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There are times when life is more than the update on Facebook, the tweets, the IMs, and the texts. Sometimes, the important times, it’s about looking beyond the abridged, the instants, the clichés. It’s about discovering what God is really trying to say to you.
SABBATH SCHOOL
TEACHER PREPARATION
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cq

teacher's guide

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FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. CQ’s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the Adult Bible Study Guide find that because CQ deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

About four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to CQ each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflect the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit’s guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passages on which each week’s lesson are based appear in bold type in the “Logos” portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the “Logos” pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.
4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
   - **Introduction** is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week’s theme.
   - **Logos** is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
   - **Testimony** presents Ellen White’s perspective on the lesson theme.
   - **Evidence** approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
   - **How-To** discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
   - **Opinion** is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
   - **Exploration** provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week’s lesson.

CQ AND THE CHURCH

CQ is the General Conference-approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.
Hannah Goldstein illustrated this Bible Study Guide while a student at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A. The following is how she described her life during that time:

Originally, my major was psychology. However, the more classes I took, the more I developed a love for religious studies and sociology. I’m currently narrowing down my major and figuring out where I want to go from there.

I’m from the state of Maryland, and Washington, D.C., is pretty much in my backyard. Ever since I was 17, during the summer I’ve been employed at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring. I first worked for the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department and then for Adventist Risk Management.

Photography has always been a hobby of mine; however, I put the camera down a couple of years ago and didn’t pick it up until recently. Illustrating for CQ made me realize why I love photography. I get to express meaning through pictures. I’ve always believed that one of the most powerful ways to reach people is through this medium. Though I doubt I will ever pursue a career in photography, I do enjoy freelance projects such as this one and can only hope that the images I produced will further glorify Christ and His message to us.

Once I’ve graduated, I’m not sure where I’ll go. Maybe I’ll return to Maryland. Perhaps I’ll just stay in Tennessee. Wherever I go, it will be to share God’s truth. He has a plan. It’s up to me to be open to seeing it in His time.
**Explanation of Artwork**

**Cover:** We can only imagine the beauty that God had originally created.

**Lesson 1:** This photo was taken of a mountain in Tanzania and only holds a fraction of the beauty that must have existed at Creation.

**Lesson 2:** It’s unfathomable to imagine how powerful and great the Creator of the universe is.

**Lesson 3:** Sabbath is the seventh day. God intended for us to remember the Sabbath and to observe it.

**Lesson 4:** This stone angel near my house is a reminder of the importance of the first angel’s message in Revelation 14:6, 7 about Creation.

**Lesson 5:** One simple act in the Garden of Eden caused humanity’s fall.

**Lesson 6:** Sin is what made humans, as well as angels, fall from a perfect existence.

**Lesson 7:** On this earth we can see only a hazy picture of the glory that is to come.

**Lesson 8:** Christ provides for us in much the same way as parents provide for their children.

**Lesson 9:** Marriage was a gift to the first man and woman and remains a gift to men and women today.

**Lesson 10:** God gave us the earth to take care of, not to destroy.

**Lesson 11:** The Sabbath is not to be a burden, but a time to rest, reflect, fellowship with others, and enjoy the beauty of all that God created.

**Lesson 12:** Through sin we all will eventually die and sleep in the ground. But God has given us the hope of the resurrection.

**Lesson 13:** The world now is still full of so much beauty. It’s incredible to think of how much more beautiful it will be when God re-creates it. What a huge concept to grasp!
Jesus, Creator of Heaven and Earth

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”

(Gen. 1:1, NKJV).
Canis Majoris is the largest star known to humankind. “If the earth were a golf ball, Canis Majoris would be the height of Mount Everest!”* Climbing Mount Everest—29,029 feet above sea level—is a feat achieved only by the dedicated. Yet Revelation 1:16 describes Jesus as holding seven stars in His hand. Imagine Jesus holding Mount Everest. No wonder He tells us in Matthew 17:20 that faith, as small as a mustard seed, can move mountains. Imagine a mustard seed, a golf ball, Mount Everest, the earth, and the star Canis Majoris. (Google images may help to give us a better perspective on size.) Then imagine Jesus, our Creator, holding seven stars in His hand. When John saw Jesus like this, he was so awestruck he “fell at his feet as though dead” (Rev. 1:17, NIV). What would your response be?

Our Creator, Jesus Christ, is an amazing and powerful God! Every day the sun rises and sheds its light on us. It is easy to take this for granted. Yet light is so incredible! It can travel at approximately 186,282 miles per second. This speed is incomprehensible. To create something so powerful, you must be able to understand and control it. Yet there were no laborious hours spent creating or a rubbish bin full of first, second, and third tries. The Word of God spoke, and nature occurred in an instant, with perfection.

When we consider the immense power and intelligence of our Creator, how can we not trust Him with our lives. Gaze upon the stars and see the glory and splendor of God. Look below the surface at a cellular level and see how intricately we are made. Explore a tranquil forest and be filled with the peace of God. Wander along a beach, and let your troubles be washed into the deep blue sea. God’s nature helps us to break away from worldly distractions to hear His loving voice.

As you study this week’s lesson, make a point to spend time in nature, just you and God. If you live where that is not possible, look at nature pictures on the Internet or check out some nature photography books from a library. Let your heart be immersed in nature’s serenity, magnificence, and cleansing power—all a reflection of our Creator God.

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* Louie Giglio, How Great Is Our God (DVD, 2009).

Jeanelle Isaacs, Sydney, Australia
**Beginnings (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6, 9)**

Whether we believe in God or not, we are exercising faith. Everyone chooses who or what they believe in, and their faith becomes the driving force of their lives. Some people search for happiness by living for the pleasures of the flesh. Others look for fulfillment in gathering the wealth and treasures of this world. Still others seek meaning in wielding the power they think they have, while many others put their hope in false gods. Multitudes turn to humanism in their desperate search for something to believe in, and masses passively follow the traditions of pseudo-Christianity.

**The all-powerful God is still speaking to us today.**

However, pursuing these goals leaves an aching hollowness. Thankfully there is an exciting alternative. A meaningful belief in God, a committed worship of our Creator, and a personal experience with Him will shape and direct our lives. This is where the searching ends—and begins!

**Knowing (Pss. 19:1–3; 139:14; Rom. 1:18–20)**

Our faith is a matter of the choices we make. However, when we explore the wonders of creation, we begin to understand the wonders of our Creator. Read Psalm 139:14 and reflect on the wonder of the human body. Consider Romans 1:18–20 in light of the evidence of the Creator in nature. Take time to gaze at the starry heavens and to contemplate the vastness of creation and the meaning of Psalm 19:1–3. The evidence of the Creator in creation is overwhelming.

But God gives us other types of evidence as well. There are the prophecies of the Bible. There is the power of God to change lives. There is the revelation of Jesus Christ in human flesh. There is a personal experience in answered prayers. Our God is real and He wants us to know Him personally. He is the God of creation, the God of life—our life.

**The Word (John 1:1–3, 14; Col. 1:15, 16)**

While the members of the Trinity work in harmony, the Bible reveals that Jesus Christ has been particularly involved with our planet. Colossians 1:15 describes Jesus as *prōtotokos*—“the firstborn.” In this context, *prōtotokos* is “a figurative expression describing Jesus as first in rank, the figure being drawn from the dignity and office held by the first-born in a human family, or more precisely, the first-born in a royal family. Christ’s position is unique, authoritative, and absolute. He has been entrusted with all prerogatives and authority in heaven and earth. Paul emphasizes the position of Christ be-
cause he is seeking to meet the arguments of the false teachers, who declared that Christ was created, and who denied His supremacy.”

In John 1:1–3, 14, Jesus is identified as the logos, the “Word” of God. Logos means “utterance,” “saying,” “speech,” “narrative,” or “account.” In these verses, John employs the imagery of Jesus revealing God. In Genesis 3:15, God predicts the coming of a Deliverer. So the plan of redemption was covenanted before the creation of this world (1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8). God gave His word in Eden—and the Word is manifest when Jesus took the form of humanity. Jesus reveals the very thoughts of God. Indeed, Jesus is God. God’s Word was given for you and me.

**The Power (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9; Ps. 33:9; Heb. 1:1, 2)**

Scientists have learned to split an atom in order to unleash an enormous destructive power. However, think of the power of God as He spoke and brought the atoms together. What sound accompanied the work of creation? Was there indeed a “big bang”? Notice the Genesis account and the repetition of the phrase “and God said.” The Hebrew word translated as “said” (‘amar) in Genesis 1 is the same word translated as “spoke” in Psalm 33:9. Would we be afraid if we heard God’s voice? Consider God’s revelations to the prophets. “Thus saith [‘amar] the Lord” introduces some of the most powerful prophetic messages (Josh. 7:13; Isa. 37:6; Jer. 4:3; Ezek. 5:7; Hag. 1:7). God has made many attempts to communicate with humanity (Heb. 1:1, 2). The all-powerful God is still speaking to us today.

