throughout Acts (Acts 17:30, 31; 26:19, 20). It is “the goodness of God” that leads us to repentance; it is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that brings us to the realization of our need for a sin-pardoning Savior. At the same time, we must remember that the Holy Spirit does not fill unrepentant hearts (Rom. 2:8; Acts 2:38, 39; 3:19). The Holy Spirit fills hearts emptied of selfish ambition, of the desire for personal recognition, and of the drive for personal glory.

Why is it so difficult to acknowledge our sins and repent of them? Why is it so easy to let self get in the way of true repentance?
True Repentance Defined

How does the apostle Paul describe true repentance? 2 Cor. 7:9–11.

Repentance is a God-initiated sorrow for sin. It also includes a decision to forsake whatever specific sins that the Holy Spirit brings to mind (Ezek. 14:6, Zech. 1:4). Genuine repentance does not lead Christians into a state of deep depression because of their sinful natures or deeds. “Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation” (2 Cor. 7:10, NKJV). It leads us, instead, to focus on Jesus’ righteousness, not our sinfulness. It produces a “diligence” in “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (2 Cor. 7:11, Heb. 12:2).

Throughout the New Testament, we see that the enormity of our sin is never greater than the enormity of His grace. For “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20, NKJV). This was certainly true in the apostle Paul’s experience.

Read 1 Timothy 1:14–17 and Acts 26:10–16. What do these passages tell you about Paul’s sinfulness and Jesus’ righteousness?

When the apostle Paul realized that he was persecuting the Lord of glory, he was driven to his knees in genuine repentance and confession. Throughout his entire life he never tired of telling the story of his own sinfulness and God’s grace. His repentance did not leave him in a state of depression; instead, it drove him into the arms of an all-loving and forgiving Savior. The confession of his sin did not leave him feeling guiltier than before. His focus was not on how unrighteous he was but on how righteous Jesus was.

Have you ever felt that you were the “chief” of sinners? Or, if not the chief, still too sinful to be saved? How can you learn to rest in the assurance that Christ’s righteousness is enough to save you?
True Repentance and Confession

What spiritual principles do we learn from Leviticus 5:5; 1 John 1:9; Isaiah 1:16–18; and Acts 26:19, 20 regarding the nature of true repentance and confession?

Genuine repentance is always accompanied by confession of specific sins. The Holy Spirit does not give us vague feelings of guilt. He convicts us of our definite shortcomings.

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.”—Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 38.

The purpose of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit is to reveal our need of the saving grace of Christ. Repentance does not make God love us more; rather, it enables us to appreciate His love more. Confession does not earn God’s forgiveness; it instead enables us to receive His forgiveness. God does not love us more when we repent or love us less when we fail to. His love for us is constant. The only variable is our response to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The truth is that our hearts are hindered from receiving the abundant blessings that God has for us while our spiritual arteries are clogged with the sludge of sin. Sin deadens us to the Spirit’s prompting and makes it harder for us to respond to Him. Repentance and confession open the clogged channels of our spiritual hearts so that we may receive the overflowing of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power.

However much we long for forgiveness when we confess and repent, we must remember that this is a two-way street. That is, how do we respond to those who have treated us wrongly and who ask for forgiveness? Whom, though totally undeserving of our forgiveness, do we need to forgive anyway, and why is it so important for us to forgive?
True and False Repentance Contrasted

There are some very specific examples in the Bible of people who sought repentance but were not forgiven by God. They wept. They were sorrowful. They confessed their sin but were not forgiven. Read the accounts of Pharaoh, Balaam, Esau, and Judas in Exodus 12:29–32, Numbers 22:32–35, Hebrews 12:17, and Matthew 27:4.

What common thread do you see running through each story in regard to repentance and/or confession?

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

One phrase in Hebrews 12:17 sums it up well. Speaking of Esau, the passage says that “when he wanted to inherit the blessing” (NKJV) he repented. Like Pharaoh, Balaam, and Judas, Esau’s heart was not broken over the pain that his sin had brought to his family or to the heart of God. His concern was over the birthright he had lost. He was sorry that he had not received that which he believed to be rightfully his. His motives were not pure. His sorrow was for himself. False repentance focuses upon the consequences of sin as opposed to the sin itself.

The law of sowing and reaping is a divine law. It is true that sin brings dire consequences, but repentance is not consumed with the negative results of sin. It is concerned, instead, with the dishonor and sorrow that our sin has brought to God.

True repentance is always characterized by at least three things. First, a sorrow that our sin has broken God’s heart. We are hurt because we hurt the One who loves us so much. Second, there is an honest confession of the specific sin that we have committed. True repentance is not laced with excuses for our behavior. It does not place blame on someone else. It takes responsibility for our actions. Third, true repentance always includes the decision to turn away from our sin. There can be no genuine repentance unless there is a corresponding reformation in the life. False repentance, on the other hand, is self-centered. It is concerned with the consequences of our sin. It is an emotional state of sorrow because our sins often bring negative consequences. It makes excuses and lays the blame on someone else. It is unconcerned about the changing of behavior unless the change will personally bring its own rewards.
Confession’s Healing Power

Confession lances the boil of guilt and allows the poisonous pus of sin to drain. Confession is healing in many ways. It opens our hearts to receive God’s grace. Through confession we accept the forgiveness that Christ freely offers us from the Cross. Confession is healing because it allows us to receive grace. Confession also breaks down barriers between us and other people. It heals relationships.

Read Psalm 32:1–8. What does this teach us about confession and repentance?

Read Acts 24:16. The apostle Paul strove for a “conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men.” What does that mean?

Is guilt good or bad? It all depends. If the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and the guilt of that sin drives us to Jesus, guilt is good. If we have already confessed our sin and continue to feel guilty, the guilt may become destructive. “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 of true happiness. Now Jesus says, ‘Lay it all on Me. I will take your sins. I will give you peace. Banish 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.’”—Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 9, p. 305. The answer to guilt is Jesus. His grace abolishes the destructive guilt sin lays upon us.

There are times we may have confessed our sins and we still feel guilty. Why? One reason might be that the devil is attempting to rob us of the assurance of salvation. He loves to steal away the blessed assurance of forgiveness and salvation that we have in Jesus. Second, the Holy Spirit may be pointing out something that exists between us and another individual. If we have hurt another individual, our troubled conscience will be eased when we confess our wrong to the person whom we have hurt.

How has guilt impacted your relationship with the Lord and with others? What can you do to help to alleviate the burden of guilt that you carry? Even if you have done wrong and the guilt is in a sense justified, what promises can you claim from the Bible to help you to move on?
Further Study: “Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. The work that we have to do on our part is plainly set before us: ‘Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.’ Isaiah 1:16, 17. ‘If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.’ Ezekiel 33:15.”—Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 39.

Discussion Questions:

1. What crucial lesson about forgiveness can we learn from Jesus’ willingness to forgive those who nailed Him to the cross? If He was willing to do that, how much more so should we be willing to forgive those who have hurt us?

2. In your own experience, how has confession of sin been a blessing to you? In what ways has it helped you in your relationship, not only with the Lord but with others?

3. Though we read this week about the need, at times, to confess to other people whom we have wronged, why must we always be very careful in what we say to others?

4. True repentance, we have read, includes a putting away of sin. What happens, however, if we—struggling with that sin—fall into it again? Does that mean our repentance wasn’t sincere? Does it mean we cannot be forgiven for it again? If this were true, what hope would any of us have? How are we to understand the nature of biblical repentance while always keeping in mind the reality of our sinful natures?

5. From what we have studied this week, why is repentance a vital component in the whole issue of revival and reformation? How do the terms revival and reformation contain within themselves the idea that we do need to repent?
The Lesson in Brief

 ► **Key Text:** Psalm 32:1–5

 ► **The Student Will:**

 **Know:** Recognize the importance of the ways in which both repentance and confession relate to revival and the reception of the Holy Spirit.

 **Feel:** Foster sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s convicting power, which leads to repentance and confession.

 **Do:** Apply the biblical principles of repentance and confession to his or her own life and, with the apostle Paul, seek a “‘conscience without offense toward God and men’” *(Acts 24:16, NKJV)*.

 ► **Learning Outline:**

 I. **Know: Understanding the Nature of Repentance and Confession**

   A. What is the difference between repentance and confession?

   B. Why are repentance and confession essential prerequisites to receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Who initiates both repentance and confession?

   C. When is guilt destructive, and when is it healthy? Is guilt ever healthy? Explain.

 II. **Feel: Delivered From Guilt and Condemnation**

   A. As Paul considered the sinfulness of His own life, he called himself the chief of sinners *(1 Tim. 1:15)*. How did he deal with the guilt of his past? In what way did Paul understand sin and righteousness? What difference does this understanding make in our lives?

   B. What must occur for repentance and confession to be effectual in our lives?

 III. **Do: Experiencing the Joy of a Clear Conscience**

   A. In what way does the experience of God’s forgiveness affect our relationships with others?

   B. Why is confession healing for the soul?

 ► **Summary:** In the upper room, the disciples repented and confessed their sins to God and, if necessary, to one another. They were reconciled to God and in harmony or of one accord. They prepared their hearts to receive the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Sin hinders that same mighty outpouring in our own lives. It blocks the flow of God’s Spirit. Repentance and confession of specific sins in our lives opens the clogged channels of the soul so that it may receive heaven’s richest gift, the Holy Spirit, in His fullness.
Learning Cycle

**STEP 1—Motivate**

**Spotlight on Scripture:** *Psalm 32:1–5*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** Repentance and confession are key elements of spiritual growth. Unless we acknowledge our sins and confess them, the Holy Spirit’s power in our lives will be limited. When we yield to the promptings of the Spirit and prepare our hearts to receive Him, He will come into our lives in all of His fullness.

**Just for Teachers:** Emphasize how important it is to carefully listen to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and confess any sin that stands between God and us. It is only if we are honest with ourselves before God that we can receive the blessings He longs to bestow upon us.

Clint was a new Christian attending a Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meeting in New England. He was deeply moved by the biblical presentations on prophecy. One evening a presentation on the second coming of Christ particularly impressed him. When the evangelist asked, “Is there anything in your life that would keep you from being ready for the coming of Jesus?” the Holy Spirit brought something specific to Clint’s mind. Years before, with a group of other teenagers, he had robbed a home in his community. Clint claimed Christ’s promise for forgiveness and confessed his sin.

A few weeks went by, but Clint was still troubled by what he had done. He discussed it with the evangelist, who explained that there was a difference between moral and psychological guilt. Moral guilt is the guilt that comes from breaking God’s law. Psychological guilt is the guilt we experience when we have wronged another. Our moral guilt is gone when we confess our sins to God, but, at times, psychological guilt remains until we confess our sins to the ones we have wronged. When Clint understood the need to ask forgiveness and, if necessary, make restitution to the ones he had wronged, he immediately asked the evangelist to help him to develop a plan to make things right. The evangelist contacted the family, and they were very willing to forgive this young man. When the evangelist explained to Clint that the family had a simple response, “We forgive you,” he broke down in tears. His psychological guilt vanished. His burden was lifted. Freedom to live a Spirit-filled life comes when we ask God to forgive us both for our sins against Him and for the times we have wronged others.
Discuss With the Class: When is it appropriate to go to another person and ask him or her to forgive you for something hurtful you have done or said? Is it ever appropriate to confess that sin to God alone without talking to the other person about it? Discuss. When should we confess to God alone?

STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary

I. The Certainty of Forgiveness (Review 1 John 1:9 with your class.)

The Epistle of 1 John contains vital truths for God’s people of every generation. Some Bible scholars have called it “The Epistle of Christian Certainties.” We read about the certainties of Jesus as the Son of God, the promise of eternal life, the assurance of answered prayer, deliverance from the evil one, and forgiveness of sin. In 1 John 1:9, the apostle gives the followers of Jesus this assurance, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (NKJV). Here is something certain. When we confess, God forgives.

Our passage describes two things that God is and two things that God will do. He is faithful, and He is just. He will forgive, and He will cleanse. Referring to this passage, The SDA Bible Commentary makes this insightful comment: “It is also clear that he [John] is speaking of specific acts of sin, and not of sin as an evil principle in the life. Accordingly, confession should be more specific than the mere admission of sinfulness. The recognition of the precise nature of a sin and an understanding of the factors that led to its commission are essential to confession and to building up strength to resist a similar temptation when it recurs.”—Vol. 7, p. 632.

In the first century, the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples as they acknowledged their sins and prepared their hearts with confession and repentance. What was true for God’s followers then is equally true for His people living in these last days.

Consider This: Our sinful acts are the result of our sinful choices. Our sinful nature is the result of being born into a world of sin. When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior and are born again, what happens to our old nature? What is the old nature, and how long will it remain?
II. The Joy of Forgiveness (Review Psalm 32:1–5 with your class.)

Our passage begins with the word blessed. The Hebrew word is ashre, which means “happy,” “content,” or “at peace.” Confession leads us down the pathway to genuine happiness, true contentment, and lasting peace. David declares, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity” (vss. 1, 2, NKJV). Notice these three words: transgression, sin, and iniquity. Each one has a different shade of meaning in the original language. Transgression implies willful rebellion against the will of God. In this passage, the word for “sin” means “missing the mark” or “failing to obey God’s commands.” Iniquity has to do with moral distortion or crookedness. True joy, perfect peace, and inner contentment come when we confess our sins and acknowledge our guilt before God. The grace of God is fully capable of covering our transgressions, sins, and iniquities. There is nothing for which His righteousness cannot atone.

For a whole year after his affair with Bathsheba, David did not confess his sin to God. The results of this denial became obvious in his own body. In Psalm 32:3, 4, David describes what was physically going on inside. His “bones grew old” through his “groaning all the day long” (NKJV). He was filled with guilt and shame. His energy was sapped, and his vitality was gone. When David confessed His sin and acknowledged his guilt, he found in God forgiveness, security, and joy. He discovered a God who would instruct him and teach him in paths of righteousness.

Consider This: Unconfessed sin is a barrier to both our inner peace and Christian joy. It becomes an obstacle between our souls and God. It severely limits that which God can do with our lives. It inhibits the powerful moving of the Holy Spirit through us to reach others with the gospel. Why are confession and repentance essential if we long to experience the promised revival?

►STEP 3—Apply

Thought Questions:

1. Read Leviticus 5:5, 6. What does this passage teach us about the true nature of confession? Why does God invite us to be specific in our confession? If there is something specific that the Holy Spirit is leading you to confess right now, take a moment to do so in silent prayer.
The apostle Paul strove to have “‘a conscience without offense toward God and men’” (Acts 24:16, NKJV). Can you think of anyone whom you may have offended? Is the Holy Spirit leading you to seek to rebuild any damaged relationship? What can you do to begin that process of healing and reconciliation?

Application Questions:
1. Invite your class members to spend a few moments examining their own hearts, asking themselves two questions:
   a. Is there anything between me and God that I have not confessed?
   b. Is there anything between me and someone else that I need to deal with?

2. After a moment in silent prayer, pray a short prayer asking God to take full control of each class member’s life.

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: All biblical revivals are accompanied by confession and repentance of specific sins. Each revival throughout history has been characterized by earnest confession and heartfelt repentance. When the Holy Spirit truly moves upon God’s people, reconciliation takes place. Wrongs are righted, and relationships are restored.

Individual Activities:
1. Have you ever had an experience where someone came to you and asked your forgiveness for something that he or she had said or did? How did that make you feel? What impact did it have on your relationship?

2. Have you ever gone to another person and asked him or her to forgive you? How did you feel after you asked for forgiveness?

3. Can you think of a time in your life when you entered into earnest confession before God because of some sin? How did you feel after confessing?
Unity: The Bond of Revival

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1–3, NKJV).

Unity is an essential ingredient of revival. Conflict, division, and strife do not create an environment for nurturing revival. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on a church that had united in Christ’s mission to the world. Their petty differences were subordinate to the call of Christ’s larger mission. Striving for supremacy ceased in the light of Christ’s commission to reach the lost with the gospel. If the early followers of Christ were busy vying for power, the work would have been stymied from the start. Instead, convicted by the Holy Spirit to die to self, they were united in purpose and mission.

In short, where there is no unity, there can be no revival. Where jealousy, envy, and jostling for supremacy reign, the Holy Spirit’s power is withheld. How crucial, then, that we learn how to break down the barriers that sometimes separate us so that we can enter into the unity that Christ seeks for His church.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 17.*
Answering Christ’s Prayer for Unity

John 17 contains Jesus’ great intercessory prayer. It reveals what was on His mind at that momentous hour of earth’s history.