**Living Proof (John 2:1–11; 6:4–13; 9:1–12; Gal. 5:22–26)**

When Jesus was present, water became wine. Five loaves and two fish fed thousands. And people were healed. Yet there will always be those who still refuse to believe (Luke 16:31). What is the greatest proof for you that Jesus is God? Note that even the devil employs miracles to convince people to follow him (see Matt. 24:24).

However, the manifestation of divine power is not limited to the days of the first disciples (John 3:3–6). Jesus explained our relationship with God by using the metaphor of the branch being connected to the vine (John 15). The unity of the Trinity is made evident by the Holy Spirit carrying on the work of re-creation in us (Gal. 5:22–26).

**REACT**

1. How can you have that genuine belief and worship that brings real happiness?
2. What corrupts your worship of the all-powerful Creator God?
3. How does God speak to you and through you?
4. What are the secrets of experiencing the power of God in your life?

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2. Ibid., vol. 5, 1st ed., p. 897.

Graham Wynniatt, Adelaide, South Australia
“Nature and the Bible both show us of God’s love. Our Father in heaven gives us life, learning and joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature.”  

Romans 1:18–20 says God has been clearly teaching us truths about Himself through nature ever since Creation: “If we listen, we shall hear and understand the lessons God is teaching through the things of nature.

“Green fields, tall trees, and flowering plants invite us to know God. Clouds and the glories of the heavens speak of Him. Falling rain and running brooks turn our minds to the One who made them all. They invite us to know Him.”

The smallest atom has invisible pieces made of even smaller microscopic pieces and yet contains the power to destroy cities. The night sky, seen with the human eye, is only a speck in the mind-boggling hugeness of space. Stars and planets travel their assigned invisible courses at incredible speeds to remain in their constellations or orbits.

God created the wonders of the heavens by His word and the breath of His mouth as He sent out power beyond imagination (Ps. 33:6, 9). “If we will listen, God’s created works will teach us precious lessons of trust and obedience. The stars follow their unmarked way through the sky year after year as they obey God’s laws. The smallest bit of created matter also follows the same laws of God.

“God cares for everything He has created and provides what each needs. He holds the worlds in space, even though there are more than we could count. At the same time He cares for the smallest bird that sings its humble song without fear.”

**REACT**

1. Why do you think God reveals Himself to the entire world through nature?

2. How can you humbly share lessons from nature to show why you love and worship Jesus as the almighty Creator?

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2. Ibid., p. 84.
3. Ibid., p. 85.
An advertisement promised a 22 pound drop in weight within a two-week period. Yes, it was too good to be true. I lost less than one pound. The weather forecaster promised a sunshiny day in early spring, with tropical temperatures. It was too good to be true. Hail fell from the sky instead. The man in the car park offered an electronic gadget for a quarter of the price. It was too good to be true—the device was stolen.

**In the changing of our hearts, we see God as Creator.**

The Bible expounds on the power of God’s word. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, / their starry host by the breath of his mouth” (Ps. 33:6, NIV). To be certain we understand, David continues, “For he spoke, and it came to be; / he commanded, and it stood firm” (verse 9, NIV). In Genesis 1 and 2, we read about the creation of the world, in which God spoke, and the earth and all that is in it came into being.

However, God did more than speak the world into existence. He does more than keep that same world going, no matter the abuse humans inflict upon it. In the Gospels, we read about the power of Jesus’ words. He turned water into wine, commanded the lame to walk, raised the dead to life, and fed multitudes—all by speaking aloud.

Paul describes Jesus this way: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Col. 1:15, 16, NIV).

Maybe you’ve tried to do something greater than yourself. Perhaps preparing for an exam or keeping your finances in order seems impossible. It is possible to learn how to do these things—but success comes only when the doer is greater than the task at hand.

In the creation of the world, we see God as Creator. In the miracles Jesus performed, we see God as Creator. In the changing of our hearts, we see God as Creator. In all these things, God is greater than the created. He is greater than the miracles. He is greater than we are.

**REACT**

1. Can acknowledging God as Creator of all make a difference in how we live our lives? Explain.
2. Identify and share life experiences in which God demonstrated the power of His word.
God, our Creator, understands our nature well. He displayed His love in everything He created for Adam and Eve, so that they would feel and understand His love for them. He showed His faithful love to the Israelites by providing them with food and water while they were wandering in the desert. And best of all, He sent His own Son to walk the earth as a visible example of who God is. He continues to display His love for us today. We only have to look around us to see the everlasting love of God, the invisible Creator. God is with us!

Always have a grateful heart.

*Remember that God’s love for us will be with us for eternity.* What can we do to keep ourselves connected to His love? Remember that God’s love is in plain sight. Sam Jones, an American composer, once said, “The mountains are God’s thoughts piled up. The ocean is God’s thoughts spread out. The flowers are God’s thoughts in bloom. The dew drops are God’s thoughts in pearls.”*

*Stop, observe, and understand His love.* Stay alert as you are doing your daily activities. While walking, you may stop to look at a flower. As you walk on, think about how meticulously God has arranged the petals of that flower! If He cares so much for it, consider how much more He cares for you. When you see God’s love, receive it with an attitude of awe.

*Feel good about the fact that you are deeply loved.* Do not be too proud to be in awe when you experience the awesomeness of God’s love. Always have a grateful heart. Just as an adult approves of the gratefulness of a child, God is delighted when His children thank Him for His love. In return, you may find that He has a thousand ways to reassure you of His love around each corner of life.

**REACT**

1. What could you do personally to constantly experience God’s love?
2. How is God’s love related to His creation?
3. What is one of your favorite things about God’s creation? How does it teach you about His love?

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**Peempahn Henley, Moree, New South Wales, Australia**
It is a beautiful thought that the Creator of heaven and earth valued His creation and called it “good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). It is remarkable that this Creator not only delights in His creation but also mourns its deterioration. It is liberating to think that the Creator considers His created beings worth dying for. This reveals His character of love and justice. This should attract us to Him.

We are created in the image of our Creator—by Him and for Him (Col. 1:15). In the way personal and physical characteristics in parents are often reflected in their children, so there should be an obvious resemblance between the Creator and His children. When creating the world, Jesus intended humankind to flourish. He placed Adam and Eve in a garden and provided for all of their needs. But it was not to be a one-way relationship. The relational nature of the Creator meant that He intended humankind to also be engaged in relationships with Him, others, and the environment. In the Garden, God gave humans the charge to care for and to populate the earth (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). However, while humans have excelled at populating the earth, they also have tended to misrule creation.

Famines are an example of this misrule. Amartya Sen says that starvation “is a function of entitlements and not of food availability as such.”¹ He concluded that the Ethiopian famine (1972–1974) “took place with no abnormal reduction in food output, and consumption of food per head at the height of the famine in 1973 was fairly normal for Ethiopia as a whole.”² Ruling the earth rightly and fairly involves serving and sustaining it while preserving the dignity of humankind.

Creation is a gift to humankind and is the theater of God’s glory. The beauty of creation plays an important role in feeding the human spirit. As we are blessed by God’s creation, our spirits can be filled by the beauty of the Creator. When creation was marred by sin, it resulted in broken communities and relationships. The Creator had a plan to bring this broken world to a place where God’s presence is experienced by all creation. Jesus—the Creator of heaven and earth—longs for us to respond to the wonderful truth of His love.

². Ibid., p. 111.

Opinion
Created by Beauty—for Beauty

Sonja Larsen, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia
CONCLUDE

The Bible introduces God as many things—all-powerful, holy, the Law-Giver, Protector, Deliverer, Refuge, and so on. But there is one thing that God points to that sets Him apart as the only true God of heaven and earth. He is the Creator. As such, He is the One to whom allegiance and worship are due because He is the Source of our very lives and existence. So when John introduces Jesus not just as Savior or Rabbi or Messenger, but as Creator, there’s a deafening pause. That settles it. Jesus Christ is God. And within His created works, He is revealed. Let us not make the mistake of admiring the painting and miss seeing the character of the Painter.

CONSIDER

- Reading Genesis 1 and 2 and making lists in four columns. Label the columns “Physical,” “Emotional,” “Spiritual,” and “My Own Needs.” In the first three columns, list ways that God provided for these human needs when He first created Adam and Eve. Then list your own needs in these areas that you would like to trust God to fill.
- Pondering the following: Because God’s words have creative power, and because you are created in God’s image, in what finite way do your words have creative power? Spend a day being aware of how your words create or destroy emotions, motivation, reputation, and self-image, not only in yourself but in others.
- Videotaping or photographing the varieties of color, design, and texture in nature. Show your finished work to your Sabbath School class, classmates, or coworkers.
- Spending quiet time in nature, writing poetry, or journaling thoughts that come to you about the Creator.
- Looking for images of outer space on the Internet. Contemplate the beauty in seemingly dark, black spaces.
- Using a concordance to find passages in the Bible that identify God as the Creator. What points do these passages make?

CONNECT

Isaiah 37:16; Psalm 96:5.

Illustra Media, http://illustramedia.com/ (DVDs on science that support a Creation model of the origin of our world).

Creation: Forming the World

“For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited:

‘I am the Lord, and there is no other’ ” (Isa. 45:18, NKJV).
Milton Wright was a minister who traveled across the United States spreading the gospel. Once when he returned home from a trip, he brought a gift for his two sons—a toy helicopter with a rubber band that twirled its blades. Orville and Wilbur were fond of this gadget, and after playing with it many times, they made another one just like it. Eventually, they became so fascinated with aeronautics that in 1903 they built an airplane out of a wooden frame and canvas. They tested the plane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in the United States. It flew for 12 seconds.*

It is incredible to think about aviation’s humble beginnings and where it is today. Currently, the aviation industry is worth billions of dollars, and scientists are constantly working to improve the durability and safety of airplanes. Just imagine, it all began with a wooden frame and canvas, but it has changed how we travel around the world.

It is easy for us to visualize something being formed from two or more objects, but God, through His mighty power, created this world from nothing. Genesis 1:2 says that “the earth was without form, and void.” It was dark, empty, shapeless, and useless. Yet out of that, God created a place that displays His glory (Ps. 19:1). He spoke—and the earth and all that is in it came into existence. He did not have to draw a plan and then look for suitable building materials. What power there is in God’s word (Isa. 55:11)!

Some people still believe that the solar system was formed from clouds of gas and dust, that the sun appeared, and the planets formed around it. Others believe there was a cosmic cataclysm referred to as the big bang. Scientists have tried to perpetuate different theories as to how the world appeared, but their theories are inconclusive.

As we study this week’s lesson, we will see God’s almighty power. By observing nature, we can see that creation did not happen by chance. God did not create animals without first having vegetation, nor did He create birds and fish without creating the firmament and the sea. This shows that our God is a God of order. We are not able to fully explain in detail the Creation story. Believing is truly an experience of faith and trust in God.

The Bible is consistent in proclaiming that God created the earth. From the very beginning of Scripture, God is revealed as the Creator of all (Gen. 1:1). Psalm 33:6, 9 also confirms how Creation took place: “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made; / And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . . / For He spoke, and it was done; / He commanded, and it stood fast” (NKJV). In verse 9, “‘He’ is emphatic . . . ; God is set forth as Creator, in sharp contrast with any god that might claim creative ability.”

Paul upheld the truth of how the world began when he wrote, “There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things” (1 Cor. 8:6, NKJV). Then to the Colossians, he penned that “by Him all things were created” (Col. 1:16, NKJV). And in the final book of Scripture, we read the following: “‘You are worthy, O Lord, / To receive glory and honor and power; / For You created all things, / And by Your will they exist and were created’ ” (Rev. 4:11, NKJV).

On the first day of Creation, God separated the light from the darkness, thereby setting in motion the sequence of evening and morning as one day. Over the next five days and part of the sixth, God created a luxurious planet for the humans He would form with His own hands (Gen. 2:7). When God created Adam, the word yasar is used. Yasar means “formed” and “implies an act of molding and fashioning into a form corresponding in design and appearance to the divine plan. The word is used in describing the activity of the potter (Isa. 29:16; 49:5; etc.), . . . and of God, who fashions various things, among others, the light (Isa. 45:7), the human eye (Ps. 94:9), the heart (Ps. 33:15), and the seasons (Ps. 74:17).” When God created Eve, the Bible uses a verb which means “to build.” “Adam’s rib formed the basic material from which his companion was ‘built.’ The woman was formed for inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man, and the mode of her creation was to lay the actual foundation for the moral ordinance of marriage.”

2. Ibid., vol. 1, 2nd ed., p. 222.

Alice Madanhi, Cape Town, South Africa
The God Who Creates (Gen. 1:1–27)

“ ‘So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; / It shall not return to Me void, / But it shall accomplish what I please, / And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it’ ” (Isa. 55:11, NKJV).

Only God could create the world. Only He can create us anew when we have sinned.

After our heavenly Father spoke into existence the heavens and the earth, He began to speak into existence the many operations of a planet that allow for life. He declared that the light shine in darkness, and it came forth. The sun, moon, and stars appeared exactly when He commanded them to. Land formed, grass sprung forth, and trees with their fruit began to grow what would become a bountiful harvest. At His word, all of the water creatures came into existence as did the animals that were to live on the land. Then our Savior intricately formed a man and a woman in His image and breathed life into them. The Hebrew word translated as “image” is selem. This word conveys the concept that Adam and Eve were like God in physical likeness as well as in their ability “to think God’s thoughts after Him. . . . The likeness of God also extends into the realm of emotions. God is an emotional being. We have abundant evidence of this in the Bible. He loves His creatures. He is not the cold, dispassionate, and removed god of the deists; He is the present and active God who is in touch with His creatures.”

The God Who Provides (Gen. 1:29; 2:9, 16)

The universe attests to God’s law. And part of His law includes provision for our diet. Before God created animals and humans, He planted food for them. To us He gave “ ‘every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit’ ” (Gen. 1:29, ESV). “The wording of this regulation reveals that it was not the will of God that man should slaughter animals for food, or that animals should prey upon one another; consequently, the violent and often painful destruction of life by man and animals is a result of the entry of sin into the world.”
Today, certain scientific studies done in the United States are verifying that the diet God gave to Adam and Eve is the best diet. “These studies, when taken together, produced compelling evidence that most vegetarian diets were not only nutritionally adequate but also associated with lower risks of certain chronic diseases when compared with effects of a more typical Western diet.”

The God Who Re-creates (Ps. 51:10)

Christ knows our worries and cares. He sees the distress of a forgotten prisoner and the falling tears of a divorced mother. He recognizes the fear in the heart of a failing university student. He cares for us all because He created us all. And to experience His salvation is to be re-created.

After David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he repented and pled with God to create in him a clean heart. The Hebrew word David used for “create” is the same word used in Genesis 1:1—*bara*. This word is used only in reference to God’s creative activities. Only God could create the world. Only He can create us anew when we have sinned. When the Holy Spirit leads us to repent of our sins and accept Christ as our Savior, “we are justified, adopted as God’s sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him, we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment.” Finally, when He returns and creates this world anew, the cycle of creation and the salvation will be complete.

**REACT**

What part of the earth made new do you think you will enjoy the most?

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Vanessa Audiann Hunter, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.
“God spoke, and His words created His works in the natural world. God’s creation is but a reservoir of means made ready for Him to employ instantly to do His pleasure.”

“The Lord has given His life to the trees and vines of His creation. His word can increase or decrease the fruit of the land. If men would open their understanding to discern the relation between nature and nature’s God, faithful acknowledgments of the Creator’s power would be heard. Without the life of God, nature would die. His creative works are dependent on Him. He bestows life-giving properties on all that nature produces. We are to regard the trees laden with fruit as the gift of God, just as much as though He placed the fruit in our hands.”

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“The Garden of Eden was a representation of what God desired the whole earth to become.”

“As it came from the Creator’s hand, not only the Garden of Eden but the whole earth was exceedingly beautiful. No taint of sin, or shadow of death, marred the fair creation. God’s glory ‘covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise.’ ‘The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’ [Hab. 3:3; Job 38:7.] Thus was the earth a fit emblem of Him who is ‘abundant in goodness and truth’ [Exod. 34:6]; a fit study for those who were made in His image. The Garden of Eden was a representation of what God desired the whole earth to become, and it was His purpose that, as the human family increased in numbers, they should establish other homes and schools like the one He had given. Thus in course of time the whole earth might be occupied with homes and schools where the words and the works of God should be studied, and where the students should thus be fitted more and more fully to reflect, throughout endless ages, the light of the knowledge of His glory.”

**REACT**

1. What three items from all that God created before He created humans interests you the most, and why?
2. How does studying what God created help us to understand Him better? With God’s help, what can you do to fulfill His original desire?

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2. Ibid.
God formed our world from absolutely nothing. Creation was purely a product of His imagination, thoughts, and ideas. When He spoke, the world’s various parts instantly became a reality. The earth is an expression of His mind.

God also formed you. In Psalm 139:13–16, David likens his birth process to the Creation story in Genesis 1. Just as the earth was “fearfully and wonderfully” made by God, so were you.

The purpose of your life is to be all that your Creator created you to be. At this point, you have the raw material from which God formed you. It is up to you, with God’s help, to fulfill your potential for which you were created. How is this done?

**Acknowledge that God created you.** This is the most important step in being what God made you to be. Instead of being a genetic hodgepodge or a happenstance of heredity, your life was conceived in the mind of God. The only true foundation and launching point in life is recognizing God as your Creator (Job 33:4).

**Know that God created you for a specific purpose.** As every created thing had a purpose in Creation, so God has a specific role for you to play. You are specifically equipped to accomplish this task, so it will be easier for you to succeed than to fail (Jer. 1:5).

**Ask God to show you your purpose.** The Creator alone knows why He created you. So go to Him to discover your reason for existence. Develop a relationship with Him. Talk with Him. Listen to Him. If you make an effort to know Him, He will be more than willing to make Himself known to you. It is only in having a relationship with God that you will discover what you are to do with your life (Prov. 3:5, 6).