**Read** John 17:9–11, 20–24. What was Jesus’ heartfelt longing? Why was this so important? How did the disciples’ relationship to one another demonstrate genuine Christian faith? *See Acts 4:32, 33.*

The “oneness,” or unity, of the disciples prepared their hearts for the reception of the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power. Christ’s prayer for His church was fulfilled. They surrendered their differences. Love prevailed. Strife was banished.

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all” *(Acts 4:32, 33, NKJV).*

This passage links the disciples having “one heart and one soul” with their “great power” in witnessing. In the challenging circumstances of first-century Jerusalem at a time when Christianity was unpopular, these committed Christians shared their resources. They supported one another. They laid aside their personal ambitions. Their unselfish attitudes and generosity of spirit prepared them to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s power for witnessing.

“Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. All differences had been put away.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 8, p. 20.

**Why is the fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer in John 17 so important for our church? What does Jesus’ desire for the unity of the first-century church reveal about His desire for our church today?**
New Testament Illustrations of Unity

The New Testament world of the first century was divided by caste, social status, and gender. It was a society in social turmoil. The concepts of equal rights, freedom, and human dignity were not the accepted norms.

Then Christianity burst upon the scene. It created a social revolution. Jesus’ teachings of equality, justice, concern for the poor, and respect for the marginalized appeared radical. At the same time, New Testament believers united around the core values of Creation and Redemption. They taught that all human beings were created by God and that Redemption was made available to all people through the cross of Christ. The Cross showed that each person, regardless of his or her worldly status, was of immense value in God’s sight.

How do the following images illustrate the way in which different believers, regardless of their backgrounds, blend into a harmonious whole? 1 Cor. 12:12–18; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5.

What images could be more powerful to illustrate unity in the church? The apostle Paul uses the body to illustrate the church and its members. The body is closely knit. Its members are interrelated and mutually dependent upon one another. All parts have their function. If one part of the body suffers, the entire body suffers (1 Cor. 12:18–26).

Peter adds the illustration of a spiritual building with the members as stones, each fitting perfectly into the construction of a glorious temple that will glorify Jesus’ name. In these illustrations, each member is intimately linked. It was this bond of loving unity in a world of fractured relationships, power struggles, and divisive schisms that was to be a powerful argument for Christianity. Jesus stated this universal truth clearly: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35, NKJV).

How well does your local church reflect the unity spoken about here? Ask yourself, too: are you helping to bring unity? What attitudes might you be harboring that could be adding to the problem?
Elements of Unity: Our Mission and Message

The unity experienced by the New Testament believers was based on far more than emotional warmth between members.


The disciples were consumed with something much larger than themselves. Christ’s commission to take the gospel to the entire world swallowed up their personal ambitions. The church cannot reach the community with the gospel until it is united, but it will never be united until it is consumed with the preaching of the gospel.

Mission is a great unifying factor. The early believers rallied around mission. The life, death, resurrection, priestly ministry, and return of our Lord bound them together. New converts were anchored in the “apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:41, 42, NKJV). The teachings of Jesus provided the foundation for their unity.

The apostle Peter uses the term “present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12). The message of “present truth” in Peter’s day united the church and propelled it forward with a prophetic impetus: Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. They were united with an urgent, present-truth message regarding the fulfillment of prophecy.

Now, in the final days of earth’s history, God has given His people an urgent, present-truth message, as well (Rev. 14:6–12). It is the message of “the everlasting gospel” in the context of judgment, of obedience, and of the Lord’s return. This is what unites Seventh-day Adventists as a worldwide family. If this message was watered down, given a secondary place, or treated as a relic of the past, the unity of the church would be fractured, and its mission would lose its urgency. If the church’s message is either misunderstood or distorted, its mission will be unclear. It is the proclamation of the prophetic message of the Three Angels that gives Seventh-day Adventists the reason for our existence.

How connected are you with our message and mission? Or look at it this way: why are you a Seventh-day Adventist? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.
Church Organization: The Structure for Unity

The New Testament reveals that the early church had a definite organizational structure. This structure helped to preserve the doctrinal purity of the church and keep it focused on its mission.

In Acts 6, a small group of disciples met together to solve the problem of the distribution of food to the widows of the Greek converts. They selected deacons to solve the dilemma. Church members respected the authority of these church leaders.

When the apostle Paul was converted on the Damascus Road, he was directed to Ananias, a representative of the church (Acts 9:10–17).

After Paul’s baptism by Ananias, the Holy Spirit directed him to meet with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem in order to confirm his ministry (Acts 9:26–30).

In Acts 20 Paul met with the church elders from Ephesus to urge them to be on guard against false teachers and their heresies (Acts 20:17, 27–32).


The Jerusalem Council saved the first-century church from a serious schism. Church organization with administrative authority was essential in preserving the doctrinal integrity of the New Testament church. In this instance, local church representatives were sent to Jerusalem to participate in doctrinal discussions, which would have serious implications for the future of the church. Once this representative group came to a consensus, they wrote out their decision in a committee action and circulated it throughout the churches where the problem originated: Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (Acts 15:23).

Members accepted the decision of the Jerusalem Council and rejoiced that the Holy Spirit had guided them to an answer to their dilemma (Acts 15:30–35).

If you are a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, then you are involved in the church structure. What is your role in that structure, and how might you be more constructively involved?
Achieving Unity

The closer we come to Jesus, the closer we come to one another. We see with new spiritual eyesight. The Spirit of Christ enables us to view one another differently. The little things that once bothered us are reframed by the grace of Christ. Cherished hostilities are relinquished in the light of His magnificent grace. Old scores and disputes are, as much as possible, set aside. Barriers are broken down. The gospel heals broken relationships.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out in its fullness on Pentecost, the attitudes of the disciples toward one another changed dramatically. In the light streaming from the Cross, they saw one another differently.

“Every Christian saw in his brother a revelation of divine love and benevolence. One interest prevailed; one subject of emulation swallowed up all others. The ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ’s character and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 48.

**List** some of the practices that fostered unity among first-century Christians. **Why are these practices so powerful in bringing believers together?** *Matt. 18:16–20; Acts 1:14; 12:5, 12; 6:7; Matt. 28:16–20.*

—

Hoping or wishing for unity does not bring it about. The New Testament church prayed together and talked together. They studied God’s Word together, and together they shared their faith. Prayer, Bible study, and witnessing are powerful elements that create, foster, and sustain the unity of the church. As we pray for one another, we are drawn closer together. Participating in an evangelistic outreach to the community creates a sense of oneness or togetherness. A living, dynamic, unified, and revived church is one whose members are praying together, studying God’s Word, and reaching out to their community.

**What are some of the forces at play that threaten the unity of your local church, or even the church as a whole? Why is it important to understand what these forces are and to be ready to deal with them?**
Further Study: “In these first disciples was presented marked diversity. They were to be the world’s teachers, and they represented widely varied types of character. In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action. This unity it was Christ’s object to secure. To this end He sought to bring them into unity with Himself.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 20.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is a unified church structure so important for us? What would happen to our mission, to our message, and to our church as a whole if congregations, conferences, unions, or divisions were to go their own way? Imagine the chaos that would ensue.

2. In class, answer the question: Why am I a Seventh-day Adventist?

3. However important unity is for the church, are there some things that are even more important? If so, what? For instance, in dealing with those who preached doctrines with which he disagreed, Paul wrote this: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” *(Gal. 1:8, 9)*. What happened to unity here, at least with these people?

4. Dwell more on the issue of how our message and mission are crucial to our whole identity as Seventh-day Adventists. After all, what would our purpose be without our message, which no one else is preaching to the world? At the same time, what other things unite us as Seventh-day Adventists? That is, though we would have nothing were it not for our mission and message, what else do we have that helps to define us, and why are these important, as well?

5. Why is unity so crucial for any revival and reformation among us?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** John 17:9–11, 20–24

**The Student Will:**
- **Know:** Analyze the elements of unity in the New Testament church and explore the relationship between unity and revival.
- **Feel:** Discern the attitudes that lead to revival and apply them to his or her local congregation today.
- **Do:** Accept Christ’s invitation for unity, based on a common message, mission, and church organization.

**Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Understanding the Unity of the New Testament Church

A. What is the burden of Christ’s heart in John 17, just before His crucifixion? Why is this so important to Jesus?

B. How do Peter (*in 1 Peter 2:4, 5*) and Paul (*in 1 Corinthians 12:12–18*) illustrate unity? Why do you think they used these particular figures or illustrations for the unity of the church?

C. What role do the mission and the message of the church play in the unity of the church?

II. Feel: Experiencing New Testament Unity

A. In what ways does pride lead to rivalry in the church today? Can our own humanness keep us from experiencing the unity that Christ desires for His church? What can we do to achieve the unity that Christ desires in our local church?

III. Do: Applying the Principles of New Testament Unity

A. In what ways should we relate when conflict threatens the unity of the church? What is a better option than taking sides in a conflict?

B. What are some of the practical steps we can take as a congregation in order to continually foster unity?

**Summary:** Jesus places priority on the unity of His church. The entire New Testament places prime importance on relationships between church members. A praying congregation with a common message and mission will receive the power of the Holy Spirit to make a major impact on their community for Christ. Like the early disciples unified in His love, we can make a difference in our world.
Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate**

**Spotlight on Scripture:** *John 17:20–24*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** Unity is essential for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit in revival. When Christ’s church is unified, focused upon His message, and passionate about His mission rather than afflicted with the malaise of complacency, revival will come.

**Just for Teachers:** Highlight the importance of Christ’s emphasis on unity in light of His intercessory prayer in John 17. Discuss the devastating effects of disunity upon a local congregation or school. The story below will help to set the tone for your class.

Jim and Tom were both in their late twenties. They were teachers at a small Christian school. Early in the school year they had a disagreement that placed a heavy strain on their relationship. They tried to avoid one another as much as possible. It was obvious that there was serious tension between them. This animosity often boiled over in staff meetings. Tom opposed whatever position Jim took on an issue. The faculty and students sensed the tension in the air.

Near the end of the school year, a young pastor conducted a Week of Spiritual Emphasis at the school. The Spirit of God moved on the hearts of both the faculty and students in a marked way. At the end of the week, a Friday night foot-washing and Communion service took place. During the footwashing, Jim approached Tom and said, “Tom, may I wash your feet? I have been wrong in the way I have treated you this year. I am sorry.” Tom was stunned. The two embraced and participated in the footwashing together. Barriers between them were broken down. The atmosphere in the school changed dramatically. Brotherly love replaced animosity. Kindness replaced sharp competitiveness, and the grace of Christ united two estranged teachers. It took someone to make the first move, which Jim did.

**Discuss With the Class:** Why do you think it is so difficult to make the first move toward someone who has wronged you?
**STEP 2—Explore**

**Bible Commentary**

**I. When Jesus Prayed for Unity** *(Review John 17:11, 20–24 with your class.)*

Jesus knew that He would soon leave His disciples. Just before His crucifixion, He prayed that they would be one. You can feel the earnestness in His voice as you listen to Him praying, “‘that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me’” *(John 17:21, NKJV)*. Jesus prayed that His disciples would have the close relationship with one another that He had with His Father in heaven.

One of the greatest evidences that Christianity is real is the unity of Christ’s church. When people of varied backgrounds and cultures with differing opinions relate in loving unity, non-Christians take notice. In *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ellen G. White describes the experience of the disciples in these words, “In these first disciples was presented marked diversity. They were to be the world’s teachers, and they represented widely varied types of character. In order successfully to carry forward the work to which they had been called, these men, differing in natural characteristics and in habits of life, needed to come into unity of feeling, thought, and action. This unity it was Christ’s object to secure.”—Page 20.

**Consider This:** The disciples would not allow their different personality traits, their ways of viewing various issues, or their personal preferences to stand in the way of accomplishing Christ’s mission. Why do we feel uncomfortable, at times, around people who think differently from the way we do about some issues? What is the difference between unity and uniformity? For what does Christ pray?

**II. Paul’s Illustration of Unity** *(Review 1 Corinthians 12:12–18 with your class.)*

The Corinthian church had its share of problems. These issues included conflict between members, immorality and divorce, idolatry and lawsuits, the abuse of the Lord’s Supper and of the gift of tongues, and doctrinal heresy. One of the major issues in the church was the division between the members *(1 Cor. 1:10–12)*. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul explains that differences need not lead to division. Unity is not uniformity. Each member is part of the body of Christ. Just as the different organs of the body have different functions but each blends into the whole for the good of the body, each member of the church is gifted by
God to bless the entire body (1 Cor. 12:12, 19–24). There are many members yet one body (vs. 20). It is God who, according to His will, gifts each member for service (vss. 11, 18).

**Consider This:** The core message of 1 Corinthians 12 is that each member of the church has been placed in the body by Christ, is gifted by Christ, and, according to Christ, is necessary for a healthy, growing church. How does understanding the concept of spiritual gifts lead us to celebrate our diversity and embrace our differences?

**STEP 3—Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** The disciples focused upon accomplishing the task that Jesus gave them. They were committed to proclaiming His message of love to the world. Herein lies the main point of this week’s lesson: disunity disrupts mission. Conflict creates chaos, and Christ does not reign supreme in the midst of chaos.

**Thought/Application Questions:**

1. Think of times when your strong opinions have created conflict in your home or church. What might you do to reduce the conflict?

2. If you have strong negative feelings toward another person in the church, what can you do to repair the broken relationship, even if you are the one who was wronged?
How does personal involvement in the mission of the church foster unity?

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________

STEP 4—Create

Here are two imagined situations. Choose one and discuss the solution in small groups of two or three class members.

**Situation 1:** You hear that in a church nominating committee meeting your name came up to be considered for a position, such as a local elder or deaconess, but that one of the elders or members on the nominating committee made some very negative and disparaging remarks about you. How do you handle it? What do you do?

   a. Say nothing.
   b. Speak to the pastor about it.
   c. Go directly to the person.
   d. None of the above.

**Situation 2:** It is after church service, and a few people are standing around in small groups, talking. You happen to overhear someone make a very unkind remark about one of your friends. You know that what was said is not true. What do you do?

   a. Say nothing.
   b. Confront the people in the group.
   c. Tell your friend.
   d. None of the above.

Spend the last few minutes of class discussing the ways in which you can resolve conflicts when division arises. Close class with a prayer for the unity of the church. Leave your class with this thought: the mission of Christ will never be accomplished if the church is filled with conflict. Christ appeals to each one of us to unite in loving witness so that we can reach the world with His last-day message.
Discernment: The Safeguard of Revival

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: John 17:3; 1 John 2:3–6; Matt. 23:27, 28; 2 Thess. 2:9–12; 1 Cor. 12:4–7.

Memory Text: “Consider how I love Your precepts; revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness. The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (Psalm 119:159, 160, NKJV).

Early in my ministry I studied with a family in rural Tennessee. One day a large man walked into the room smoking a big cigar. He then declared that the Lord had healed him from lung cancer!

I have reflected upon this experience often. This man sincerely believed that the Holy Spirit had miraculously healed him. However, did his belief that he was healed make it true? Are signs and wonders always evidence of the Holy Spirit’s working? Can we base our faith on signs and wonders alone? What role might signs and wonders have in a false revival?

In the context of revival, we need to ask, Is it possible that the devil can create a false religious excitement and leave the impression that a genuine revival has occurred?

This week we will study the spiritual indicators of genuine revival and contrast them with the obvious signs of false ones. Knowing the difference between the two will help to save us from the enemy’s delusions.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 24.
God’s Will and His Word

All true spirituality is focused on knowing God and doing His will (John 17:3, Heb. 10:7). Any so-called “revival” that focuses on experience rather than commitment to obey God’s Word misses the mark completely. The Holy Spirit will never lead us where God’s Word does not. The Holy Spirit leads us into the Word (2 Tim. 3:15, 16). The Word of God is the foundation and heart of all true revival.

**What** do the following passages in Psalm 119 reveal about revival and God’s Word? List all the spiritual qualities that God’s Word develops in our lives. Ps. 119:25, 28, 49, 50, 67, 81, 105, 116, 130, 154. What do these promises mean in practical terms in our experience with the Lord?

---

In Jesus’ sermon about the Bread of Life, He explained the essence of all revival and the foundation of all spiritual life. He declared, “‘It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life’” (John 6:63, NKJV). Jesus’ statement is extremely significant. The Holy Spirit, who is the Source of all spiritual revival, speaks through God’s Word in order to give to those who grasp it by faith a deep spiritual life. Revival occurs when the Holy Spirit impresses Jesus’ words upon our minds. This is why the Savior said, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4, NKJV).