**Stay in close contact with your Creator.** When God created you, He had a plan for every phase of your life. Every day, seek understanding from Him as to what you are to do and be. You will please Him and live life to the fullest by staying in close contact with Him (James 4:8).

**REACT**

1. Why do you think God created you?
2. In what way are you a product of His mind?

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*Benjamin Baker, Rockville, Maryland, U.S.A.*
When everything is made new and we are in heaven, God Himself will be our light (Rev. 22:5). Since the beginning, God has been giving us His light, and we are to have no other light. The very first thing He created on earth was light. There was perfection, and the presence of light embodied that perfection. In John 1:1–5, God’s light is symbolic of life and life is God Himself. God gives us His divine light because He wishes for everyone to walk in that light.

This Light has the power to illuminate all people.

In making light at the beginning, God not only made Himself manifest, He also put into motion the plan for making our earth inhabitable. God sees the end from the beginning; He knows our needs before we know them ourselves. Creating light was the first step in making our world a fit place in which to live. He knew that we would need the cycle of light and dark in order to regulate and balance our days. He knew that the plants He would create on the third day—both on land and in the sea—would need light to produce photosynthesis. God knew light was crucial to sustaining all of life, so He created it first.

Our Savior and Creator also knew the importance of light when it came to our spiritual lives. He knew that once sin entered the picture we would be disconnected from our Source of life. He knew that we would stumble as we walked in darkness. So God sent His Son, who is Life, “and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). This Light has the power to illuminate all people and grant to them the “power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

**REACT**

1. How does light embody God’s perfection?
2. Light was the first thing God created. How is spiritual light involved in our spiritual re-creation?
3. How can we receive the spiritual light God longs to give to us?

Gabrielle A. Baker, Caldwell, New Jersey, U.S.A.
While it has been used in much scientific debate, the Bible’s account of Creation is not so much a scientific report as it is a story. This story portrays God as personally and intimately involved in the creation, forming, and making of the world and all its inhabitants. It especially tells how He formed Adam and Eve in His own image. Imagine Him stepping back to admire His Creation work, smiling broadly and saying, “It is very good!” Even when reading it, we can hear the satisfaction, excitement, and love in His voice. He was—and is—a good Creator.

CONSIDER

• Spending time watching and talking with someone who creates, perhaps a visual artist, a cook, or a tradesperson such as a builder. Observe what they do in their work and ask them about preparation, training, raw materials, imagination, the creative process itself, and how they feel about the items they have created. How is their creativity like God’s? How is it different?
• Finding a place that is completely dark with no visible light, perhaps a basement, a school darkroom, or a well blacked-out room. Spend a few minutes in that dark place; then turn on a small flashlight or light a candle to begin to push back the darkness. By this meager light, read Genesis 1:1–5; Matthew 5:14–16; John 1:1–14; and Revelation 21:22–27.
• Using potter’s clay, modeling clay, or other materials, create, make, or form a model of our world, showing the land formations and seas. If a few of your classmates are also working on this, compare what you have created. What do the differences in each of these creations reveal about their creators?
• Creating or cooking a meal with a group of friends. Include as many different kinds of fruits and vegetables as you can. Enjoy the variety of tastes, smells, colors, shapes, and sizes.

CONNECT

Psalms 8; 139; 148.
Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, chap. 2.

Nathan Brown, Melbourne, Australia
The Creation

Completed

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work”

(Gen. 2:2, NIV).
As the history of the world progresses, knowledge increases. If our forefathers were alive today, they would be shocked to see how advanced and convenient our life is now when contrasted to theirs. Their travels on foot or by animal would now be so much easier by car, rail, or air. And what would they think about the speed of sending an important message to someone through the Internet or a smart phone?

I was amazed by the knowledge behind the technology used for my eye operation.

Recently, the reality of modern technology became quite personal for me. I began wearing eyeglasses at a young age due to a congenital defect. After 25 years of wearing glasses, I underwent the LASIK procedure. This is a bladeless refractive surgery where the doctor uses a femtosecond laser to create a thin flap on the corneal surface. Then the doctor lifts the thin flap to expose the eye to an excimer laser that takes away the grade of the eye. Then the surgeon returns the flap without any stitches. The procedure for both eyes was done in less than 16 minutes. Within four hours after the operation, my previous eye test grade of 525/500 became 20/20 vision!

International law recognizes such products of human minds as “intellectual property.” As such, they become the exclusive rights of inventors, scientists, artists, and other gifted individuals. Intellectual property consists of, but is not limited to, copyright (for literary, musical, dramatic, and artistic works), trademark and service mark (for distinguishing the goods and services of an enterprise), and patent (for industrially applicable inventions). The underlying similarity of these intellectual property rights is for society to properly recognize and attribute to the creators their intellectual creativity and consequently reward them for their talents.

While I was amazed by the knowledge behind the technology used for my eye operation, I was filled with awe and thanksgiving to the Creator. Creation is entirely God’s intellectual property. Satan infringes upon and counterfeits God’s intellectual property through the concept of evolution.

This week, we will look at the last three days of Creation and the Sabbath, which is a memorial to the Creation week. As you study, give credit to whom credit is due—your Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ.
The Creator (Gen. 1:1)

The Creation account is foundational to truly understanding the nature of God. Genesis 1 is indeed an inspired narrative of an Infinite Being in action. God’s creative action was creation ex nihilo (creation out of nothing), which implies that the material universe (“the heavens and the earth”) had an absolute beginning. In that beginning, God is the Creator. He is not dependent upon or limited to preexisting matter in order to create something. Instead, “Creation rests totally on God’s wisdom and activity. . . . Creation does not require or assume the existence of any principle outside of God, such as matter or physical energy.” Such a creation is suggested even in the New Testament (Matt. 25:34; Mark 10:6; Heb. 1:10; 14:7; 17:8). God would be a different God if the Creation account were to be understood otherwise.

The Sabbah is the apex of the six days of Creation.

The Creation (Genesis 1:1—2:1–3)

A closer look at the six days of Creation suggests a basic division and structure, which are in themselves divine actions. The first three days of Creation were actions of formation. On day one, God said, “ ‘Let there be light’; and there was light” (Gen. 1:3, NASB). On the second day, God separated the waters of the sea and the waters of the sky (verses 6, 7). On the third day, God created dry ground (verse 9). When the formation aspect of Creation was complete, God moved to another action, which is the action of filling. He filled the earth with vegetation (verses 11, 12). Then He filled the heavens with the sun, moon, and stars. Next, He filled the sea with a multitude of water creatures and the sky with a multitude of birds (verses 20, 21). Finally, on the sixth day, He filled the earth with animals and created Adam and Eve to care for the earth. In all of God’s creation, it is only Adam and Eve who are said to be created in the image of God (verse 26). This is “the most powerful expression of the dignity and the uniqueness of the human being.” We are “a portrait achieved by His creative design.” From this account, it is obvious that our God is a God of order and symmetry.

It is vital that the six days of Creation be understood in relationship to
the entire Bible. Each of the six days of Creation would best fit a literal day rather than ages or epochs of time. This is based on the context of Genesis 1, where each day of Creation is given a number. In addition, the expression “evening and morning” (verses 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), and the use of the Hebrew word yom (day) strongly suggest that the days of Creation are indeed literal days (compare Exod. 12:15; Num. 1:1). The fourth commandment found in Exodus 20:8–11 also suggests that the keeping of the Sabbath mirrors the weekly cycle of the six days of Creation (see verse 11).

The Completion (Gen. 2:2, 3)

Creation was completed in six literal days. This has important implications for God being the Creator and for the fact that the days of Creation are each unique in themselves. This implies that human beings play a vital role in the preservation of the environment. God is the object of true worship and the Sabbath is directly related to God’s rulership over and ownership of His creation. Why, then, wouldn’t we take care of what He has created? Let us not forget that He has instructed us to do so (Gen. 1:28).

The Sabbath is the apex of the six days of Creation—a day commemorating the creative acts of God. The Sabbath commandment is not centered on Creation itself, but rather on the Creator. This is made clear in Genesis 2:2, “By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done” (NASB). This is complemented by Exodus 20:11, which reads, “‘For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy’” (NASB). The Sabbath, therefore, signals the completion of Creation. It is not just a memorial of Creation but of the Creator who is worthy of our worship and praise. It is a day that is set aside as a day of celebration.

REACT

1. What difference would it make if Creation were not understood as ex nihilo?
2. What is the importance of the six literal days of Creation to the Sabbath commandment?
3. Why is being made in the image of God important to human dignity?

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Felixian T. Felicitas, Silang, Cavite, Philippines
“As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was exceedingly beautiful. Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers and lovely lakes; but the hills and mountains were not abrupt and rugged, abounding in terrific steeps and frightful chasms, as they now do; the sharp, ragged edges of earth’s rocky framework were buried beneath the fruitful soil, which everywhere produced a luxuriant growth of verdure. There were no loathsome swamps or barren deserts. Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn.”

“The Sabbath was not made to be a burden to man.”

“The creation was now complete. ‘The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.’ ‘And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.’ Eden bloomed on earth. Adam and Eve had free access to the tree of life. No taint of sin or shadow of death marred the fair creation. ‘The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’ Job 38:7.”

“In the beginning the Father and the Son had rested on the Sabbath after their work of creation. See Genesis 2:1. All heavenly beings rejoiced in contemplation of the glorious scene. Now Jesus rested from the work of redemption; and though there was grief among those who loved Him on earth, there was joy in heaven. God and angels saw a redeemed race that, having conquered sin, could never fall—this, the result to flow from Christ’s completed work.”

“The Sabbath was not made to be a burden to man. It was to do him good, to give him peace and rest. Therefore our Lord said, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.’ Mark 2:27.”

**REACT**

How would you explain the Creation story to an unbeliever, especially as it relates to the Sabbath?

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1. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 44.
2. Ibid., p. 47.
It is clear from biblical evidence that God made “the heavens and the earth” in six literal days. God was succinct in His description of the Creation account. The clearest proof of this is in the usage of the Hebrew word yom (day). Notice that each “day” or yom of the Creation account (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) is singular in form and appears with the phrase “evening-morning.” “The rhythmic boundary phrase ‘and there was evening and there was morning’ provides a definition of the creation ‘day.’ The creation ‘day’ consists of ‘evening’ and ‘morning,’ and is thus a literal ‘day.’” God is dependent neither on time nor evolution to complete His creation.

The days of the Creation account are not to be likened to a figurative or prophetic rendering of the word day regardless of the reading of 2 Peter 3:8, “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years” (NASB). This verse is not talking about Creation. Notice that the rest of the verse reads, “and a thousand years are like a day.” Rather than discussing the meaning of a day, 2 Peter 3:8 is presenting God as being true to His promise (see verse 9).

“The days of the Bible’s Creation account signify literal twenty-four-hour periods. Typical of how the Old Testament people of God measure time, the expression ‘the evening and the morning’ (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) specifies individual days with the day beginning at evening, or sunset (see Lev. 23:32; Deut. 16:6).”

James Stambaugh summarizes it this way: “The only meaning which is possible is that the ‘days’ of creation were 24-hour days.”

REACT

2. How would you explain your belief in a literal six-day Creation to someone who believes that the world evolved over a long period of time?

Some of us may not admit it, but we are physically, mentally, and spiritually deprived of rest. There are even people who take a twisted self-satisfaction in their constant state of busyness. However, God the Creator has given us an example of rest. “At the end of His work of creation He rested. From a theological angle one could argue that the God who brought everything into existence in an effortless way did not need to rest. Yet He rested. This is what we call ‘anthropomorphism’ (anthropos, human; morphe, form)—human characteristics being ascribed to God. He who is not a human being is described as one. The anthropomorphic language is stronger after the Fall when God’s rest is described as ‘being refreshed’ (cf. Ex. 31:17). The purpose of this anthropomorphism is for God to model for humans what He expects from them.”* 

God created human beings on the sixth day of Creation. He instituted the Sabbath the very next day. So Adam and Eve’s first full day of life was the Sabbath. The Sabbath was God’s gift to them and therefore to all humanity. Indeed, the Sabbath is one of the greatest gifts God has bestowed upon us. Let us come to Jesus for rest, refreshment, and restoration on the Sabbath. How can we do that?

**Retreat.** Use the 24 Sabbath hours to disengage from the activities of the other six days of the week. For example, if, during the week, you must spend a great deal of time with technology, then unplug during the Sabbath hours.

**Commune with Jesus.** Go to Sabbath School and church. Spend extra time in prayer and Bible study.

**Appreciate God’s wonderful work of nature.** Walk through a park with friends. Feel the sun and breeze on your face. Consider the richness and variety of all that God created. Or look at books of nature photography.

“Delight yourself in the Lord” (Ps. 37:4, NIV). He is what the Sabbath is all about. Think about how He has guided you through your life.

**REACT**

1. When was the last time you paused to let God calm your soul?
2. Why is it hard for society to accept the idea of Sabbath rest?
3. Think of other ways you can delight in the Lord on the Sabbath day.


Alfred A. Selin, Baesa, Caloocan City, Philippines
God spoke and there was light. He spoke again, and there appeared the firmament, vegetation, and the sun, moon, and stars. Then He spoke into existence the creatures of air, water, and land.

On the sixth day, however, God’s own hand carefully formed man and woman, creating them in His own image (Gen. 1:26, 27). It is said that we are the crowning glory of all creation because we bear the likeness of God. King David was full of praises for the Lord when he said that he is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14). Thus, it is wrong for us to place a low estimate on ourselves.

Then on the seventh day, God rested. He did so not because He was weary from His work of creating, but because He had completed His task. He also “established the seventh-day Sabbath so that we would have a weekly reminder that we are creatures of His making. The Sabbath was a gift of grace, speaking not of what we did, but of what God has done. He especially blessed this day and sanctified it so we would never forget that, besides work, life should include communion with the Creator, rest, and celebration of God’s marvelous creative works.”*

It is hard to come up with a reason why God would need to rest. After all, He is omnipotent. Apparently, however, He considered it important. Rest is often an unfamiliar concept in our busy, fast-paced world. Some may think that it is socially unacceptable to take an entire day off to rest—that doing so is being lazy and unproductive. Yet God knows we need times of refreshing. We should not feel guilty when we take time each week to rest and renew our bodies, souls, and spirits.

**REACT**

God was pleased as He went about the work of creating. How about you? Do you enjoy your work? Whether it’s your job, hobby, or your ministry, if your work is pleasing to God, then it should also bring pleasure to you. What things are you doing to bring pleasure to both you and God?

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*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . , 2nd ed. (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 2005), p. 84.*

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Retchie R. Reyes, Olongapo City, Philippines
CONCLUDE
As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, our understanding of the Sabbath directly arises from the six literal 24-hour-days of Creation. God created all living things and their habitats in a state of completeness. Everything needed to sustain and enhance the lives of His creatures was there from the beginning. God did not rest on the seventh day because He was exhausted, but because He was appreciating the totality of His creation. In giving us the Sabbath, He invites us to do the same. In acknowledging the Sabbath, we not only proclaim our faith in God’s sufficiency for us, but we accept the responsibility He has given us to care for what He has created.

CONSIDER
• Finding a special song to sing, play, or listen to that involves both nature (Creation) and the Sabbath.
• Writing a prayer to thank God for the parts of His creation that you particularly appreciate. Be specific and share your prayer with your Facebook friends.
• Reading books, magazines, or Web sites about nature and natural phenomena. Look for the hand of God in the varied living organisms and the ecosystems in which they exist.
• Making a computer animation or photographic slideshow depicting the six days of Creation and the first Sabbath. Post it on YouTube.
• Contemplating the acts of God in creating you as the person He desires you to be (see Gal. 5:13–26).
• Reading the account of Creation in Genesis and then paraphrasing it. What does Creation mean to you? What does it reveal to you about God?

CONNECT
Isaiah 42:5–7; Revelation 14:6, 7.
Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, chap. 9.
Randall W. Younker, God’s Creation, chaps. 5 and 6 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press®, 1999).
Creation, a Biblical Theme

“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’ ” (Rev. 14:6, 7, NIV).
It only took six days and was masterminded by the true God. It was Creation, and, throughout the Bible, we see testimonies to its truth.

One day, while in science class, I realized I had additional studying to do. What would happen if a nonbeliever challenged my faith and all I could refer to was Genesis 1:1. How pathetic would that look? This verse, along with the rest of Genesis 1 and 2, are not the only places where the Bible speaks of Creation.

For example, in Psalm 104, David shows us how God cares for all of His work. This is a clear reference to God being the Creator of the world. Now consider the book of Job. For most of the book, Job and his friends discuss the whys and wherefores of Job’s hardships. When God finally joins their conversation, He asks, “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding” (Job 38:4). God continues for almost the rest of the book, inquiring if Job doesn’t realize He is the Almighty Creator. But if the words of a man after God’s own heart and God’s direct dialogue with the righteous Job aren’t convincing enough, let’s check out the New Testament. Acts 17:24 reads, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” In addition, 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Thus, the New Testament validates the relevance of the Old Testament.

The six days God took to create this world and the day He took off to rest, have stood through the ages and will stand forever more.

As you study this week’s lesson, look for the many reasons we have to believe that God created the world.

Jodi Lewis, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
In an effort to find answers to the meaning of life, cultures around the world have passed down stories that explained the emergence of man long before notions of the big bang theory and evolution became accepted answers. Examples include the Mesopotamian and Babylonian accounts in the Enuma Elish, written in the twelfth century B.C. and discovered anew in the mid-nineteenth century A.D. In this story, the goddess of the sea, Tiamat, is killed; and the earth and the sky are subsequently created from the remnants of her body.¹ In another description of creation passed down by the Iroquois, the foundation of earth is built by creatures of the deep that carried mud from the depths of the sea and placed it on a turtle’s back in order to save a woman who had fallen into the water. The woman was the sky, and she sat on the mound of mud.² The development of a scientific approach took the place of these stories, which were consequently referred to as myths.