“In many of the revivals which have occurred during the last half century, the same influences have been at work, to a greater or less degree, that will be manifest in the more extensive movements of the future. There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead. Yet none need be deceived. In the light of God’s word it is not difficult to determine the nature of these movements. Wherever men neglect the testimony of the Bible, turning away from those plain, soul-testing truths which require self-denial and renunciation of the world, there we may be sure that God’s blessing is not bestowed.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 464.

The essence of true revival is discovering God’s will as manifest in God’s Word. Jesus lived a life filled with the Holy Spirit. From His birth to His death, He was led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
God’s Love and His Law

Revival is all about knowing Jesus. It is a reawakening of the spiritual faculties of the soul. It is a personal and vital experience with the Savior. Knowing Jesus—really knowing Him as a friend—is the essence of all revival. From the depth of his personal experience with Jesus, the apostle Paul shared that he is praying for the Ephesians to “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19, NKJV).

This is in contrast to the story of the end-time virgins, five of whom had an outer form of godliness and religion but lacked an intimate experience with Jesus. Referring to their great need, Jesus said, “‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you’” (Matt. 25:12, NKJV).

Knowing God always leads to obedience. God’s law reveals His love. A deeper relationship with Christ leads to a greater desire to please Christ. Obedience is the fruit of love. The more we love Him, the more we will desire to obey Him. Any so-called revival that does not emphasize repentance for the times that we have willfully broken His law is suspect. Religious fervor may stimulate a temporary religious high, but lasting spiritual change will be lacking.

For the apostle John, what are the evidences that one really knows God? 1 John 2:3–6; 4:7, 8, 20, 21.

In these passages, John makes two crucial points. First, knowing God leads to keeping His commandments. Second, loving God leads to loving one another. John’s point is clear. Genuine spirituality results in a changed life. The heart of revival is not a warm sensation of feeling close to Jesus. It is a transformed life filled with the joy of serving Jesus. God’s great goal in all revivals is to draw us closer to Him, to deepen our surrender to His purpose for our lives, and to release us for witness and ministry in His cause.

How are you in your own personal relationships? What do those relationships tell you about your own walk with the Lord? In what ways might you need to progress in both your relationship with God and with others?
Formalism, Fanaticism, and Faith

One of the challenges of true revival is breaking through the icy surface of cold formalism while at the same time avoiding the fiery flames of fanaticism. Formalism is rigidly locked in the status quo. It is satisfied with the external husks of religion while it denies the living reality of faith. Fanaticism tends to go to extremes. It goes off on religious tangents. It tends to be unbalanced, focusing on one aspect of faith to the neglect of all others. Fanaticism is often self-righteous and judgmental. The apostle Paul longed that the Christian church “no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph. 4:14, NKJV).

**What** do we learn about cold formalism in Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees? *Matt. 23:27, 28; Luke 11:39, 40; Mark 7:5–9.*

**What** do we learn about those who thought that signs and wonders proved that they were Jesus’ faithful followers? *Matt. 7:21–23.*

The deeper issue in both of these experiences is the commitment of the heart. Signs and wonders can never take the place of authentic biblical faith. They are not substitutes for surrendering to the will and Word of God. The essence of real revival is a faith so deep that it leads to an obedient life that is committed to do God’s will. A biblically based revival echoes John’s words, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, NKJV).

“What kind of faith is it that overcomes the world? It is that faith which makes Christ your own personal Saviour—that faith which, recognizing your helplessness, your utter inability to save yourself, takes hold of the Helper who is mighty to save, as your only hope.” —Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, p. 21.

**Which side do you tend to lean toward: formalism and tradition or experience and excitement? If you lean too much toward one side or the other, how can you find the right balance?**
Ministry and Miracles

False revivals often place their major emphasis on miracles. Genuine revivals focus on ministry. False revivals emphasize spectacular signs and wonders; genuine revivals recognize that the greatest miracle is a changed life.

The healing miracles of Jesus testified to the fact that He was the Messiah. As our compassionate Redeemer, the Savior was concerned with alleviating human suffering. But He was even more concerned with the salvation of everyone whom He touched with His healing grace. The purpose of Jesus’ redemptive ministry was to “seek and save” lost humankind (Luke 19:10). Speaking to the religious leaders regarding the paralytic, Jesus declared, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’”—then He said to the paralytic, “‘Arise, take up your bed and go to your house’” (Matt. 9:6, NKJV). The crowd’s response to this miracle was to glorify God (Matt. 9:8).

Miracles were an outgrowth of Jesus’ redemptive ministry, but they were not the main reason He came to earth.

What can we learn from these texts about how people can be deceived in the last days? 2 Thess. 2:9–12; Matt. 24:11–13, 24; Rev. 19:20.

These people are deceived by false miracles “because they did not receive the love of the truth.” When the desire for the spectacular is far more important than the desire for a new life in Christ, the mind is open to deception. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus concludes with Jesus’ insightful words, “‘But he said to him, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead’” (Luke 16:31, NKJV). In other words, spectacular signs and marvelous wonders can never take the place of understanding and then following God’s Word. Obedience to God is primary; signs and wonders, if and when they come, are always only secondary.

What kind of miracles have you experienced in your own life, in your own walk with the Lord? What have you learned from them? How important are they to your faith?
Fruits and Gifts

What are some of the prime reasons that God gives the gifts of the Holy Spirit to His church? I Cor. 12:4–7, Rom. 12:4–8, Eph. 4:11–16.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit might be divided into two large categories: some gifts are qualities, other gifts are callings. For example, the gifts of helps, hospitality, exhortation, and teaching are qualities that God imparts to individual believers (Rom. 12:6–8). The gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers are callings given to individual believers (Eph. 4:11, 12). Both categories serve a similar purpose. They have been imparted by the Holy Spirit to strengthen the spiritual life of the church and equip it for its mission. Spiritual gifts are not an end in themselves. They have been given by God for the benefit of His church.

What does the apostle Paul mean when he uses the expression “Walk in the Spirit” in Galatians 5:16? Read Galatians 5:22–25, and list each fruit that comes from walking in the Spirit. See also John 15:1–7.

Any so-called revival that has little interest in the fruit of the Spirit, but is obsessed with possessing the gifts of the Spirit, is dangerous. If God gave the gifts of the Spirit in abundance to believers who were not manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, the church would become the center of selfish exhibitionism. For God to turn on Heaven’s power when the spiritual power lines are frayed would produce only disastrous results. Beware of movements that concentrate on the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit rather than on obedience to God’s will and a transformed character that reveals the fruit of the Spirit.

What do you say to someone who has experienced what he or she judges to be a supernatural manifestation from God? How can you help him or her to know if it truly were from God or from the other side? How does our understanding of the reality of the great controversy help us when we seek to understand who or what can be behind miracles?
Further Study: “The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talents, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them the channel for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe.”—Ellen G. White, Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 328.

“The apostle’s earnest words of entreaty were not fruitless. The Holy Spirit wrought with mighty power, and many whose feet had wandered into strange paths, returned to their former faith in the gospel. Henceforth they were steadfast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. In their lives were revealed the fruits of the Spirit—‘love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ The name of God was glorified, and many were added to the number of believers throughout that region.”—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 388.

Discussion Questions:

1. Dwell more on the contrast between cold formalism and unbridled fanaticism. Or, are they always in contrast? That is, could a church be fanatical and coldly formal at the same time? If so, how might that be made manifest? Why would either extreme, or both, be detrimental to revival and reformation? What about your own local church? Where does it stand in this area? How could you help it to find the right balance?

2. What evidence, if any, can we see of false revivals going on in the world? How can we know that they are false? On the other hand, would it be wrong to believe that God is working a revival among those who, though loving the Lord, don’t know the things that we do?

3. In class, go over your answer to Thursday’s question regarding someone who thinks that he or she has had a supernatural experience with God. What can you learn from each other’s answers?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** 1 John 2:3–6

**The Student Will:**

**Know:** Discern the difference between the elements of true and false revival and understand that true revival avoids formalism on the one hand and fanaticism on the other, while leading to loving obedience of God’s commands.

**Feel:** Nurture the desire to know Christ personally, manifest the fruit of the Spirit, and experience true revival in his or her life.

**Do:** Honor God supremely by living a godly life so that God may entrust him or her with His spiritual gifts in Pentecostal power.

**Learning Outline:**

I. **Know:** The Relationship Between Revival and Obedience

A. How does an experience of genuine revival relate to God’s law?

B. What danger is there that an emphasis on obedience will lead us to fall into the trap of legalism and formalism?

C. How can we avoid fanaticism and sensational emotionalism in true revival?

II. **Feel:** Miracles, True and False

A. Throughout the lesson there is an emphasis on discerning the difference between true and false miracles. What danger is there in being so consumed with the identification of the false manifestations of the Spirit that we miss the true miracles that God is working?

B. In what ways can we foster attitudes of humble submission in order to prepare for the genuine revival and subsequent miracles that God will work in these last days?

III. **Do:** Glorifying God—the Essence of Revival

A. Given that the Holy Spirit is the Author and Originator of all revival, how should we relate to His promptings and guidance in order that we may prepare to receive His power in its fullness?

B. In light of the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the end time, why is it so essential to seek to glorify God completely in our lives?

**Summary:** God longs to pour out His Holy Spirit in Pentecostal power on His church at the end time so that His work may be finished on earth. As we seek this mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, desiring to glorify Him through our godly lives, the longed-for revival will come.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: Matthew 7:21–24

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The authentic fruit of genuine revival does not manifest itself in signs and wonders, emotional feelings, or sensational miracles. Revival is rooted in a deep relationship with Jesus, resulting in the fruit of the Spirit. It is shown in a life of unselfish service. Miracles may accompany revival, but they are not the evidence of revival; a godly, obedient lifestyle is.

Just for Teachers: Lead your class members in a discussion of why a genuine revival is always accompanied by a changed life. Point out that God does work miracles. In Jesus’ ministry, miracles testified to the divine power of God, and they will do the same today. Nevertheless, miracles alone do not confirm the authenticity of a revival. Why?

Opening Activity: During the sixteenth-century Reformation, the devil raised up fanatics to counteract the work of Martin Luther. These radical extremists claimed that their consciences were subject to God alone through the impressions of His Spirit. They believed that they held direct supernatural conversations with heaven and were instructed by the angel Gabriel. These fanatics drew scores of supporters and created quite a stir of excitement in Wittenberg. Throughout the Reformation, Luther faced fiery fanaticism on one side and icy formalism on the other. Commenting on the ways in which Luther met these heretical movements, Ellen G. White adds, “Fearlessly did Luther defend the gospel from the attacks which came from every quarter. The word of God proved itself a weapon mighty in every conflict.”—The Great Controversy, p. 193.

Have your class complete the following statements:

A. Fanaticism is like having a car without ____________.
B. Formalism is like having a car without ____________.
C. Which would you rather have: a car without power or a car without brakes?

Answers: (A) Brakes (B) Power

Question for Discussion: Why is it so dangerous to depend on supernatural signs, wonders, and miracles in order to determine truth?
STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary

Just for Teachers: This section reviews the lesson’s three major points in three passages of Scripture.

A. A godly, Christ-centered life of obedience and service reveals the genuine working of the Holy Spirit.
B. Although miracles may accompany a true revival, they are not necessarily evidence of true revival because Satan can create counterfeit signs and wonders.
C. The fruit of the Spirit must be revealed in a life in order for the gifts of the Spirit to be fully manifested.

I. The Evidence of True Revival (Review 1 John 2:2–6 with your class.)

Evidently, some forms of heresy had infiltrated the church in John’s day, and the apostle was concerned. Most likely, varying groups of Gnostics had made some headway in the mingling of nonbiblical teachings with the truth of God’s Word. The Gnostics denied the Incarnation and taught that Christ only seemed to have a human body. In the opinion of these false teachers, knowledge, which is the core meaning of the word Gnosticism, was the essence of salvation. John met these heretics by focusing on Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection. He set forth the reality that “knowing God” is much more than an intellectual assent. It goes far beyond a mental exercise. Nor is it cold formalism. It is a personal relationship with Jesus. For John, knowing Jesus meant experiencing His grace personally, loving Him supremely, and obeying Him wholeheartedly. John uses the words know and known throughout his epistle to mean experiencing Jesus in this way (see 1 John 2:4, 5, 13; 3:1–3; 4:2).

John, in these words, highlights His understanding of what it really means to know Christ: “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6, NKJV). The word for “abide” in the original language is meno. It means to continue to be present or to remain. It speaks of a continual abiding or remaining in Christ’s presence—a deep knowing of Him—which leads to a transformed, obedient life. This is the heart of true revival.

Consider This: Throughout John’s epistles, the greatest evidence of being a true disciple of Christ is a life of loving obedience. John also highlights the necessity of obedience at the close of the passage in Revelation’s end-time prophecy of the three angels’ messages in Revelation 14:12. Read
this passage and discuss the relationship between loving God supremely and obeying Him completely.

II. The Evidence of the Counterfeit Revival (Review 2 Thessalonians 2:9–12 with your class.)

Our passage outlines the strategy of the lawless one, or the antichrist. He will work with “all power, signs, and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9, NKJV). Jesus warned His disciples about the cunning devices of the evil one by declaring, “‘For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect’” (Matt. 24:24, NKJV). The Bible’s last book, Revelation, confirms this frightful reality. Satan will use miracles to deceive multitudes and lead them to receive the mark of the beast (see Rev. 13:13, 14; 16:14, 19:20). Note carefully why millions will be deceived by these false miracles. It is “because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved”; and because they “did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness,” they accepted a strong delusion and believed a lie (2 Thess. 2:10–12, NKJV).

The Bible is our safeguard. It is our defense against the wiles of the enemy. This is why Ellen G. White writes, “None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God’s immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?”—The Great Controversy, pp. 593, 594.

Consider This: Understanding God’s Word and applying its principles to our lives will keep us secure in the crisis ahead. How can we be sure that we understand the Bible correctly and are not misled by false interpretations? (See John 7:17.)

III. The Fruit and the Gifts of the Spirit (Review Galatians 5:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 12:4–8 with your class.)

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the character qualities that the Holy Spirit imparts to our lives as we fellowship with Jesus in prayer, Bible study, and witness. These qualities reveal an authentic Christian experience. They are not the natural impulses of the human heart. They are truly “the fruit of the Spirit.” The gifts of the Holy Spirit are divinely imparted qualities or redirected natural talents with which the Holy Spirit equips believers for their ministry of witness and service. Without the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit could easily degenerate into selfish exhibitionism. The New Testament
teaches us to seek the fruit of the Spirit and to allow God to give us the gifts of the Spirit as He desires. In His infinite wisdom, He knows which are the gifts that we will use in the most useful way in order to bless Christ’s body and enlarge His kingdom.

Consider This: If we concentrate on receiving the gifts of the Spirit rather than exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit, we are open for the deceptions of the evil one. If we focus on knowing God, submitting to His will, and obeying Him, He will impart heaven’s richest gifts to us so that we may bless others. Why is it important to focus on the fruit of the Spirit rather than to seek the gifts of the Spirit?

▶STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Read Galatians 5:16 and lead your class in a discussion of what it truly means to “walk in the Spirit.”

Thought Questions:

1. How is walking in the Spirit different from walking in the flesh?
2. What does life in the Spirit look like in practical terms?
3. How does life in the Spirit help us to avoid the pitfalls of both formalism and fanaticism?
4. Why are the gifts of the Holy Spirit so important for witness and service? Why can we expect a full manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, just before the coming of Jesus, in those people who reveal the fruit of the Spirit?

▶STEP 4—Create

Activity: Ask your class members to share one of their favorite family Christmas or birthday memories. As they think back on the positive memories of their lives, ask them to share why these times were so special. What is more important from an adult’s perspective: the special experience or the gifts received? Point out that children seek gifts but adults seek relationships. Mature Christians seek to know Jesus intimately. Their relationship with Him is vital. They are willing to allow Him to work through them in the ways that He sees best. They seek to live godly, obedient lives, and to let Him impart the gifts that will best equip them to serve Him. They recognize that the fruit of the Spirit is the hallmark of genuine revival.
Reformation: The Outgrowth of Revival

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: 2 Chron. 20:17–20; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rev. 2:1–6; Rom. 1:16, 17; Rev. 14:6, 7, 12.

Memory Text: “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11, NKJV).

Revival is an ongoing process. Daily, our Lord invites us into the joy of His presence. Just as Israel was nourished by the manna that fell from heaven, Jesus spreads out a spiritual banquet for us every day. Our souls are nourished, our spirits refreshed, and our hearts revived as we kneel quietly before His throne, meditating upon His Word. True spiritual renewal leads to a change in our thought patterns, habits, and lifestyle; it’s what we call a “reformation.”