Nevertheless, the biblical account of Creation has survived as one of the most respected stories and as a relevant historical document. Setting this account apart from other accounts is the reference to places with geographical significance. “And a river went out of Eden . . . and became into four heads. . . . The first is Pison. . . . The second . . . is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia” (Gen. 2:10–13). The account continues with the locations of the third and fourth rivers, Hiddekel and Euphrates. Apart from these geographical allusions, the description of the function of the firmament is striking in detail. Read Genesis 2:5, 6.

The fact that creation stories are so similar is evidence that perhaps like a game of telephone, in which character’s names were changed and territorial structures redefined, the message became jumbled. However, by understanding the biblical Creation story, we may be closer to the truth than scientific reasoning would allow. In the end, it is the interpretations of histories that many times control the way we view reality. But what remains of utmost importance is that in this story we meet a great and powerful God who will continue to show those whom He has created His power in their individual lives.

The Significance of Creation (2 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 4:11)

When considering the story of Creation, it is important to understand its significance. The story of Creation explains why we should value nature, ourselves, our peers and companions, and the Sabbath. Basically, believing in the story of Creation affects all facets of life. There is a reason why the beginning of the Bible details God’s creation of the world and does so again with the same measure of importance at the end (Rev. 4:11). We should understand that our self-worth should be maintained at a high level just because we know that God took the time to create us and a wonderful world for us to live in! For example, God says in Genesis 1: “‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food’” (verses 29, 30, NKJV). Let us take note each day of God’s care for us. Let us appreciate His provision and pray for understanding.

The Sabbath (Exod. 31:13)

Through Creation, God has given us the gift that keeps on giving—our world. But sometimes our world gets tiring, and we need to focus just on God and be in an attitude of constant thanks for the love that He bestows upon us daily. This is what the Sabbath is for. In Exodus 31:13, we read that the Lord considers keeping the Sabbath to be a symbol of praise, thanks, and reverence for Him as a response to the fact that He is our Creator. It reads, “‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you’” (NKJV). Understanding and appreciating Creation strengthens our relationship with God. The pinnacle of our relationship with Him and the key to accepting salvation is that He loves us so much that He created a world in which we could flourish before we were even created. And when we were created, He made us in His image. Every time we view ourselves in the mirror, we become a physical
reminder of His existence. Surely, therefore, one day a week devoted to Him is not too much for Him to ask!

**The Story of Creation (Genesis 1; 2; 2 Tim. 3:16)**

Genesis 1 and 2 detail the first moments, minutes, hours, and days of the world. People, communities, and different religions have engaged in countless debates and research projects trying to determine where we came from. Some people believe in evolution and the big bang theory, while those who believe the Bible seek comfort and find a better life in already knowing the truth. Second Timothy 3:16 assures us that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for re-proof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (NKJV). Praise God! The Creation story is true!

**Why We Need Not Fret (Job 38)**

In Job 38, God confronts Job about his self-pity. He clearly states that He made the earth and therefore knows what He is doing. God asks Job, “‘Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?’” (verse 4, NKJV). Although God seems to be reprimanding Job, He still takes the opportunity to give him a glimpse of how intricately the world was created. Here God also is informing every single person who would read His words in the centuries to come about Creation. It personally gives me chills to read Job 38 because God is saying things that in this day and age, people generally consider to be abstract, poetic fiction. Job 38 really teaches us how marvelous creation is and how all-powerful God is. He is bigger than the world, bigger than sin, bigger than ignorance, bigger than mainstream opinion on the fallacies of the Bible, bigger than pain, bigger than catastrophe, bigger than any political party, and surely bigger than Satan. Job 38 disapproves of all the nonbelievers who claim that God is not real or that there is no higher power. Job 38 also opposes their blasphemies. For example, God talks about Orion (verse 31), lightning (verse 35), and the viciousness of lions (verse 39). These are all things that we see now in our world. In other words, God is now the same God He was then. And He will be the same God in the future. We need not fret because we believe in a real God who loves us and who is bigger than we are. How wonderful it is to experience this God!

**REACT**

1. What about Creation helps you to understand the nature of God?
2. For you personally, what is the significance of Creation?
3. What comfort do you derive from knowing that God never changes?

Alesia Etinoff, Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A.
“On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Gen. 2:2, 3). This rest was purposeful and exemplified God’s love for His creation.

Ellen White states, “Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God’s great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God’s wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for the Maker.”

In creating the Sabbath, God also portrayed His unconditional love for His people by creating a time He knew would be essential for our peace of mind. “God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.”

“The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign; that they were the work of His hands and the subjects of His authority.”

Thus, the Sabbath is God’s signature on everything He has created. It is a day in which we show our gratitude for His creation and a wonderful opportunity to spend special time with Him.

**REACT**

1. How does the Sabbath teach us about Creation?
2. What would your life be like if God had not given us the Sabbath?

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2. Ibid., p. 48.
3. Ibid., p. 48.

Talia Wright, Temple Hills, Maryland, U.S.A.
At some point, we all begin to think about the meaning of our lives in the grand scheme of things. Are we just creatures that exploded into existence to live, work, then die, only to be forever forgotten? When we see the pain and suffering plaguing our world and when it seems as though everything is falling apart, how can we know there is a God who made us for a purpose? The Bible tells us so! Here’s how.

We are made in God’s image. This is the ultimate honor He could have bestowed upon us!

Isaiah 45:18 describes a God who did not abandon the world, but who created it for a purpose. And He purposely created us to live here! “Regardless of what may be the purpose of the enemy and what ruin he may accomplish by sin, God’s original plan will at length be carried out. Creation was a purposeful act, not merely an end in itself.”

Genesis 2:7, 22 teach us that God literally formed humans with His own hands. In verse 7, the Hebrew suggests an “act of molding and fashioning into a form corresponding in design and appearance to the divine plan.” In verse 22, a word is used that is synonymous with the verb “to build.” Rather than simply speak us into existence, the Creator took time to kneel down and shape us Himself. So naturally, just like a parent, He deeply values every offspring of each generation. In fact, He pays so much attention to us that He even knows the number of hairs on our head (Matt. 10:30).

Genesis 1:27 teaches us that we are made in God’s image. This is the ultimate honor He could have bestowed upon us! We are able to love, reason, choose, and feel emotion. God wouldn’t invest these abilities and characteristics in beings He doesn’t care about!

Through Creation, God shows that He cares and has a deep, personal, spiritual adventure ready for each one of us!

**REACT**

1. God created us all. How should that change the way we treat others?
2. You were created for a purpose! What do you think your purpose might be?

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2. Ibid., p. 222.
3. Ibid., p. 226.

Matthew Johnson, Bowie, Maryland, U.S.A.
When struggling, Christians often find it hard to believe a God grand enough to create the world. *Where is this Almighty God in a time like this?* People often wonder, leaving them distressed, and, in some cases, causing their faith to waver.

**This grand event shows us the limitless power of our God.**

Creation itself was indeed a massive event. The book of Job describes it as a time when “‘the morning stars sang together / and all the angels shouted for joy’” (Job 38:7, NIV). Can you imagine sights and sounds like that? Every majestic being created before us watching to see this grand event, waiting to see what else God would make, amazed at His power and majesty.

However, it seems that the chaos of our lives is often left unattended. Even many faithful individuals in the Bible found themselves in doubt during rough times. Job, in particular, lost everything he had, and failed to see whom he was speaking with, what capabilities his God had. In moments of sorrow, pain, and agony, it can seem as if the Creator is inattentive to our trauma. However, this is farthest from the truth.

It’s times like these when the story of Creation has just that much more meaning. This grand event shows us the limitless power of our God. He is the God of answers. He is the One who knows where the darkness ends and the light begins. This is the God who holds the oceans in their boundaries.

Our minds are incapable of understanding how truly amazing Creation was. Often we fail to realize that the same God still exists today with the same power and wisdom that He had during those days. Like Job, our problems may cause us to doubt. Although struggles may take over our lives, we must never forget the God who created us. The Bible is clear about Creation. When in doubt, read Genesis 1 and 2 to renew your faith in a God who cares about what He has made—you!

**REACT**

1. How does the story of Creation assure you of God’s potential to resolve issues in your life?

2. Why is it often easy to forget about our Creator God in times of trouble? What can we do in order to prevent this from happening?
CONCLUDE
Acceptance of the biblical account of Creation provides us with a sense of self-worth. It answers two important questions: (1) where do I come from? and (2) where am I going? When God created the world, He made provision for our physical needs and for our emotional and spiritual needs by creating the Sabbath as a symbol of His love for us. The Sabbath allows us time to reflect upon and to respond to God’s goodness in praise and worship. It is a weekly reminder that God is in control of the past, the present, and the future and that He has a plan for His creation.

CONSIDER
- Making a collage of pictures cut out from newspapers and magazines illustrating the beauties and wonders of nature. Write Revelation 14:7 in the middle of the collage: “‘Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (NIV).
- Going out after dark to a safe place where there is not much street lighting and looking up at the stars. As you do so, consider that the God who made them knows the number of hairs on your head (Matt. 10:30). When you go back inside, read Psalm 8.
- Using modeling clay to create a model of an animal or flower. How does your example compare with God’s creation? How does the creative power of God make you feel?
- Finding five Bible texts that speak about God as Creator and memorizing them.
- Listening to praise music that you would not normally listen to. Then try to write a praise song using a familiar tune.
- Planning a trip into nature with some friends or members of your Sabbath School class. Share how God speaks to you through what you observe.
- Surveying your family and friends and asking them where they feel closest to God.

CONNECT
Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, chap. 2.
God of Wonders, a DVD distributed by Review and Herald®.

Audrey Andersson, Lindesberg, Sweden
Creation and Morality

“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die’ ” (Gen. 2:16, 17, NIV).
I read recently in one of the local newspapers that a militant group in Somalia had imposed a ban on sambusas or samosas, a popular pastry snack stuffed with minced meat, vegetables, or cereals. Such a ban is truly bizarre in this war-torn, famine-ravaged country, but what was more perplexing was that it was alleged that the Islamists may have associated the triangle-shaped snack with a symbol of Christianity, which is incompatible with their religion.

Conflicts over religious beliefs often involve what people eat, wear, or their overall lifestyles. However, as Christians, we believe that we all come from one God who created us in His image. That makes us unique from all else that God created.

Even people with different beliefs about God and human origin need to discover the truth that all of us come from one Source to whom we owe total allegiance. This week we’ll explore why there is a good reason to believe that there is a God who created us and that our lives are not meaningless. We also will explore how we all depend on this wonderful God. Along with our origin comes a set of standards that shape our lives on earth. Morality is a system of behaviors based on these standards. This system also governs our daily decisions. The God who created us has given us these guidelines so we will not err in the decision-making process. People often say they can see God reflected in physical things like stars, mountains, lakes, or forests. But can they see God reflected in the decisions His people make and in their behaviors?

This week we also will learn about our dependence on Him, how He made us in His own image, and how we can apply morality and accountability to our daily lives.

Felix Otieno, Homa Bay County, Kenya
Our Right to Ownership (Ps. 95:6, 7; Psalm 100)

People in some countries have freedom of religion. Others still don’t enjoy this right. In the Bible, it’s clear that humans have only one Maker, the Omnipotent God. Because God is eternal, we have every reason to rest in His omnipotence, sure that we depend on a perfect, divine Source who is unchanging (Mal. 3:6). As the flock under His care, we need to depend on Him for life and wisdom.

As God’s creatures, it is our obligation to worship and revere our Creator. When we do not do so, we cease to return to God what belongs to Him. In His endless love for us, He gives us the freedom to either choose or reject Him. If we accept the provision for salvation He has made through Jesus Christ, we will have joy in this life and after.

Can we walk in the shoes of Christ in the twenty-first century?

A Representative of God (Gen. 1:26–28; 9:6)

God created us in His image. Humankind was the climax of His creation. As such, He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to “be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:28, NKJV). This shows that humans were to represent God upon the earth. To this end, we are charged with the responsibility of taking care of His other creations. The natural resources that God created, such as fish, animals, birds, and plants are all ours to look after without upsetting the ecological balance of the geographical regions in which we live.

God was a wonderful Creator, and to make sure that His work was well cared for, He created humans and put them in charge of everything. One point to remember about being God’s representatives is that the whole human race comes from one man and one woman. We are all descendants of these original parents. Therefore, we are all brothers and sisters and should not harbor ill feelings toward one another. God gave us the ability to multiply, fill the earth, and take care of it, implying that we are to also take care of each other, thereby exercising God’s love to one another (1 John 4:7, 8).
In the Footsteps of Christ (Phil. 2:1–8)

Can we walk in the shoes of Christ in the twenty-first century? This question disturbs the minds of many young adults today. However, God’s Word is clear. Christ and the Father have the same character. Therefore, if we want to emulate the character of the Creator, we must look for it in the life of Jesus. The Bible instructs us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). With our human minds, we may think that this is impossible. Our Creator, however, loves everyone.

Christ confirmed God’s love when He came to live with sinful humans, when He walked the same paths with them, and ate their food with them. In the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the Bible illustrates this concept of boundless love, which is the character of our Creator. God wants us to be kind, merciful, and loving to all whose paths we cross, just like He was. When we are, we are bound together as a family in Christ.

Facing the Judgment (Matt. 25:31–46)

We talk of the Judgment Day when God will open the books of heaven to reveal the history of our lives. We ourselves know very well how we spend each day. God wants us to recognize Him in all situations of our lives whether we are happy or sad. Most people would find it difficult to praise God in difficult circumstances. However, God observes our every step as we go about our lives.

The criterian of judgment involve how we live out God’s principles of morality and accountability. In other words, how we coexist with our fellow humans in any and all situations matters a great deal in our lives as Christians. Do we have sympathy toward the sick, the hungry, the homeless, those who are in prison, and those whose lives have been devastated by war? What do we do for people who need help so that they will see Christ in us?

We will be accountable for all that we do with our lives. Therefore, we need to consider carefully our actions and words to determine what and who people are really seeing when they observe us.

REACT

1. Think of specific ways in which we can respond to the needs of others so they will see Christ in us.

2. God created us to worship and serve Him. So why is it that some citizens of the world still don’t enjoy this right?

3. To what extent should we take care of the natural world God created?
God created us in His image so we could be His representatives on earth. God loves us and longs to be closer to us than earthly parents are to their children. He also wants us to love our fellow humans.

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creed, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.”¹

“The angels of heaven look upon the distress of God’s family upon the earth, and they are prepared to co-operate with men in relieving oppression and suffering. God in His providence had brought the priest and the Levite along the road where the wounded sufferer lay, that they might see his need of mercy and help.”² However, they chose not to do God’s bidding. The Samaritan, however, “did not question whether the stranger was a Jew or a Gentile. If a Jew, the Samaritan well knew that, were their conditions reversed, the man would spit in his face, and pass him by with contempt. But he did not hesitate on account of this. . . . It was enough that there was before him a human being in need and suffering.”³ Walking in the footsteps of Christ demands that we follow His example of compassion, mercy, and love at all times.

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Jesus gave a picture of Himself and His mission. Man had been deceived, bruised, robbed, and ruined by Satan, and left to perish; but the Saviour had compassion on our helpless condition. He left His glory to come to our rescue. He found us ready to die, and He undertook our case. He healed our wounds. He covered us with His robe of righteousness. He opened to us a refuge of safety, and made complete provision for us at His own charges. He died to redeem us.”⁴

**REACT**

1. What three characteristics of the good Samaritan do you need to apply in your life in order to emulate Christ’s example?

2. In your community, how can you show the “priests and Levites” how to follow the example of the good Samaritan?

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² Ibid., p. 500.
³ Ibid., p. 503.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 503, 504.

*Silas Onyango, Nairobi, Kenya*
Moral accountability helps us to assess our reasoning. “There needs to be a way to distinguish what is good from what is bad. For example, a moral standard might specify that being kind to children is good, but that torturing them for fun is bad. If the standard is purely subjective, then people could believe anything and each person would be justified in doing right in their own eyes. Even a ‘social contract’ is just based on people’s opinions. So we need a standard that applies regardless of what people’s individual and collective opinions are.”*  

*Moral accountability has its own reward. That standard is the Bible, which God has given us as a universal assessment tool with which to check our thoughts and behaviors. Biblical standards are applicable to everyone, without fear or favor, in all of life’s situations. For instance, we know that we can exercise our right to make free moral decisions. But we also know that we shall be held responsible for every thought we have and every action we undertake. That’s why on Judgment Day, God has appointed the Man who will sit on the heavenly throne to pronounce judgment upon everyone. That Man is Jesus Christ. That’s why we are obliged as Christians to do the right thing according to the Bible. Doing so will not infringe upon anyone’s God-given rights as an individual human being. We owe this obligation to God, even if it goes against our self-interests.

Moral accountability has its own reward. For those who believe in Jesus Christ and live according to His principles through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, life does not end here. Instead, there is a meaningful ultimate hope that carries them into the future of this life and beyond to eternity.

**REACT**

1. Which would you choose and why? (A) a good life here without hope after death; (B) a life with Christ here on earth with the hope of eternal life.
2. How do you deal with having to make choices that go against your self-interests, especially when these choices relate to your spiritual life?
3. What does Galatians 5:13–26 teach us about life in the Spirit and moral accountability?