“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:17, 18, NKJV). The term reformation simply refers to this “growing in grace”; it is allowing the Holy Spirit to align every aspect of our lives with God’s will. In those areas where we have drifted from obedience, revival reawakens our longings to please God. Reformation leads us to make the challenging choices to surrender anything that stands between us and Him.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 31.*
The Prophet’s Appeal for Reformation

God often sent His prophets to lead Israel into revival. Reformation regularly accompanied these times of revival. It is important to notice that even when God’s people drifted away from Him, they were still His chosen people. Again and again, He sent His messengers to guide them back. The examples of revival and reformation recorded in the Old Testament often have similar characteristics.

Revival and reformation occurred in the Old Testament when there was a renewed heart commitment to obey God’s will. When Israel “turned to its own way” and “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25), God withdrew His blessing, and the nation faced disaster and defeat.

In one instance, when God’s people faced one of their greatest challenges—a battle with the Ammonites and Moabites—King Jehoshaphat showed remarkable spiritual leadership. Throughout the crisis, the king sought to keep the eyes of all Israel focused on the power of God (2 Chron. 20:12).

The king recognized a critical point in sustaining all revival and reformation. What earnest counsel did he give his people? What spiritual pattern do we discover here for revival and reformation?

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–20 and summarize King Jehoshaphat’s instructions to Judah.

“God was the strength of Judah in this crisis, and He is the strength of His people today. We are not to trust in princes, or to set men in the place of God. We are to remember that human beings are fallible and erring, and that He who has all power is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater.”—Ellen G. White, Conflict and Courage, p. 217.

Jehoshaphat’s experience illustrates the essence of revival and reformation. He led Israel into a united time of fasting, praying, trusting, and obeying God.

How can you learn, in your own times of stress and challenges, to apply the spiritual principles revealed here? What is the only way to truly exercise faith?
Paul’s Appeal for Reformation in Corinth

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses great concern regarding their spiritual condition. Many members had drifted from God’s ideal. The situation was serious, including sexual immorality that, Paul says, was not seen even among the pagans (1 Cor. 5:1). A whole host of problems arose that Paul had to address. In light of this background, it is not difficult to understand why the Corinthian church needed revival and reformation.

**What** counsel did Paul give the Corinthians regarding their spiritual lives? **What is the main idea in the following texts?** 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; 9:24–27; 13:13; 15:1, 2, 27, 28.

The apostle Paul urged them to hold steadfastly to their faith and make God’s glory the primary goal of their lives. He reassured the Corinthians of his love and assured them that the power of God was greater than any temptation they faced (1 Cor. 10:13).

**How** did the Corinthian church respond to Paul’s counsel? 2 Cor. 7:8–12.

Paul was overjoyed with the Corinthians’ response. Although he still had concerns, he wrote, “I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything” (2 Cor. 7:16, NKJV). What a change. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul chastised them as “carnal.” In his second letter he expressed complete confidence in their new experience with God. The Holy Spirit brought the Corinthians spiritual renewal. This revival brought a corresponding reformation. Reformation led to changed habits, changed lives, and changed relationships. The Corinthians still faced spiritual challenges. They had their share of trials, but they made significant advances in their Christian faith. Revival and reformation are not some panacea to solve all of our spiritual problems. They are part of an ongoing faith journey.
Revelation’s Appeal for Reformation in Ephesus

The seven churches described in Revelation 2 and 3 are representative of the Christian church throughout the centuries. This is a view that has been taken by Bible students throughout the centuries. Seventh-day Adventist expositors have historically taken this position, as well.

The angel instructs John to “write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (Rev. 1:19, NKJV). The vision of the seven churches relates to the past, the present, and the future. It records the triumphs of God’s church, as well as its failures. It shares the church’s victories, as well as its defeats. Although the seven churches can represent a historical continuum of Christian faith down through the centuries, there are vital lessons in each one of these churches for God’s people today.

Ephesus, for instance, provides a striking illustration of heaven’s appeal for revival and reformation.

Read Revelation 2:1–6. What are the good things about this church? What are the problems?

Ephesus, here, is equated with the New Testament church from approximately A.D. 31 to A.D. 100. These early Christians were zealous for their faith. They labored unceasingly for the advancement of the gospel. The disciples diligently preserved the doctrinal purity of the church. They had no tolerance for heresy and were fierce defenders of truth.

As time went on, however, the members began to lose their “first love.” They substituted duty for devotion. Doing Jesus’ work became more important than their relationship with Him. Gradually and almost imperceptibly, their experience with Jesus began slipping away. They were laboring hard to defend the faith, but something vital was missing in their own spiritual experience. Love for Jesus and for one another was desperately lacking.

What was it like when you first came to know Jesus? How can you still maintain that “first love”? Why is it so important that you do so? What things threaten to turn you away from that love?
Luther’s Appeal for Reformation

When we think of the word reformation, our minds are naturally drawn to the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther. Until then, western Christianity was, for the most part, locked in tradition. The tenets of the church overshadowed the teachings of Jesus. Tradition became more quoted than Scripture. Multitudes were dominated by fear. They had little or no assurance of salvation. Confused and bewildered, they struggled to believe that God really longed to save them.

It was at this crucial point of religious history that God raised up Martin Luther, among others, to lead His people into a thorough reformation. Luther had struggled with the guilt of his own sins for years until the light of the gospel broke through.

Read the following passages from Romans. Why did they make such a powerful impact on Luther’s life? Why are they so vital in leading us to a revival of faith and reformation? Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21–25; 5:6–11; 8:1–4.

“Sinners can be justified by God only when He pardons their sins, remits the punishment they deserve, and treats them as though they were really just and had not sinned, receiving them into divine favor and treating them as if they were righteous. They are justified alone through the imputed righteousness of Christ. The Father accepts the Son, and through the atoning sacrifice of His Son accepts the sinner.”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 3, p. 194.

Understanding grace is life transforming. It is the very essence of Christianity. God’s unmerited, undeserved grace is the cornerstone of our faith. Through the life, death, resurrection, and priestly ministry of Jesus, the gift of eternal life is ours. Receiving it by faith, we have the assurance of salvation.

Revival has to do with appreciating the gift of grace every day. There is nothing more spiritually uplifting than rejoicing daily in the goodness and grace of God. Reformation is simply living out this grace in all that we do.

Dwell on the great hope that salvation is found in what Christ has done for you. Why must that truth be the foundation of any revival and reformation in your life?
Heaven’s Appeal for an End-Time Reformation

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a reform movement. It was raised up by God to restore biblical truths lost sight of many centuries ago. Although the Holy Spirit worked powerfully through the Reformers, there were vital truths that they did not fully understand. God still had more truth to reveal to His people.

God is not interested in our understanding truth merely in order to fill our minds with more religious knowledge. Biblical truths are windows into His very heart. They reveal something about His character. The more clearly we understand the truths of His Word, the more completely we will understand the depth of His love. False doctrine distorts His character. Truth unmasks the devil’s lies and reveals who he really is (take, for instance, eternal torment in hell as a prime example of what lurks in Satan’s heart).

From the inception of the great controversy in heaven, Satan has attempted to malign the character of God. He has lied about God’s intentions toward His creatures. But, in the life that He lived, in the truths that He taught, and in the death that He died, Jesus revealed what His heavenly Father was really like.

Read God’s end-time message of revival and reformation (Rev. 14:6, 7, 12). Read carefully what is said there. What do these verses teach us about the character of God?

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

God’s end-time message of the “everlasting gospel” includes a call to obedience to God’s will in the light of the judgment hour. The judgment reveals to the whole universe both the justice and mercy of God. In an age of evolution, Jesus’ message of reformation also calls His people back to worship the Creator on the true Bible Sabbath. The Sabbath is a stunning rebuke to the error of Darwinian evolution and to the harsh and violent depiction of God that it presents.

What does it mean that the whole foundation of these messages is the “everlasting gospel”? How can you have the daily assurance that this gospel message is for you, whatever your mistakes? Why is it so important that you claim the gospel message for yourself daily?
Further Study: “A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.”—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 25, 1902.

“Whatever may be their profession, it is only those who are world servers at heart that act from policy rather than principle in religious things. We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God. To men of principle, faith, and daring, the world is indebted for its great reforms. By such men the work of reform for this time must be carried forward.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 460.

Discussion Questions:

1. In the call for revival and reformation, what must come first, revival or reformation, and why?

2. Why are revival and reformation things of the heart more than anything else? Why must they start individually, with each of us making a conscious choice to renew our walk with the Lord, to draw closer to Him, and to seek more earnestly than ever to do His will? What is the danger of waiting for the person next to you in the pew to do this, or waiting for the pastor to initiate this? Why must you, yourself, now, make the choice to surrender even more fully to the Lord so that He will work in you?

3. Nothing could kill the call to revival and reformation more than a harsh and judgmental spirit toward those who don’t seem to live up to the standards that we think they should. How can we learn to avoid that dangerous pitfall while, at the same time, standing for the truths that have been entrusted to us?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** 2 Chronicles 20:17–20

**The Student Will:**

**Know:** Identify the factors that led to reformation in the times of King Jehoshaphat, the apostle Paul at Corinth and Ephesus, Luther, and, finally, the early Advent movement.

**Feel:** Experience a deeper desire to grow in grace, to relinquish ungodly habits, and to become more like Jesus.

**Do:** Resolve to follow Jehoshaphat’s counsel to “ ‘Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper’ ” (2 Chron. 20:20, NKJV).

**Learning Outline:**

I. **Know: Understanding Reformation**

A. When you think of the word *reformation*, what words immediately come to your mind?

B. How does the Bible describe reformation? *(See 2 Pet. 3:18.)*

C. Why did the churches at both Corinth and Ephesus need reformation? What needed to be changed?

D. What makes the Seventh-day Adventist Church a reform movement?

II. **Applying the Principles of Reformation**

A. What lessons can we learn from Jehoshaphat’s appeal to God’s people?

B. What is the most significant truth for your life today in Paul’s urgent appeal to Corinth?

C. How does John’s message in Revelation 2 relate to the church at Ephesus?

III. **Do: Acting on Our Knowledge**

A. What steps do we need to take when God stirs our hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in revival?

B. Why is it easier to make a general statement, such as, “Lord, I surrender my life to You,” than it is to surrender specific habits or attitudes to Jesus that the Holy Spirit points out?

**Summary:** Reformation is a change in our thinking whereby we see sin from God’s perspective and surrender any practice, habit, or attitude that is not in harmony with His will.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: 2 Peter 3:18

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Genuine revival always leads to reformation. Reformation occurs as we continue to grow in grace and allow the Holy Spirit to align our attitudes, habits, and lifestyle practices with the mind and will of Christ. Jesus is calling His end-time people to live lives of extraordinary devotion and commitment in the light of His soon return.

Just for Teachers: Emphasize the examples set by Jehoshaphat, Paul, and John that call for both revival and reformation. Point out the practical changes that these individuals called for and the results of their urgent appeals.

Why does it seem so difficult to change our attitudes and behavior? Could it be that we have confused the function of the will with willpower? Attempting to overcome the temptations of the evil one by our willpower will only leave us languishing in frustrated defeat. Our willpower is not strong enough to overcome our inherited and cultivated tendencies toward evil. Left alone, we are powerless. Understanding the critical importance of our will and our freedom to choose is quite another thing.

Let’s suppose you are left alone in a very dark auditorium after a concert. All the lights are out and you sit in the auditorium, lost in the dark, thoroughly confused about how to get out. Here are some options. You could work furiously for hours to push the darkness out. If you had a broom or shovel, you could work for a few more hours to try to sweep or shovel the darkness out of the auditorium. In spite of your strenuous and exhausting efforts, would you be successful? Of course not! What if a close friend senses you are missing and finds you in the darkness and guides you to a light switch? Simply flipping the switch would light up the entire room. Cooperating with your friend, you flip the switch and connect with a source of power that is greater than all of your feeble human efforts. Your choice to throw the switch is quite small, but the results are extremely significant. Our choice to surrender our wills to God unites us with the Source of unlimited power and lights up the darkness of our lives.

Revival and reformation occur as we allow our Friend and Helper, the Holy Spirit, to lead us to connect with the Source of all power—Jesus. Through our consent and the exercise of our will, we allow the Holy Spirit to work His will in our lives.
Discuss With the Class: What is the difference between the proper use of the will in overcoming sin and attempting to overcome sin through our own willpower? How can we cooperate with God in the process of overcoming?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: Help your class members to understand what it means to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18, NKJV) in order to experience true revival and reformation in their personal lives.

Bible Commentary

I. Growing as a Christian (Review 2 Peter 3:18 with your class.)

The word *grow*, as found in Peter’s exhortation “grow in the grace,” is not a static word; it is an active word. The passage could be translated as “keep on growing in grace.” These early Christians had made great strides in their spiritual lives, but they were to continue to grow. With Paul they would say, “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14, NKJV). The Christian life is a dynamic adventure of growth, seeking to reflect more fully the loveliness of Jesus’ character. We grow in grace when we experience daily the wonder of grace in our own lives. We long to “grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Eph. 4:15, NKJV).

As we grow in grace, our love for Him grows stronger, and our appreciation for His sacrifice on the cross deepens.

Consider This: The more we know Him, the more we love Him; and the more we love Him, the more our lives are changed. This is the pathway to true revival and reformation. How can we be actively growing in grace daily?

II. Being Before Doing (Review Revelation 2:1–6 with your class.)

Here we read of the positive characteristics of the congregation at Ephesus. It was a working church. Its leaders and members worked to the point of exhaustion. The word for “labor” in Revelation 2:2 is *kopos*, which implies a weariness from strenuous toil. The church at Ephesus was committed to the work of the Lord. They did not shrink from duty or responsibility. This church was doctrinally conservative. It defended
the faith vigorously. A group called the Nicolaitans, who evidently did not believe in the divinity of Christ and downplayed obedience, plagued the church at Ephesus with their heresy. The church leadership confronted this group with the truth of God’s Word. They were concerned about the doctrinal purity of the church. They were ardent defenders of the faith; nevertheless, the living Christ speaks these words of rebuke, “‘I have this against you, that you have left your first love’” (Rev. 2:4, NKJV). They substituted duty for devotion. They placed Christ’s work above Christ. They were active but not prayerful. Christ calls them to do three things: to remember, to repent, and to return. When we are spiritually empty, Christ calls us to remember when our hearts once were filled with His grace. He asks us to repent of our prayerless lives, our lack of devotional Bible study, and our loss of spiritual focus, and to return to those basic Christian practices of prayer and devotion that bring spiritual strength.

Consider This: Christianity is about knowing Jesus and being like Him. Why is it easy to substitute that which we do for Jesus—our works—for spending time in His presence and really knowing Him? From where does the power for change really come?

III. End-time Commitment (Review Revelation 14:6, 7 with your class.)

Revelation 14:6, 7 presents the heart of the Adventist message of reform. This message is a call to return to the truth of the everlasting gospel. Ellen G. White beautifully describes the gospel and the message of justification by faith in these words, “What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.”—The Faith I Live By, p. 109.

This message of the all-sufficiency of His redeeming grace is to reach the ends of the earth before the coming of Jesus. Christ’s message of revival and reformation, uplifting the beauty of Jesus, is a universal message. It calls all men and women everywhere to “glorify” God.

Consider This: Heaven’s final appeal to a planet in rebellion is a message of physical, mental, and spiritual reform. What relationship does our physical health have to our spirituality? How important is it that we guard the avenues of our minds? What impact do our leisure activities have on our relationships with God?
STEP 3—Apply

Thought Question:

Think of an area in your life in which you have experienced “reformation” or a change of attitudes or behavior recently. How have you grown in grace? Be specific. Would you like to share your experience? Be sure to describe how your attitudes or lifestyle practices have changed as the Holy Spirit has convicted you.

Application Question:

In what areas of your life has the Holy Spirit been prompting you to reform or change? Spend a few moments meditating on these areas right now and surrender them to Jesus as you spend a minute or two in silent prayer.

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Encourage your class to participate in the devotional activities below in order to put into practice the principles that we have studied this week.

1 With your Bible open, spend this week praying using the words of David in Psalm 51. Read two to three verses each day aloud. Ask God to deepen your understanding as to how these verses apply to your life. Let the prayer of David’s be your own.

2 Read through the familiar hymn “Have Thine Own Way, Lord” for your morning devotions and ask the Holy Spirit to apply the words to your heart:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary help me, I pray!
Power—all power—surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine!

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Hold o’er my being absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me!

—Words by Adelaide Pollard (1862–1934)
Reformation: The Willingness to Grow and Change

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:6, 7, NKJV).

Before Pentecost, the disciples had significant spiritual needs. Their understanding of God’s plan was clouded. They failed to comprehend Jesus’ mission. After they were touched by divine grace, Christ’s love broke their hearts. They experienced revival and reformation.

A revival is simply a reawakening of deeper spiritual longings. It is an intensifying of our spiritual desires as our hearts are drawn closer to God through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Revival does not imply that we have had no previous experience with Jesus; rather, it calls us to an experience that is deeper and richer. Reformation calls us to grow and change. It appeals to us to move beyond the status quo, spiritually. It invites us to reexamine our lives in the light of biblical values and to allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to make any changes necessary in order to live in obedience to God’s will.

This week we will study the lives of New Testament believers who experienced growth and change in their own spiritual experience.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 7.
The Grace to Grow

The lives of the disciples showed constant spiritual growth as they walked with Jesus. When Christ first called His disciples, their attitudes and actions certainly did not reflect the loveliness of His character.


________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

James and John had some serious character flaws. They were not prepared to represent Christ’s love to the world. They were not qualified to proclaim a message of grace to others who had not changed their own lives.

In spite of their serious defects of character, James and John longed to reveal Jesus’ character more fully. They longed for transformation and reformation in their own attitudes. Growth and change are part of our Christian experience.

**Read** 1 John 2:1–9. What do these verses reveal about the great changes that came over John during the years following Jesus’ death? What do they teach us about what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

It’s so easy to get discouraged over our own spiritual growth, especially since we truly want to have revival and reformation in our lives. When discouraged, when feeling as if you are a spiritual failure and that you are going to be lost, what promises can you claim that will show you why you must never give up, and why, despite your faults, you can have assurance of salvation?

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
The Power to Choose

Change comes at the point of choice. Reformation occurs as we choose to yield to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and surrender our wills to God’s will. God will never force or manipulate our wills. He respects our freedom. His Spirit impresses our minds, convicts our hearts, and prompts us to do right, but the choice to respond to the Holy Spirit’s appeals is, always and only, our own.

Read Philippians 2:12–14. How does this passage show the necessity of cooperating with God in our growth in grace? What does Paul mean by “work out your own salvation”? What does he mean by “it is God who works in you”?

It is not possible for us to work out what God has not already worked in. As He works in us through His supernatural power, we are able to make the choices to “work out” through our lives the grace and strength that He has worked into our lives.

“As finite, sinful man works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, it is God who works in him, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But God will not work without the co-operation of man. He must exercise his powers to the very utmost; he must place himself as an apt, willing student in the school of Christ; and as he accepts the grace that is freely offered to him, the presence of Christ in the thought and in the heart will give him decision of purpose to lay aside every weight of sin, that the heart may be filled with all the fullness of God, and of his love.”—Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 134.

Reformation occurs as we cooperate with God by choosing to surrender to Him anything that the Holy Spirit points out as not being in harmony with His will. Unless we make those choices (sometimes very painful ones), then positive, spiritual change will not occur.

God will not rip some selfish thought out of our minds. He will not mysteriously snatch away unhealthful habits or secret indulgences. He convicts us of sin. He convinces us of right, but we must choose. Once we do, He empowers our choices, but it is we ourselves who have to daily, even moment by moment, make those choices.

What does it mean to cooperate with God in the working out of our salvation? What doesn’t it mean? When was the last time that you felt deeply convicted over something and, through God’s grace, overcame, no matter how difficult the struggle?
Confidence and Doubt

What was wrong with Peter’s attitude before the Cross? Matt. 26:31–35.

Peter was no match for the wiles of the evil one. He attempted to face Satan’s temptations in His own strength. Filled with a sense of self-inflated confidence, he had little idea of the crisis that was coming. In the high priest’s courtyard and trembling at the sound of a servant girl’s questioning, Peter denied His Lord (Matt. 26:69–75). Jesus had warned Peter earlier, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31, 32, NKJV). Jesus’ statement provides a fascinating analysis of Peter’s spiritual condition. Trusting in his own strength, Peter drifted from his Lord. This is why Jesus used the expression, “when you have returned to me.” Peter needed a spiritual awakening. He needed a change of attitude. He needed reformation.

Read John 20:24–29. What does this passage reveal about Thomas? What lessons can we take from this for ourselves?

Both Peter and Thomas had one striking feature in common. They approached faith from a very human perspective. Peter placed confidence in what he could do; Thomas, in what he could see. They depended on their faulty human judgment. But Pentecost made a difference. A transformed Peter fearlessly preached, and three thousand were baptized on Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Peter realized that he certainly had no strength to heal a lame man, but Jesus had that power and a miracle took place (Acts 3:2–9). When the authorities attempted to silence his voice, Peter proclaimed, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20, NKJV). Peter was a changed man. Thomas was changed also. It is believed that he sailed to India to preach the gospel. Though not much more is said about him, we can be sure that he had become a new man after Pentecost, as well.

Who are you more like in temperament, Peter or Thomas? What can you learn from their experiences so that you don’t make similar mistakes?
The Conviction to Return

Read Luke 15:11–21. What specific attitudes and actions led the prodigal to decide to return home? What principles of revival and reformation do we discover in this passage?

Revival can be defined in different ways. However it may be defined, one factor ought not be missed: revival is coming home. It is a heart hunger to know the Father’s love in a deeper way. Reformation is the choice to respond to the Holy Spirit’s leading for change and growth. It is the choice to give up whatever stands in the way of this closer relationship with God. The prodigal could not have both the pigpen and the Father’s banquet table.

Simply put, the young man missed home too much to remain where he was. There was an aching in his heart to return. It is this heartache for the presence of God that leads us to long for revival and reformation. It is this heart cry for the warm embrace of the Father that motivates us to make necessary changes in our lives too.

As the young man prepared to return home, he planned his apology in advance. He must have rehearsed it again and again. Read his speech in Luke 15:18, 19 and his father’s interruption in verses 20–24. What does this interruption reveal about the father’s attitude toward his son and God’s attitude toward us?

Although his son was far from the father’s eyes, he was not far from his heart. The father’s eyes searched the horizon for his son each day. The greatest motivation to make changes in our lives is the desire to no longer break the heart of the One who loves us so much. When the boy was wallowing around in the mud with the pigs, the father suffered more than his son. Revival occurs when God’s love breaks our hearts. Reformation occurs when we choose to respond to a love that will not let us go. It takes place when we make the difficult choices to give up those attitudes, habits, thoughts, and feelings that separate us from Him.

How is the statement “‘my son was dead and is alive again’” an insightful definition of true revival? What is it like to be dead and then alive again?
The Faith to Act

Jesus revealed the Father’s compassion and love through the miracles that He performed. He healed palsied bodies in order to reveal an even greater ability to heal palsied souls. He restored twisted arms and legs in order to demonstrate His greater desire to restore twisted hearts and minds. Jesus’ miracles teach us something about how to exercise faith. They teach us valuable lessons about growth and change.

One of Jesus’ most powerful illustrations of the power of faith is found in the miracle of the sufferer at the pool of Bethesda. The poor man lay by the pool for thirty-eight years. He was hopeless. His life seemed doomed to wretchedness, poverty, and suffering until Jesus came.

Read John 5:1–14. Why do you think Jesus asked the man, “Do you want to be made well?” (John 5:6, NKJV). Isn’t it rather obvious that anyone suffering for so long would want to be healed? What was Jesus’ motive here? What was the man’s response? John 5:7.

Jesus did not listen to the man’s excuse. He did not counter the excuse with an argument. He simply said, “ ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’ ” (John 5:8, NKJV). The essential question was, Would this poor sick man believe the word of Christ and act upon it in spite of what he was experiencing? As soon as the man resolved to act upon the word of Christ, He was made whole. Jesus’ gift of healing was in His word. Christ’s word carried with it the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish that which Christ declares.

“If you believe the promise,—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed,—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It is so if you believe it.

“Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say, ‘I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.’” —Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 51.

Why is it so important to believe God’s promises for forgiveness, especially when we feel so condemned and guilty for our sins? Why must forgiveness precede reformation in our lives? Why is it important to believe that we can overcome through Christ’s power in our lives, even now?
Further Study: “Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing’ (John 15:5). From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God. Unless the Holy Spirit works upon the human heart, at every step we shall stumble and fall. Man’s efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. . . . Never leave the impression on the mind that there is little or nothing to do on the part of man; but rather teach man to cooperate with God, that he may be successful in overcoming.”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 381.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 668.

Discussion Questions:

1. Growth comes in the Christian life as we claim God’s promises by faith, believing that He will do just what He says. What are the promises made to us here? 1 John 1:7–9, Phil. 4:13, James 1:5–8, Rom. 8:31–39. How can you learn to believe them for yourself? More important, what choices can you make that will help these promises to become more real in your life?

2. Dwell more on this idea of working out your own salvation with “fear and trembling.” In class, talk about what that means, especially in terms of salvation by faith alone. What should we fear; what should cause us to tremble?

3. When was the last time that, like Peter, you made a promise to God that you, however sincere at the time you made it, utterly failed to follow through on it? What did you learn from that mistake? What principles can we find in the Bible that will enable us to have the victories that we are promised?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** Philippians 2:12–16

**The Student Will:**

**Know:** Compare the attitudes of the disciples before the Cross with the attitudes of the disciples after Pentecost and identify the reformatory changes.

**Feel:** Contemplate the transformations that took place in the disciples’ lives as a model for his or her life.

**Do:** Grasp the Holy Spirit’s power by faith and choose to surrender his or her life fully to Him.

**Learning Outline:**

I. **Know: Understanding Change**

A What were the disciples’ attitudes before Pentecost, and how did they change after Pentecost? Why? What made such a dramatic difference?

B What role did choice play in bringing the prodigal back home? What role did love play in his acceptance? What roles do choice and love play in revival and reformation?

C What were the two major factors in the healing of the paralytic by the pool of Bethesda?

II. **Feel: Identifying With the Disciples**

A How would you feel if you were Peter, and you had just denied your Lord?

B What do you think was going through the prodigal’s mind as he made the long journey home? How might he have felt when his father ran to meet him?

C Imagine the desperate state of the man by the pool of Bethesda. Describe how you would feel if you were that man.

III. **Do: Acting on His Word**

A What similar qualities did Peter, James, John, the prodigal, and the man by the pool of Bethesda all have that led to the changes in their lives?

B Are there times when Christ humbles you as He did Peter? Or He corrects you as He did James and John? Or He welcomes you home as He did the prodigal?

**Summary:** Change does not occur without a spiritual battle. Reformation occurs as, by faith, we accept Christ’s victory as ours and choose to surrender our un-Christlike habits and attitudes to Him.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: Philippians 2:12–16

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Growth in our spiritual lives comes as we cooperate with God. He will not do the work for us without our cooperation, and we certainly cannot do it without Him. He will not violate our freedom of choice, but our choice alone does not carry with it power for change. As we choose to yield to the promptings of His Spirit and surrender our lives to Him, He will supply the power for change.

Just for Teachers: Help your class members to seize this vital concept for spiritual growth: God empowers our choices for change. Change does not come because we try harder. Reformation of character will not come because we diligently work at it. Character transformation occurs when we unite our weak, wavering will to His almighty unchangeable power.

A pastor friend of mine once told the story of his father’s battle with chewing tobacco. When his father was becoming a Christian, he longed to have victory over this vice. It was a real struggle. My friend remembers being a boy and seeing his father get up in the morning and begin chewing. Then Dad came to his senses and spit the chew into his hands, squeezed it into a ball, and threw it as far as he could out into the cornfield and declared, “I am done.” Then about noon, my friend said he saw his dad walking up and down among the rows of corn, looking for the tobacco. Do you think God would let him find it, or do you think God would hide it from him? Of course, God would let him find it! God respects our freedom of choice.

Have you ever said, “I am done! That is it. I am not doing that again” and then found yourself doing the same thing a few hours later? The issue is not God’s power to reform our lives and give us victory; it is about our choice. When we want victory over some besetting sin as much as God wants to give it to us, we will have it.

Discuss With the Class: Have you ever had a struggle with some habit or attitude for weeks that, finally, through the grace of God you overcame? Describe your struggle and final victory over that habit/attitude. What helped you the most to achieve victory?
STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary

I. Working Out What God Works In *(Review Philippians 2:12, 13 with your class.)*

Salvation is only and always through grace *(Eph. 2:8)*. Christ is our Righteousness and our Redemption. He is our Savior and our Deliverer. He is our dying Lamb, our resurrected Lord, our living Priest, and our coming King. He initiated the plan of salvation in eternity past, consummated the plan of salvation on the cross, and will complete the plan of salvation at His soon return.

Jesus convicts us of sin, draws us to Himself, places the desire to respond to His grace in our hearts, saves us, and sustains us by His grace. Although salvation is all of Him, this truth does not mean that we do not have a role to play in receiving His grace and in being transformed by it. As the apostle Paul so forcibly states it, “work out your own salvation” *(Phil. 2:12, NKJV)*. The Greek word here means “carry to completion” or “carry to a full conclusion.” In other words, Paul is saying, “Do not stop halfway in the Christian life. Let Christ finish what He has started in you.” As *The SDA Bible Commentary* so aptly puts it, “The Scriptures teach that each individual must cooperate with the will and power of God. One must ‘strive to enter in’ *(Luke 13:24)*, ‘put off the old man’ *(Col. 3:9)*, ‘lay aside every weight,’ ‘run with patience’ *(Heb. 12:1)*, ‘resist the devil’ *(James 4:7)*, and ‘endure unto the end’ *(Matt. 24:13)*. Salvation is not of works, but it must be worked out. It springs from the mediation of Christ alone, but it is lived out by personal cooperation.” —Vol. 7, p. 158.

Paul does not end the passage with “work out your own salvation.” He continues by adding this vital spiritual truth, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” *(Phil. 2:13, NKJV)*. The Greek word for “do” is energein. Obviously, our word energy is derived from this word. William Barclay, in his *Daily Bible Study Series*, makes this insightful comment about this unique word. “There are two significant things about that verb; it is always used of the action of God; and it is always used of effective action. The whole process of salvation is the action of God; and it is action which is effective because it is the action of God. God’s action cannot be frustrated, nor can it remain half-finished, it must be fully effective.”—*Letters to Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (Westminster Press, 1959), p. 51.

As we cooperate with God and allow Him to complete in us the work that He has started (as He did in the lives of James, John, Peter, the prodigal, and the man by the pool of Bethesda), Jesus will work amazing changes in our
lives. Day by day we will become more like Him, and that is what reformation is all about.

**Consider This:** Reformation comes, not because we try harder but because we experience God’s amazing grace. How can we allow God to work in us to do “His good pleasure”?

**STEP 3—Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** Help your students to understand what it means to cooperate with God in overcoming. Clearly explain how our choice places us in touch with the infinite power of Christ.

**Thought Questions:**

1. What does it mean to work out our own salvation? How do we cooperate with Christ in the plan of salvation?

2. Review the story of the prodigal son. What lessons can we learn about cooperating with Christ and yielding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit?

3. What does it mean that He works in us to “will and to do for His good pleasure” (*Phil. 2:13, NKJV*)? Read Hebrews 12:1, 2 and Philippians 1:6. What promise does Christ make to us about what He will do in our lives if we consent?
STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: The quotation below was written more than one hundred years ago by Ellen G. White. Share it with your class and invite them to gather in groups of two or three and answer the questions following the quotation. If possible, print out this statement and distribute it.

“In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.”—The Desire of Ages, p. 466.

Thought Questions:

1 What does it mean that “the expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself”?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

2 How does reformation, or change, actually take place in our lives? Describe the cooperation with God in overcoming sin, a cooperation that this statement explicitly details.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Col. 3:1, 2; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; 10:3–5; Rom. 12:2, 3; John 10:10; Matt. 5:13–15.

Memory Text: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1, 2, NKJV).

Isaac Watts is credited with more than seven hundred fifty hymns, many of which are sung by thousands of Christians today. On one occasion, a parade was held in London in Watts’ honor. People thronged the streets to get a glimpse of this famous man. As his carriage passed under a balcony filled with spectators, one lady was astonished that this short, elderly man now hunched over in old age had written such mighty hymns. She shrieked, “What, you are Isaac Watts?” Watts motioned for the carriage to stop. He stretched himself up to his full frame and exclaimed, “Madame, could I in fancy grasp the poles or hold creation in my span, I would still be measured by my mind, for the mind is the measure of a man.”

Isaac Watts was right. The mind is the measure of a man, and reformation is about our minds. If we have a reformation in our thinking, we will have a reformation in our actions. Reformation occurs as the Holy Spirit brings our thoughts into harmony with Christ’s thoughts. When that happens, our actions will follow.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 14.
The Mind Matters

Our thoughts will ultimately dictate our behavior. The way that we think influences the way that we act. The converse is also true. Repeated actions influence our thoughts. The Christian is a “new creation.” Old thinking patterns have been replaced by new ones (2 Cor. 5:17).

When a sailboat embarks on its seaward journey, the sails are set. The set sails give the boat its direction. Throughout the journey, the sails need to be reset in order to maintain the correct course. If the sails are neglected, the boat will veer off course very quickly. Like those sails, our thoughts give direction to our spiritual lives. When the apostle Paul admonishes Christians to “set your mind on things above” (Col. 3:2, NKJV), he is urging us to focus our thoughts heavenward. Our minds are shaped by what we put into them. Our thoughts are molded by what we spend our time dwelling upon.

What miracle of grace takes place in our own lives as we behold God’s glory in His Word? 2 Cor. 3:17, 18.

As we behold Jesus in His Word, we are changed. New thoughts replace old ones. By beholding Him, we become more like Him. “It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 555.

Reformation is all about looking to Jesus. It is about Jesus filling our minds. It is about Jesus shaping our thoughts. It is about Jesus guiding our actions. When we behold Jesus, He will lead us to higher standards than a mere rigidity to rules. We cannot really look to Jesus and remain the same. When we think His thoughts, we have only one desire, and that is to do His will.

What counsel would you give to a person struggling to make Jesus a priority in his or her thinking process? What does the Bible mean when it talks about “beholding” or “looking to Jesus”?
The Mind’s Filters

There are some parents who are so concerned about their children’s Internet viewing habits that they have installed filters to block out certain sites. Others have done something similar with television. The purpose of these electronic filters is to let some things in while keeping others out. God has provided a “spiritual filter” for our minds. It has been carefully crafted to allow only those things into our minds that will build our spiritual experience with Jesus.

What practical instruction does Paul give to his fellow Christians as a filter designed to guard their minds from the intoxicating influences of evil? How does this counsel apply today to our television, Internet, and movie-viewing habits? Phil. 4:7, 8; Rom. 12:2.

Here is one simple reality. It is not possible to develop deeply spiritual thoughts if we feed our minds with violence, immorality, greed, and materialism. Our senses are the gateway to our minds. If our minds are bombarded with the stimulating scenes of Hollywood’s entertainment, they will be molded by these sensual experiences rather than by the principles of God’s Word. Multiple millions of dollars are spent by media producers to manipulate our emotions, condition our thinking, and shape our values. We can be assured that the basic question that these entertainment gurus ask is not, “How can these productions prepare people for the coming return of Jesus?” The bottom line that motivates them the most is money. Seventh-day Adventist Christians preparing for the second coming of Christ should reflect carefully before sacrificing their souls on the altar of the world’s entertainment.

There is a great cathedral with three large wooden entrance doors in Milan, Italy. Etched above the left-hand door are these words: “All that pleases is for a moment.” Over the right-hand door, these words stand out in bold relief: “All that troubles is but for a moment.” And emblazoned in bold letters over the center door is this poignant phrase: “That alone endures which is eternal.” Ask yourself: How often do you think about what’s eternal? How do your choices reflect those thoughts?
The Mind’s Safeguard

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7, NIV). This is a wonderful promise but one that we have to actively seek in order to make it real in our lives.

There are many ways in which we can let down our guard. We can let in the cesspool of this world’s entertainment. Our minds might be overcome by anger, bitterness, and resentment. They may be submerged in an ocean of intoxicating pleasure or addictive habits. The good news is that Jesus has promised to safeguard our minds—if we let Him.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. When Paul says that the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal” (NKJV) but spiritual, what does he mean? What are carnal weapons? What are spiritual weapons? The apostle also talks about “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, NKJV). What does he mean, and how can it be accomplished?

____________________________

Billy Graham is quoted as saying, “You cannot stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from nesting in your hair.” In other words, thoughts will rush into our minds. There are varying sights, sounds, and smells that stimulate certain thoughts. Different experiences evoke different emotions. We cannot always choose the thoughts that race through our minds. We can choose whether we will dwell upon them and allow them to dominate our thinking. To bring each thought into obedience to Christ is to surrender our minds to Jesus. Carnal thoughts are not banished by merely wishing them away. They are driven out as the mind is filled with something else. The mind focused on the positive principles of God’s Word is the mind “safeguarded” and “kept” by God’s grace from the wiles of the evil one.

When Paul says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5, NKJV), what specifically does he mean? How is it possible for us to have the mind of Christ? Where does the word let, or allow, in the text place responsibility for change?
Mind/Body Relationships

The ancient Greeks taught a form of dualism; that is, they believed that there was a great distinction between our bodies and our souls. In contrast, Scripture teaches that human beings are an integrated unit of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Whatever affects one part of the human frame affects all parts. The disciples taught that physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health were interconnected and could not be separated.

*How* is this idea reflected in 1 Thessalonians 5:23?

For the New Testament believers, physical, mental, and emotional well-being are indissolubly linked to spiritual well-being. The apostle Paul appealed to believers to “glorify God in their bodies.” He believed that all humanity was bought with a price and we are not our own (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20*). Caring for our bodies by adopting a more healthful lifestyle does much more than add a few more years to our lives; done with the right motives, it can be an act of worship itself.

*How* do Romans 12:2, 3; John 10:10; and 1 Corinthians 10:31 show the intimate relationship between our physical and spiritual health?

The Holy Spirit does not limit Himself to one aspect of our lives when He convicts us of our need for growth. Reformation is not one-dimensional. The Spirit longs to bring our lives into total conformity to the will of Christ in every area. If there are physical lifestyle practices not in harmony with His will, God invites us to surrender them for His glory. Satan wants to control our minds through our bodies; Jesus longs to control our bodies through our minds. Our bodies are a temple, not a funhouse. By following heaven’s principles, we can live more joy-filled, productive, abundant, healthy lives.

*What are the personal experiences that have shown you just how inseparable the link is between our physical and spiritual natures? What choices can you make to help to bring them into more beneficial harmony?*
Images of Influence

There are numerous images that Jesus uses to describe Himself and His church. One is “light.” He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12). He is also the “true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1:9, NKJV). He encourages us to “walk while you have the light” and “believe in the light” (John 12:35, 36, NKJV).

**Compare** Matthew 5:13–15 with Philippians 2:14–16. What is our Lord’s goal for His people in this world? What does that mean in practical terms? How can we be what we are called to be?

The goal of all revival and reformation is to allow the light of Christ’s love, grace, and truth to shine through our lives. Light shines in contrast to darkness. Jesus has called His people to live a lifestyle distinctly different from that which is lived in the world in order to demonstrate the superiority of His way of life. He calls us to be compassionate, caring, and concerned in a world of selfishness, greed, and egotism. He calls us to uphold high standards in entertainment in a society intoxicated with pleasure (Col. 3:1, 2). He calls us to healthful living at a time when millions are dying too young from self-inflicted degenerative diseases (John 10:10). In the midst of an immodest, sex-centered, jaded generation, Jesus calls us to something different. He calls us to modesty, propriety, and moral purity (1 Pet. 3:3, 4).

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah gave a clarion call to Israel for reformation about seven hundred years before Christ. His words speak with relevance to a church waiting for the return of our Lord. “ ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’ ” (Isa. 55:8, 9, NKJV). God’s ideal for His church and for us as individuals is higher than what we can imagine. All of heaven longs to reveal His character of love through His people.

**Look at the standards that mark your lifestyle. In what ways (if any) do they reveal that you are a follower of Jesus and that your life is set on something other than this fading world?**
**Further Study:** “Many profess to be on the Lord’s side, but they are not; the weight of all their actions is on Satan’s side. By what means shall we determine whose side we are on? Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Upon whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are on the Lord’s side, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. We have no friendship with the world; we have consecrated all that we have and are to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 262.

“It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Savior’s love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 419.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **What terms does Paul use to describe the high calling of God’s people?** 2 Cor. 5:18–20; 6:17, 18. What do these images mean in practical terms? How do our lives show that Paul is talking about us?

2. **If we are honest, we can read and claim all the Bible promises we want, but unless we make a conscious choice at the moment of temptation to set our minds on the things that we should, we will succumb to temptation. What principles or practices have you found helpful in controlling your thoughts when tempted?**

3. **What would you respond to someone who says that, “Yes, my thoughts are not always what they should be, but my actions and lifestyle are above reproach”?**

4. **Along with the wonderful spiritual and doctrinal truths that we have been given as Seventh-day Adventists, we have the health message, as well. How can we learn to better integrate these principles into our lives and into our outreach and witness? What role should the health message have in revival and reformation?**
The Lesson in Brief

►Key Text: Colossians 3:1, 2

►The Student Will:

Know: Explore the relationship between thoughts and actions as outlined in the New Testament.
Feel: Identify with the New Testament writers in sensing the overwhelming importance of being careful about what enters his or her mind.
Do: Follow Christ’s example of living a life of holiness, dedicated solely to pleasing God in every aspect of his or her lifestyle.

►Learning Outline:

I. Know: Transformed Minds

A What counsel does the New Testament give regarding the preservation of our minds from the unbiblical, non-Christian influences of this world?
B Read Philippians 2:5 regarding Paul’s statement on the mind of Christ. What does Paul mean? What positive things can we do to reflect Jesus’ mind more fully?

II. Feel: Transformed Feelings

A What basic principle should govern the feelings of a committed Christian?
B What can we do to handle strong desires to indulge in lifestyle practices in the areas of amusement, pleasure, health, and dress that are incompatible with the revealed will of God?

III. Do: Transformed Actions

A Where does all change begin? What roles do prayer, Bible study, and the Holy Spirit play in creating reformatory changes in our lifestyle habits?
B What is our motive in choosing to allow the Holy Spirit to reform our characters?

►Summary: Transformed thoughts lead to transformed actions. Our feelings are not safe guides. Our choices to yield to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, in spite of our emotions, and receive Heaven’s power for change, are the pathway to transformed characters.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: Romans 12:2

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: As we submit our minds to the influence of the Holy Spirit, He will transform our thinking and our actions. Reflecting the light of Christ’s love to a world consumed with pleasure and imprisoned in the grip of its own self-indulgent habits begins with transformed thoughts.

Just for Teachers: Share the story of the hymn “Take Time to Be Holy” with your class in order to stimulate class discussion about the need to spend time in the presence of God and to fill our minds with divine, heavenly thoughts.

William Dunn Longstaff was a Christian businessman living in England in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He was extremely successful in his businesses, and he heavily supported his local church. He also made donations to William Booth of the Salvation Army, as well as to the evangelistic efforts of Dwight Moody. One day as he sat in church listening to a missionary from China preach on 1 Peter 1:16, “‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (NKJV), something stirred deep within his soul. He sensed that God was leading him to a richer, fuller spiritual experience. He recognized that change—growth in grace—comes to those who spend time with Jesus and choose to allow Him to transform their thinking. So that evening in 1882 he went home and wrote the old familiar hymn that we sing so often: “Take Time to Be Holy.” It is found in our Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, no. 500. The hymn is the heart-cry of a busy Christian businessman who longed to allow God to shape his thinking as he spent time in His presence.

Let’s read the first two verses of the hymn together and then reflect on its application to our own lives.

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord; abide in Him always, and feed on His word. Make friends of God’s children, help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing, His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on; spend much time in secret with Jesus alone; by looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be; thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.
Discuss With the Class: Which phrase of this hymn especially speaks to your heart? What impresses you most about it?

STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary

I. Conformed or Transformed (Review Romans 12:2 with your class.)

Each one of us is either being conformed, or fashioned, into the mold of this world, or being transformed into the image of Christ daily. The apostle Paul states it clearly in Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (NKJV). The J. B. Phillips New Testament translation of this passage puts it this way, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould.” The American Standard Version translates it, “And be not fashioned according to this world. . . .”

The opposite of being conformed, fashioned, or squeezed into the mold of this world is being transformed into the image of Christ by the renewing of our minds. The Greek word for “transformed” is the word metamorphoo, from which we get the word metamorphosis. It is used to describe a butterfly that breaks out of its cocoon and experiences a new life. The Bible uses metamorphoo to describe the transformation that takes place in the life of the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the new birth—a new way of thinking and living (John 3:1–21). This transformation of thought always leads to a transformation of actions. Paul calls it “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5, NKJV). He speaks of the inward man, or our thinking patterns, being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

Consider This: What we put into our minds will determine whether we are conformed or transformed, whether our thoughts are fashioned after the will of Christ or whether they are squeezed into the mold of this world. What is the Bible’s definition of a transformed life, and how does that take place? What does it mean to be renewed day by day? Why, then, must renewal take place on a daily basis? What happens to our thinking patterns if it does not?

II. Two Minds (Review Philippians 2:5; Romans 8:5; Colossians 3:1, 2 with your class.)

The apostle Paul admonishes us to “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5, NKJV). The word let means “to allow” or
“permit.” The Pulpit Commentary makes an interesting observation regarding this passage. It translates it as, “Mind . . . the things which the Lord Jesus minded” then adds that Paul encourages us to “love what he [Jesus] loved . . . hate what he hated; the thoughts, desires, motives, of the Christian should be the thoughts, desires, motives, which filled the sacred heart of Jesus Christ our Lord. We must strive to imitate him, to reproduce his image, not only in the outward, but even in the inner life.”—“The Epistle to the Philippians” (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 59.

The Epistle to the Romans continues this theme with the expressions “the flesh” and “the Spirit.” In Romans 8:5, Paul urges the Roman Christians to “set their minds” on the things of the Spirit, not on the things of the flesh. This is similar to his counsel to the church at Colossae when he admonishes Christians to always “set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2, NKJV). The central issue here is threefold: where we set our minds, the tendency of our thoughts, and what we are dwelling upon.

Consider This: We will become like that with which we fill our minds. If we want to think spiritual, Christlike thoughts, then filling our mind with spiritual, Christlike material is critically important. What does the apostle Paul mean when he urges the Roman Christians to set their minds on things above?

III. Preparing for His Return (Review 1 Thessalonians 5:23 with your class.)

The Bible does not leave out any aspects of our lives in the light of preparation for the Lord’s return. Paul’s concluding appeal to the Thessalonians is, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely” (1 Thess. 5:23, NKJV). The Greek word for “completely” is holoteles, which means “complete in all aspects.” Nothing can be held back from Christ, who longs to transform our total thinking, habits, and lifestyle practices. The sinful attitude or practice that we consciously withhold will gradually erode our spirituality. Cherished sin undermines faith.

Consider This: A traveler entering a muddy Alaskan highway some time ago reported seeing this sign: “Consider the rut you will drive in carefully because you will be in it for the next 500 miles.” How does this relate to our lifestyle habits as Christians?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Share a personal testimony in which the Holy Spirit convicted you to surrender some area of your life to Jesus. If it
was difficult for you to surrender that attitude or habit, briefly share your struggle with your class. How did God give you the victory in that area of your life?

Thought Questions:
1. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind any habit or practice in your life that you are unwilling to surrender completely to Jesus.

2. Why is it such a struggle to surrender some of our cherished attitudes or habits?

Application Question:
1. If the Holy Spirit has impressed you with something specific, why not surrender that thing to Him right now?

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: God’s goal for our lives is that we personally experience the joy of knowing Him and rejoice in the wonder of His transforming grace so that we may be “lights” in a world of moral darkness.

Read Philippians 2:14–17 aloud in groups of two or three. What practical counsel does the apostle give to both the Philippians and to us today about the ways in which we can “shine as lights” in a world of darkness? What does the apostle mean that we are to “do all things without complaining and disputing” (vs. 14, NKJV)? How can we “[hold] fast the word of life” (vs. 16, NKJV)? What does that mean?

What does Paul mean when he talks to the church about being “poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith” (vs. 17, NKJV)?

How do each of your responses to the questions above influence the choices you make in each area of your life every day?
Reformation: Healing Broken Relationships

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: 2 Tim. 4:11, Philem. 1–25, 2 Cor. 10:12–15, Rom. 5:8–11, Matt. 18:15–17.

Memory Text: “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10, NKJV).

Even after Pentecost, the relationship between believers was at times strained. The New Testament records repeated examples of the way that church leaders and individual members dealt with such challenges. These principles are extremely valuable for the church today. They reveal the positive results that can come when we use biblical principles to deal with conflicts.

In this week’s lesson we will focus on restored relationships. Great spiritual revivals in the past fostered healed relationships. Movements of the Holy Spirit involve bringing people closer to God and to one another. They include breaking down the barriers in our relationship with God and breaking down barriers in our relationships with one another. In short, the greatest demonstration of the power of the gospel is not necessarily what the church says but how the church lives.

“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35, NKJV). Without this love, all our talk about revival and reformation will come to naught.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 21.*
From Fracture to Friendship

Paul and Barnabas worked together in witnessing for Jesus. But they had some strife between them (Acts 15:36–39). Paul could not trust one as fearful as John Mark. The potential dangers of preaching the gospel had caused John Mark at one point to desert Paul and Barnabas and return home.

“This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ.”—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 170.

Although God used all these men, the issues between them needed resolution. The apostle, who preached grace, needed to extend grace to a young preacher who had disappointed him. The apostle of forgiveness needed to forgive. John Mark grew in the affirming mentorship of Barnabas and, eventually, Paul’s heart was apparently touched by the changes.

How do Paul’s letters from prison to Timothy and the church at Colossae reveal his renewed relationship with John Mark and a new confidence in this young preacher? Col. 4:10, 11; 2 Tim. 4:11.

Although details of Paul’s reconciliation with John Mark may be sketchy, the biblical record is clear. John Mark became one of the apostle’s trusted companions. Paul highly recommended John Mark as a “fellow worker” to the church at Colossae. At the end of Paul’s life, he strongly encouraged Timothy to bring John Mark with him to Rome because he was “useful to me for ministry” (NKJV). Paul’s ministry was enriched by the young preacher, whom he had obviously forgiven. The barrier between them was broken, and they were able to work together in the cause of the gospel.

How can we learn to forgive those who have hurt or disappointed us? At the same time, why does forgiveness not always include a complete restoration of a previous relationship? Why does it not always need to?
From Slave to Son

While he was imprisoned in Rome, Paul met a runaway slave named Onesimus who had fled from Colossae to Rome. Paul personally knew Onesimus’ master. The Epistle of Philemon is Paul’s personal appeal to his friend regarding a restored relationship with the runaway slave.

Relationships mattered to Paul. The apostle knew that fractured relationships are detrimental to spiritual growth. Philemon was a church leader in Colossae. If he harbored bitterness toward Onesimus, it would color his Christian witness.

Read Philemon 1–25. What important principles about restored relationships can we find here? Remember, the key word is principles.

At first glance it is somewhat surprising that Paul did not speak more forcefully against the evils of slavery. But Paul’s strategy was far more effective. The gospel, ideally, breaks down all class distinctions (Gal. 3:28). The apostle sent Onesimus back to Philemon, not as a slave but as his son in Jesus and Philemon’s “beloved brother” in the Lord (Philem. 16).

Paul knew that runaway slaves had little future. They could be apprehended at anytime. They were doomed to a life of destitution and poverty. But now, as Philemon’s brother in Christ and willing worker, Onesimus could have a wonderful future. His food, lodging, and job could be made secure under Philemon. The restoration of a broken relationship could make a dramatic difference in his life. He became a “faithful and beloved brother” and colaborer in the gospel with Paul (Col. 4:9).

Drawing from the principles of the gospel as seen here, what can you take away that can help you to deal with whatever stresses and strains, even fractures, you have in relationships with others?
From Comparison to Complement

As we saw in an earlier lesson, the church at Corinth had deep problems. What principles does Paul outline in 1 Corinthians 3:5–11, 12:1–11, and 2 Corinthians 10:12–15 for healing and restoration, all of which are so vital to revival and reformation?

In these passages, the apostle outlines critical principles of church unity. He points out that Jesus uses different workers to accomplish different ministries in His church, even though each one is laboring together for the building up of God’s kingdom (1 Cor. 3:9).

God calls us to cooperation, not competition. Each believer is gifted by God to cooperate in ministering to the body of Christ and serving the community (1 Cor. 12:11). There are no greater or lesser gifts. All are necessary in Christ’s church (1 Cor. 12:18–23). Our God-given gifts are not for selfish display. They are given by the Holy Spirit for service.

All comparisons with others are unwise, because they will make us feel either discouraged or arrogant. If we think that others are far “superior” to us, we will feel despondent when we compare ourselves to them. If we think our labors for Christ are more effective than the work of others, we will feel proud. Both of these attitudes cripple our effectiveness for Christ. As we labor within the sphere of influence that Christ has given us, we will find joy and contentment in our witness for Christ. Our labors will complement the efforts of other members, and the church of Christ will make giant strides for the kingdom.

Can you think of someone whose gifts in ministry have made you jealous? (Not too hard, is it?) At the same time, how often have you felt proud of your gifts in contrast to those of others? The point is, Paul’s concerns are an ever-present reality in fallen beings. Regardless of the side on which we fall, how can we learn the unselfish attitudes that are necessary in order to avoid the pitfalls here?
From Friction to Forgiveness

What is forgiveness? Does forgiveness justify the behavior of someone who has horribly wronged us? Is my forgiveness dependent on the offender’s repentance? What if the one with whom I am upset does not deserve my forgiveness?

How do the following passages help us to understand the biblical nature of forgiveness? *Rom. 5:8–11; Luke 23:31–34; 2 Cor. 5:20, 21; Eph. 4:26–30.*

Christ took the initiative in reconciling us to Himself. It is the “goodness of God [that] leads you to repentance” (*Rom. 2:4, NKJV*). In Christ, we were reconciled to God while we were yet sinners. Our repentance and confession do not create reconciliation. Christ’s death on the cross did; our part is to accept what was done for us.

It is true that we cannot receive the blessings of forgiveness until we confess our sins. This does not mean that our confession creates forgiveness in God’s heart. Forgiveness was in His heart all the time.Confession, instead, enables us to receive it (*1 John 1:9*). Confession is vitally important, not because it changes God’s attitude toward us but because it changes our attitude toward Him. When we yield to the Holy Spirit’s convicting power to repent and confess our sin, we are changed.

Forgiveness is also so crucial for our own spiritual well-being. A failure to forgive someone who has wronged us, even if he or she does not deserve forgiveness, can hurt us more than it hurts him or her. If an individual has wronged you and the pain festers inside because you fail to forgive, you are allowing that person to hurt you even more.

Forgiveness is releasing another from our condemnation because Christ has released us from His condemnation. It does not justify another’s behavior toward us. We can be reconciled to someone who has wronged us because Christ reconciled us to Himself when we wronged Him. We can forgive because we are forgiven. We can love because we are loved. Forgiveness is a choice. We can choose to forgive in spite of the other person’s actions or attitudes. This is the true spirit of Jesus.

How can focusing on the forgiveness we have in Christ help us to learn to forgive others?
From Rancor to Restoration

Read Matthew 18:15–17. What three steps does Jesus give us to help us to resolve conflicts when we are wronged by another church member? How are we to apply these words in our contemporary situations?

Jesus’ desire in giving the counsel of Matthew 18 is to keep conflict in as small a group as possible. His intent is that the two people involved solve the problem themselves. This is why Jesus declares, “‘If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone’” (Matt. 18:15, NKJV). As the number of people involved in a conflict between two individuals increases, the more contention is created. People take sides, and the battle lines are drawn. But when Christians attempt to settle their differences privately, and in the spirit of Christian love and mutual understanding, a climate of reconciliation is created. The atmosphere is right for the Holy Spirit to work with them as they strive to resolve their differences.

There are times when personal appeals for conflict resolution are ineffective. In these instances, Jesus invites us to take one or two others with us. This second step in the reconciliation process must always follow the first step. The purpose is to bring people together, not drive them farther apart. The one or two who join the offended party are not coming to prove his or her point or to join in blaming the other individual. They come in Christian love and compassion as counselors and prayer partners in order to participate in the process of bringing two estranged people together.

There are occasions when all attempts to solve the problem do not work. In this case, Jesus instructs us to bring the issue before the church. He is certainly not talking about interrupting the Sabbath morning worship service with an issue of personal conflict. The appropriate place to bring the issue, if the first two steps have not helped to reconcile the two parties, is the church board. Again, Christ’s purpose is reconciliation. It is not to blame one party and exonerate the other.

“Do not suffer resentment to ripen into malice. Do not allow the wound to fester and break out in poisoned words, which taint the minds of those who hear. Do not allow bitter thoughts to continue to fill your mind and his. Go to your brother, and in humility and sincerity talk with him about the matter.”—Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers, p. 499.
Further Study: “When the laborers have an abiding Christ in their own souls, when all selfishness is dead, when there is no rivalry, no strife for the supremacy, when oneness exists, when they sanctify themselves, so that love for one another is seen and felt, then the showers of the grace of the Holy Spirit will just as surely come upon them as that God’s promise will never fail in one jot or tittle.”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 175.

“If we stand in the great day of the Lord with Christ as our refuge, our high tower, we must put away all envy, all strife for the supremacy. We must utterly destroy the roots of these unholy things, that they may not again spring up into life. We must place ourselves wholly on the side of the Lord.”—Ellen G. White, Last Day Events, p. 190.

Discussion Questions:
1. Read Colossians 3:12–17 in class. Discuss the Christian qualities that the apostle Paul encourages the church at Colossae to seek. Why are these qualities the basis for all conflict resolution? How do they guide us in carrying out the principles that Jesus gives us in Matthew 18:15–18?

2. Look again at Colossians 3:12–17 and the teachings found in these verses. Why are these things so utterly essential for the revival and reformation that we so desperately need in the church?

3. If we look at our church—that is, the Seventh-day Adventist Church—as a whole, what is the greatest thing holding us back from the kind of revival and reformation that will be needed in order to reach the world? Is it our teachings and doctrines? Of course not. These are the very things that God has given us to proclaim to the world. The problem lies solely in us, in our interpersonal relationships, our petty jealousies, our bickering, our selfishness, our desire for supremacy, and a whole host of other things. Why must you, yes, you, not the person next to you in the pew, not the pastor—but you, yourself—plead for the power of the Holy Spirit to bring the changes that have to occur in you before we will see revival and reformation in the whole church?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Romans 5:8–11

The Student Will:

Know: Examine Jesus’ counsel in Matthew 18 as a model for conflict resolution.

Feel: Nurture the Spirit of forgiveness by rediscovering the depth of Christ’s forgiveness, compassion, and mercy.

Do: Learn how to forgive those who have wronged him or her with the same attitude of forgiveness with which Jesus forgives the sinner.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: When Friends Differ

A Describe the differing attitudes of Paul and Barnabas toward John Mark. Why do you think Paul had a lack of faith in John Mark?

B Contrast Paul’s attitude toward John Mark and his attitude toward Onesimus? Do you think that Paul grew in his understanding of God’s grace and forgiveness? Explain.

II. Feel: When Your Heart Hurts

A How would you feel if you were John Mark and someone whom you deeply respected had lost confidence in you?

B How would you feel if you were either Onesimus or Paul? Has anyone ever placed confidence in you when you knew you had sinned? Would you like to share that experience?

C Has anyone who has wronged you ever approached you based on the principles of Matthew 18? How did you feel?

III. Do: When Healing Comes

A How can we follow Christ’s example and take the initiative to forgive those who have wronged us as Christ forgave us?

B How does understanding 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 and Romans 8:5–11 provide us with the tools to first understand and then forgive those who may have wronged us?

Summary: Jesus exhibited the spirit of forgiveness when we did not deserve it so that we can forgive others when they do not deserve it. As he grew in grace, the apostle Paul modeled and taught this same attitude of forgiveness.
Learning Cycle

**STEP 1—Motivate**

**Spotlight on Scripture:** Romans 5:8–11

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** It is surprising how little things fracture friendships at times. A hasty word, a rude response, or an impatient outburst can destroy a relationship. In this week’s lesson, we will discover biblical principles that can heal broken relationships. Jesus’ example of forgiveness challenges us to forgive those who have wronged us.

**Just for Teachers:** The principles of forgiveness outlined in the Bible are just as relevant today as they were two thousand years ago. As we study the experiences of the apostle Paul with John Mark, Onesimus and Philemon, and the Corinthian church, we will discover practical ways of solving the interpersonal-relationship conflicts that arise in our own lives. Paul recognized that, of all people, he needed forgiveness so he could extend forgiveness to others.

One thing that most people understand is that those who are able to forgive wrongs done to them are able to move on with their lives and heal from the agony of the past. Those who cannot forgive are locked in the past and destined to be doomed by it. The ability to forgive makes all the difference. Thus, forgiveness is just as crucial for the one forgiving as it is for the one being forgiven.

**Discuss With the Class:** What does the Lord’s Prayer mean when Jesus prays, “‘And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us’” (Luke 11:4, NKJV)?

**STEP 2—Explore**

**Bible Commentary**

I. Jesus: The Model of Forgiveness *(Review Romans 5:8–11 with your class.)*

Forgiveness is both an attitude of the heart and an act of reconciliation with God. God modeled this forgiveness in the plan of salvation through Jesus
Christ. Jesus does not forgive us because we are worthy. Accepting the forgiveness He freely offers makes us worthy. We are not forgiven because we are righteous. When He forgives us, we become righteous. In one of the most amazing biblical passages, Paul explains the magnitude of God’s love in these words, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, NKJV). J. B. Phillips is correct when he translates the passage this way, “Yet the proof of God’s amazing love is this: that it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us.” The word *demonstrates* in the New King James Version might also be translated as “commends,” “establishes,” “recommends,” or “proves.” Christ’s death on the cross does all of the above. It commends God’s love to us before the entire universe. It establishes His love without a shadow of a doubt. It recommends His love to the entire human race, and it both answers the charges of Satan that God is unjust and proves His love forever.

He did all this for us when we were His “enemies” (vs. 10, NKJV). In our fallen, sinful natures we were hostile toward God; He took the initiative and reconciled us to Himself through the death of His Son. This initiative makes all the difference in the world. Because He reached out to us when we were not reaching out to Him, we can reach out to others when they are not reaching out to us. Because He forgave us when we did not deserve it, we can forgive others when they do not deserve it.

**Consider This:** To forgive is to release another from our condemnation because Christ released us from His condemnation. How can we apply this concept of forgiveness to those who have wronged us? What does it mean practically? What doesn’t it mean?

**II. The Church: Ambassadors of Forgiveness** *(Review Matthew 18:15–17 with your class.)*

In His counsel regarding restored relationships in Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus gives specific instructions to keep the conflict between two people in as small a circle as possible. The reason an individual first attempts to solve the problem by approaching his or her brother or sister alone is that people often become much more defensive if they feel their actions are being challenged in the presence of others. The book *The Desire of Ages* gives us this divine insight: “In the spirit of meekness, ‘considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted’ (Gal. 6:1), go to the erring one, and ‘tell him his fault between thee and him alone.’ Do not put him to shame by exposing his fault to others, nor bring dishonor upon Christ by making public the sin or error of one who bears His name. Often the truth must be plainly spoken to the erring; he must be led to see his error, that he may reform. But you are not to judge or
to condemn. Make no attempt at self-justification. Let all your effort be for his recovery. In treating the wounds of the soul, there is need of the most delicate touch, the finest sensibility. Only the love that flows from the Suffering One of Calvary can avail here. With pitying tenderness, let brother deal with brother, knowing that if you succeed, you will ‘save a soul from death,’ and ‘hide a multitude of sins.’ James 5:20.”—Ellen G. White, p. 440.

The loving, forgiving Spirit of Jesus makes all the difference. Then, if the person does not respond, invite one or two other godly people to go with you. In the spirit of Jesus, share your heart burdens and concerns. If you have wronged your brother or sister, ask for forgiveness. Pray together, seeking a heart of love toward one another. If this does not work, bring the entire situation to the larger body of the church through the church board. The purpose of all of this protocol is to achieve the unity that comes through Christ’s grace.

**Consider This:** In Christ the walls that separate us are broken down. Jesus’ longing for His church is for members to respect one another and live in Christian love and unity. As we attempt to apply the principles of Matthew 18 to our personal relationships within the church, what are some of the key factors that determine a successful outcome of carrying out what Jesus says?

**STEP 3—Apply**

**Thought Questions:**

1. If we forgive someone who has deeply wronged us when he or she has not asked for, or desired, forgiveness, does that justify what that individual has done to us? Why, or why not?

2. What if you know you should forgive someone for what he or she has done to you, but you have no desire to forgive? What do you do when you know the right thing to do is to forgive but you just can’t?

3. Why is it hypocritical to tell someone you forgive him or her when the attitudes toward this person have not changed in your heart?
Application Questions:


2. What effect do our choices have upon our thoughts? How can our feelings actually change if we act upon that which we know to be right?

3. Why are restored relationships vitally important in the context of revival and reformation?

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: The situation described below is imaginary, but it certainly could be real. Situations like this regularly occur. Ask your class to apply the principles that we learned from our lesson to this situation.

Mr. Sanders has been estranged from his daughter for many years. He is divorced from her mother, and his daughter talks to him only occasionally. She still calls to wish him a happy birthday but does not want to spend any time with him. He was particularly harsh throughout her childhood and disciplined her severely. Within the last year, he has become a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and longs for a new relationship with his daughter. He comes to you for counsel.

What do you tell him? What questions might you ask him? How can he take practical steps to heal this broken relationship?
The Promised Revival: God’s Mission Completed

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 28:18–20; James 5:7, 8; Zech. 10:1; Matt. 3:11; Rev. 18:1; 19:11–16.

Memory Text: “Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7, 8, NKJV).

The challenge of preaching the gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages to the entire world may seem impossible. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing rapidly, it is not keeping up with the population. There are multiple areas of the world where the name “Seventh-day Adventist” (much less our message) is not known.

The reality of this harsh fact leads to serious questions. Is it possible for the gospel to be preached to the entire world in this generation? Will there be some unusual breakthrough that will dramatically speed up the proclamation of the three angels’ messages? There is always one thing to keep in mind when we discuss this topic: the mission is God’s, and He will accomplish it. At the same time, however, we must remember that we have been called to a crucial role in that final work, as well.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 28.
The Promised Power

Christ’s Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20 is accompanied by His great promise. What is that promise, what does it mean in a practical sense, and how can we draw comfort from it? Why is that promise so important to us?

The disciples preached not in their strength but in Christ’s. According to Paul, in fact, the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven in just a few short years (Col. 1:23). Although some might question the precise meaning of Paul’s words, it is undeniable that the gospel made a powerful impact on first-century society. It changed the world. Christ promised His disciples that He would “send the Promise of My Father” and they would receive “power from on high” (Luke 24:49, NKJV). The Savior added, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NKJV).

No matter how challenging the task, the promises of God are sure. Jesus’ statement that “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14, NKJV) is a promise. The proclamation of the gospel to the entire world may seem impossible, but God’s power will overcome every obstacle. Every person on planet Earth will have a reasonable opportunity to hear and understand God’s message of love and truth before the return of our Lord (see Rev. 18:1).

“I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere.” —Ellen G. White, Early Writings, p. 277.

God will finish His work. He will pour out His Spirit in mighty power and accomplish what seems impossible according to all human planning.

What are ways that you can, in your immediate sphere, be a more effective witness for the Lord? That is, what can you do to help to see the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14?
The Early and Latter Rain

Both the Old and New Testaments use the symbolism of water to represent the Holy Spirit. The prophet Isaiah quotes the words of our Lord, “...I will pour water on him who is thirsty. ... I will pour My Spirit on your descendants” (Isa. 44:3, NKJV). Isaiah uses a common Hebrew literary device called parallelism. The second phrase in the passage explains the first. The prophet Joel also discusses the symbolism of water. God promises to water Israel’s fields, then declares, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh” (Joel 2:28, NKJV). Jesus uses the symbolism of water to represent the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39).

What are the two symbols that each of the following texts use regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Joel 2:21–24; 28–32; James 5:7, 8. How are we to understand what they mean?

In Bible times, sowing and plowing took place in the middle of October, shortly after the falling of the early rains. These early rains brought the seed to germination and nurtured its early growth. The latter rain came in the late spring to bring the ripening fruit to harvest. The barley harvest and other grain harvests were spring events, followed by the fruit harvest in the summer and fall.

God uses the symbolism of the early and latter rain in two ways. The early rain of the Spirit fell upon the disciples at Pentecost in order to launch the Christian mission. The latter rain will be poured out on God’s church at the end of time in order to complete His mission on earth. The term early rain also refers to the daily work of God’s Spirit—convicting, instructing, guiding, and empowering each believer. The latter rain is a term used to describe a special endowment of God’s Holy Spirit on Christ’s church just before the coming of Jesus.

“Under the figure of the early and the latter rain, that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest, the Hebrew prophets foretold the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God’s church. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. . . .

“But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ ”

Prerequisites for the Latter Rain


The Scriptures invite us to ask God for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). The disciples believed Christ’s promise, waited in unity, and prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, 14). The reason that God asks us to pray for the Holy Spirit is not that He is unwilling to give us the Spirit but that we are not prepared to receive it. As we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God works on our hearts to lead us to deeper repentance. Praying in small groups with other church members draws us into a closer bond of unity and fellowship. Both prayer and Bible study prepare our minds to be sensitive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

What is the natural result of spiritual renewal in our lives? Where does all spiritual revival and reformation lead? Ps. 51:10–13; Acts 4:13, 20; 5:33; 8:4.

All spiritual revival and genuine reformation lead to a passionate desire to witness. When our hearts are filled with a deep appreciation for everything that Jesus has done for us, then, like Peter and John, “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20, NKJV). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early rain on the Day of Pentecost empowered the disciples to effectively witness. Their witness was so powerful that a rebellious mob in Thessalonica screamed in fear that “these who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (Acts 17:6, NKJV).

Just as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost enabled the disciples to be a formidable witness to their generation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power will empower God’s church to reach the world in the final generation. It will take nothing less than latter-rain power to complete God’s mission on earth, and God offers nothing less. Heaven’s most precious gift is offered in infinite supply in order to accomplish the most urgent and important task ever entrusted to His church.

The early disciples turned the world “upside down” with their preaching and witness. Why isn’t that said of us?
The Baptism of Fire

Both the Old and New Testaments use a variety of symbols, such as water, wind, and oil, to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist links another image, that of fire, to the work of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16).

There are many who have misunderstood John’s statement. The passage does not say, “ ‘He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit or with fire’ ” (NKJV). It says, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” The second expression, “ ‘and with fire,’ ” explains the first expression, “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of fire. The word *baptism* in the New Testament is used 80 times and refers to total immersion.

*Read* the following passages and describe what the symbolism of fire represents in the Bible. Exod. 3:2–4; 24:17; 1 Kings 18:24; Mal. 3:2, 3; Acts 2:1–4; Heb. 12:29.

The symbolism of fire is a symbol of the glory, presence, and power of God manifested in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. To be baptized with fire is to be immersed in the glory of God’s presence through the Holy Spirit in order to witness in His power. Moses met God at the burning bush and then left the glory of His presence in order to witness to Pharaoh. Elijah witnessed to Israel in the glory of God’s fiery presence on Mount Carmel. When tongues of fire fell on Pentecost, the disciples witnessed in languages that they had never before known. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is immersion in the presence and power of God in order that we can effectively witness of His glory. Once again, in the last days of earth’s history, God’s people will be immersed in His presence, filled with His power, and sent out to witness of His glory to the world.

The earth will be filled with the glory of God. “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14, NKJV). In prophetic vision, John saw an angel messenger descend from heaven and “the earth was illuminated with his glory” (Rev. 18:1, NKJV).

God’s glory, His loving character, will be revealed through the power of the Holy Spirit to a waiting world and a watching universe. Every person on planet Earth will have the opportunity to both hear and understand God’s last-day message.

God’s glory, His loving character, will be revealed to the world. How can you, right now, in your own sphere, reveal that glory in your life? What will that require on your part?
The Great Controversy Ended

The entire book of Revelation can be summarized in just a few words: Jesus wins, Satan loses.

Read Revelation 12:17; 17:13, 14; 19:11–16. What is the central message of these passages?

Here is good news: the same Jesus who defeated Satan on the cross will come again and triumph over the powers of hell and put a full end to evil (Rev. 19:19–21; Ezek. 28:18, 19). Evil will not have the last word. Poverty and pestilence will not have the last word. Sickness and suffering will not have the last word. Chaos and crime will not have the last word. Disease and death will not have the last word.

Instead, God will.

Until then, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing everything possible to reach every person. God’s heart aches over a lost world. Soon His people will reveal to the world, in both the witness of their words and their works, Jesus’ amazing grace and truth.

Of course, Satan will do everything in His power to oppose this witness. The final crisis will break upon this world. Jesus will pour out His Spirit in latter-rain power, and the work of God on earth will be finished.

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 612.

The work of God on earth will be finished. Jesus will come. All heaven and earth will rejoice. There is no more important priority in our lives than experiencing a revival of God’s grace in our hearts daily and inviting His Holy Spirit to make us into His image (1 John 3:1–3).

Our world is falling apart. Who can’t see that? Is there anything that matters more than opening our hearts to Jesus and pleading for the revival and reformation so needed, not just by each one of us individually but by our church as a whole? What would happen if our own hearts were totally surrendered to Him and we were completely devoted to spreading this message to the world?
Further Study: “The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

Discussion Questions:

1. In the statement above, Ellen G. White wrote: “The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God.” In class, discuss what you think that means. What does it not mean? After all, our message is very logical, very reasonable, and it comes with some very powerful arguments in its favor. How are we to understand, then, what she is telling us?


3. Dr. Stephen Hawking, one of the world’s greatest scientists, called the concept of an afterlife a “fairy story for people afraid of the dark.” Why does a statement like that show just how crucial and hopeful our message is for a world that knows neither God nor His love?

4. Though we don’t know when Jesus is going to come back, we do know that we want Him to and that we want this sin-sick world to end and a new sinless world to begin. That’s why we believe revival and reformation are so crucial to us as a people, and it’s why our leaders are calling us to it. In the end, though, it will not come by anything other than the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and that will not happen until we, as individuals, make a conscious choice to surrender ourselves with all our hearts and souls and minds to the Lord. How can we, without judging others, without making comparisons among ourselves, do our part to encourage one another to be prepared for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
The Lesson in Brief

**Key Text:** Matthew 28:18–20

**The Student Will:**

**Know:** Understand that, although finishing God’s work on earth and proclaiming the gospel to the entire world might seem impossible, God will pour out His Holy Spirit in its fullness on His people in order to complete His mission.

**Feel:** Experience the joy of knowing that God will work miraculously to finish His work.

**Do:** Determine to make a full surrender of every aspect of his or her life to Jesus and open his or her heart to receive the power of the latter rain.

**Learning Outline:**

I. Know: God’s Power Unleashed

A What promise did Jesus give with His command to His disciples to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth?

B How are the early and latter rains different in what they accomplish? When do these symbols apply?

II. Feel: God’s People Prepared

A What are the prerequisites for receiving the latter rain? Why hasn’t the Holy Spirit been poured out in the fullness of power yet?

B What is the baptism of fire, and how can you receive it? Is the baptism of fire different from the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Explain.

III. Do: God’s Promises Fulfilled

A What role does the outpouring of the Holy Spirit play in the finishing of God’s work on earth?

B What role do God’s people play?

C How can we reveal His glory and be the instruments He uses to complete His mission?

**Summary:** When Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised that through His Holy Spirit He would empower His earthly disciples to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth. These promises will reach their complete fulfillment in His last-day church as the power of the latter rain descends and His people participate with Him in the completion of His mission on earth.
Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: Acts 1:8

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: When Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel to the entire world. Jesus’ words were fulfilled on Pentecost, and they launched the Christian church; they will be fulfilled in abundance in His last-day church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain.

Just for Teachers: Emphasize that although the task before the church is great, God’s power is greater. Make a practical application to your own community. God wants to do something special in your town where you live. God’s mission for us is always where we are. He is longing to pour out His Spirit on your church in order to empower your members to share Jesus’ love in your community.

Their stories are amazing. Like many of the first-century disciples, they do not appear to be the best equipped to share God’s Word with others. They do not necessarily have the qualities to be effective witnesses, but they have the one quality that matters most—surrendered hearts, filled with the Holy Spirit.

José was brought up without the advantage of an education in a small South American farming community. Even as an adult he could not read or write, but his children could. He encouraged them to read the Bible to him. In this way, he memorized hundreds of Bible texts. One day the Holy Spirit deeply impressed him with the need to share His faith with others. He began visiting other families in his community with his Bible in his hand, explaining that he could not read and that he would like them to read the Bible to him. When they agreed, he directed them to specific texts on a single Bible topic, such as salvation, the second coming of Christ, or the Sabbath. As the weekly Bible readings continued, many showed an interest in the Seventh-day Adventist message and were eventually baptized.

Sonya is blind but has real spiritual eyesight. One of her friends serves as her guide through the streets of her city in Southern India. She knocks on the doors of one person after another, asking each one if they would like her to pray for them. She has developed scores of spiritual friends through her prayer ministry. Many of these people have taken Bible studies and are now baptized.
The stories of José and Sonya, who live continents apart, share an eternal truth with us. God does not call the qualified; He qualifies those He calls. He uses those who are willing, empowers them, and sends them out to witness for Him. The Great Commission in Matthew 28 is not for a select few. It is for the entire church. When we step out in faith, He will use us powerfully. When Christ has a people completely committed to Him and willing to share His love and truth, He will pour out His Holy Spirit in latter-rain power for the finishing of His work.

**Discuss With the Class:** What qualities does God look for in selecting effective witnesses for Him?

►**STEP 2—Explore**

**Just for Teachers:** Encourage your class with the assurance that God desires to use each member as a powerful witness for Him. Point out that although the task of proclaiming the gospel to the entire world seems impossible, there are no impossibilities with God. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power, the work of God on earth will be finished and Jesus will come.

**Bible Commentary**

**I. His Authority and Mission** *(Review Matthew 28:18–20 with your class.)*

Jesus said, “‘All authority has been given to Me. . . . Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations’” *(NKJV).* As we pointed out in our lesson in week four, the word for “authority” also can be translated as “power” or “divine privilege.” In His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus triumphed over all the forces of evil, including all evil spirits, demonic forces, disease, and death. He is the One who is the Master of every situation.

The word *exousia* is used throughout the Gospel of Matthew to indicate Christ’s authority over the forces of evil in every situation. In Matthew 9:6 and 10:1, Jesus has the authority (*exousia*) over disease and demons. When we step out in faith to share Jesus’ message with others, we go in His authority with His power. He supplies us with wisdom, strength, and courage. He has triumphed over the forces of hell. Ellen G. White adds this divinely inspired thought: “Thus Christ gave His disciples their commission. He made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.
The second phrase that is significant in Matthew 28:19 is “‘all nations’” (NKJV). In the original it is ta ethne. It literally means all ethnic groups or all peoples. Christ commissions His church to proclaim the gospel of His love and truth to every person in every village, town, city, state, province, and country in the world. The task is great, but our God is greater.

Consider This: Christ gives His people the authority over all of the powers of hell and the forces of evil in order to carry out the gospel commission. In what examples from the book of Acts is God’s power manifested?

II. His Power and His Presence (Review Matthew 3:11 with your class.)

The baptism of fire represents immersion in the presence of God. His Holy Spirit fills the heart of each believer, cleansing and purifying the life from those sins that prevent him or her from being an effective witness. Bible scholar LeRoy Froom explains the expression “the baptism of fire” in these words: “It is an explanatory phrase, completing the idea. It is the Scriptural way of repetition to emphasize and enforce a single thought. We are to be baptized with divine fire now to save us from destruction by consuming fire later.”—The Coming of the Comforter (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), p. 268. The personal presence of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is a purifying presence. The Holy Spirit searches our inmost souls. The Holy Spirit penetrates our thoughts. The Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts and energizes our spiritual lives.

Consider This: Christ has promised that our lives can be filled with the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be immersed in the presence of God? How is that possible?

III. His Glory and Character (Review James 5:7, 8 and Revelation 18:1 with your class.)

Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power, the earth will be illuminated with the glory of God. The greatest manifestation of the Holy Spirit’s power since Pentecost will be poured out. The light of God’s Word will penetrate the darkest corners of this earth. God’s glory is His character (Exod. 33:18, 19). His eternal character of love will be manifest in His people to reveal before a waiting world and a watching universe that His grace is sufficient in this sinful world to overcome all the powers of evil. In their lives and in their witness, His people will reveal His character of love. Through His power, His message will triumph, and Jesus will come (Matt. 24:14).
Consider This: The Bible’s last book, Revelation, says that an angel came down out of heaven, and “the earth was illuminated with his glory” (Rev. 18:1, NKJV). What does this mean? How is the earth filled with God’s glory?

STEP 3—Apply

Thought Questions:

What hinders the outpouring of the latter rain in its fullness in your life? Why is it not worth cherishing that habit or attitude? What keeps you from surrendering it to God?

Given what God has promised us in the gift of the Spirit to finish His work on earth, why do you think we are so reluctant to ask for the Holy Spirit and claim His power in our lives?

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Lead your class in a discussion of what a church filled with the power of the Holy Spirit would look like. This exercise is designed to get your class members thinking about the reality of a church filled with latter-rain power.

Carefully think through what a church’s prayer ministry, membership involvement, children’s and Sabbath School ministries, church services, and evangelistic ministry will look like when the Holy Spirit is poured out in its fullness. Describe a church filled with Spirit-filled members.