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Satan has corrupted our way of life to such an alarming extent that some people think they can do without God. However, the truth remains that the whole universe belongs to Him. He is at the beginning of everything, including our very own lives. The Creator God is more powerful and more knowledgeable than any single human being or all of humanity put together. We can totally depend on Him. From the very beginning, He has been persistent in His love for us, even after Adam and Eve sinned. Because of His love for us, God came to earth as Christ to bridge the gap sin had created. Therefore, in addition to being our Creator, Christ is also our Redeemer; and through faith in Him, we are reconciled to God.

Prayer is our lifeline to God’s throne.

Depending on Christ gives us hope for eternal life. Our trust in Him will grow when we do the following:

*Have faith in God.* This is the foundation of our trust in Him. By faith, we believe that He is the center of our existence (Gen. 1:26).

*Communicate with God.* We can communicate with Him through prayer, Bible study, meditation on His Word, and service to others. Being in nature and studying its ways also helps us to communicate with our Creator. Singing songs to Him or playing inspiring music can also motivate us to communicate with Him.

*Make a personal decision to change.* Sin broke our relationship with our Creator. But because Christ died on Calvary, our relationship with Him can be restored. It is up to each individual to make a personal decision to follow Him.

*Persevere in prayer.* “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18, NIV). Prayer is our lifeline to God’s throne. Furthermore, praying for each other helps our love for one other grow.

**REACT**

1. What are some things that distance you from God?
2. Is our dependence on God a right or privilege? Explain.
3. What are other things you can think of that will help our dependence on God grow?
Long before I was ten, my mother taught me how to share with the needy. She used to tell my siblings and me that instead of going to the beaches and posh places for a holiday, we should help people in our community who were sick or hungry. In other words, she taught us how to be Christlike.

As I write this article, there is a widespread famine and drought in the Horn of Africa. It’s horrible to see the elderly men and women and the children suffering on the brink of death. Facilities in the refugee camps are stretched beyond their limits. But still people stream in to these camps from war-torn Somalia. Domestic and wild animals are equally affected.

It’s against this backdrop that my country initiated the Kenyans for Kenya project. Each citizen is requested to donate at least ten shillings (about one-tenth of a U.S. dollar) to go toward saving the people living in the Horn. Within a short period of days, the project raised more than half a billion shillings, excluding material donation.

The generosity of my fellow countrymen has taught me some important lessons, one of them being this: If we live for each other, we can make a big difference in our communities, especially in difficult times. The love and help we extend to fellow humans in need go a long way in teaching them about the love their Creator has for them. Indeed, such love and service to others are pillars of God’s character. They are what sent Him to earth as Christ to save everyone, not just a select few, from sin.

Christ and God are One in character and purpose. Yet Christ did not “consider equality with God something to be grasped” (Phil. 2:6, NIV). Instead, He humbled Himself on the cross to redeem us. As one of His followers, I’m convinced that we should practice charity because, in the eyes of God, everyone needs His love. We can choose who or what we want to be in life. But we must never forget the plight of others. We must always remember to share with them what we can. In doing so, they can learn about the character of their Creator.

REACT

In addition to contributing money, how can you personally extend compassion to people who are suffering in your community?
CONCLUDE

God had created Adam and Eve perfect, for they were created in God’s image. God also had perfect standards for humans to follow so that they would continue to be like Him. Since Adam and Eve’s fall in the Garden of Eden, all humans became imperfect. However, God’s standards and requirements continue to be the same—to be like Him. In our own power, we cannot attain this state, but Jesus’ life and death allowed our sins to be forgiven and to be replaced by Jesus’ goodness. We can choose to accept this special provision. Jesus does not ask us to first do good so that we can be called His followers. The positive changes in our lives are evidence of our connection with Jesus.

CONSIDER

• Writing a journal that reflects your life’s spiritual ups and downs. Observe the patterns of how your life is different during those times when you are close to Jesus.
• Composing an oxymoron (two words that don’t normally go together, but when paired create a new meaning) that describes a state of collaboration with Jesus. Make a sentence using this oxymoron that explains its deep meaning.
• Drawing a picture showing this sequence of events—Adam and Eve’s perfect state of being, their fall, Jesus’ death, and humans regaining their perfect state.
• Compiling at least five famous quotations that relate to the Christian life (for example, “Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action.”—Benjamin Disraeli).
• Singing the song “Higher Ground,” number 625 in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal, and contemplating the Christian growth described in the lyrics.
• Watching Derek Redmond’s video and appreciating God’s timely help when we fall: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5dgJwEvhrA&feature=related.

CONNECT

Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, chaps 7 and 8; White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 76–78.
Creation and the Fall

“'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel'” (Gen. 3:15, NIV).
We’ve heard the story more times than we can count. Satan insinuates that God isn’t trustworthy, that He’s withholding something desirable. The woman is deceived and eats the forbidden fruit. Adam is not deceived but impetuously chooses to eat the fruit too. Then they know what it is to be fallen, to feel guilt and shame. In terror, they hide from their beloved Creator.

God seeks for us . . . to heal and restore us.

It’s a story we’ve reenacted more times than we can count. Already fallen by nature, we fall for Satan’s insinuations: God isn’t trustworthy. He doesn’t really love us. He’s withholding something desirable. He’s harsh, condemning, and vengeful. Sometimes we are deceived by others. Sometimes we deceive ourselves. Sometimes we choose to do something we know is wrong. And then we, too, know what it is like to be freshly fallen. To hide our guilt and shame and to run in the opposite direction from a God who surely must be angry at us.

Our own acts of rebellion do not plunge the entire planet into ruin the way Adam and Eve’s did. They just plunge our corners of it into anguish, or maybe just our own hearts. But we, too, are afraid to face our Creator.

Thankfully, Adam and Eve’s story doesn’t end with them forever separated from God. Rather, God comes walking in the Garden, calling His friends, and something about His appeal brings them out of hiding despite their terror. And although they immediately begin making excuses and pointing the finger of blame, God makes His position clear. They are not forsaken. They are worth redeeming.

Though there will be drastic, unavoidable consequences for their actions, God demonstrates that He is not seeking vengeance. Rather, He wants to save them from sin and its effects. On the very day they fall, God reveals His plan to take the guilt of humanity upon Himself. He will come to this earth, and in human form, suffer the penalty of humanity’s sins Himself. In the process, He will be bruised, bloodied, and killed. But He will also crush the serpent’s head.

Of course, this is our story too. No matter what we’ve done, we are not forsaken. We are worth redeeming. God seeks for us, not to condemn us, but to heal and restore us.

Yes, we have fallen into sin. But we can fall into grace—the grace of a God who would rather sacrifice Himself than sacrifice us.

Melanie Asaki, Moscow, Idaho, U.S.A.
When was the last time you had to make an important decision? What process did you go through in doing so? It’s likely that you evaluated the evidence you were aware of. This is critical, but sometimes evidence isn’t always what it seems.

The devil appealed to Eve in three areas.

Eve was the first person who was deceived by faulty evidence. So what is evidence? Evidence is that which is used to determine or demonstrate the truth of an assertion. Genesis 3:4–6 chronicles Eve’s encounter with Satan. Satan entices her to question God (verse 1). He misrepresents God’s Word: “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”?’” (verse 1, NKJV). It gets worse when he minimizes the consequences of disobedience: “‘You will not surely die’” (verse 4, NKJV), and when he promises supernatural benefits of disobedience: “‘Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (verse 5, NKJV).

The devil appealed to Eve in three areas: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (Luke 4:1–13; 1 John 2:16). Eve based her decision on how things appeared. Her desire for wisdom and beauty reflect present-day pursuits. The desire for self-aggrandizement is evident in popular culture in general and the entertainment industry in particular. People are continually seeking out one body-perfecting potion after another, and new schools of thought are developed as people pursue knowledge for its own sake.

God, however, provides a fulfilling life and heavenly rewards for a life of service to others. In the midst of our self-sufficiency, confusion, and ambiguity, He invites us to consider His love. His love can help us confidently respond to the lies of the enemy. We can trust that our omnipotent God will guide us into all truths once we surrender our will to Him.

**REACT**

1. The serpent asked Eve, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the Garden?” How might she have answered the serpent differently?

2. How does Satan tempt us today in ways similar to the methods he used to tempt Eve? What safeguards found in the Bible can we apply in these instances?

*Claudine Anderson-Atkinson, Pullman, Washington, U.S.A.*
A Crafty Serpent (Gen. 3:1–6)
Imagine that you are walking in a beautiful garden when you come upon a woman talking to a serpent. You know you should leave them alone, but you can’t help eavesdropping:

Serpent: Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the Garden?
Woman: No. Not exactly. He said we could eat from any of the trees except this one. He told us we couldn’t even touch it or we’d die.
Serpent: Don’t be silly. You won’t die if you eat from it. The second you eat from this tree, you’ll feel incredible. You’ll be like God and know both good and evil.
Woman: Really? Then why did God tell us not to eat from it?
Serpent: He just doesn’t want you to be as powerful as He is.

A Devilish Encounter in the Wilderness (Matt. 4:3–10)
At the end of Jesus’ 40 day fast, Satan attempted to get Him to sin. First, he tried to convince Jesus to feed Himself by telling Him to turn stones into bread. Jesus, however, refused. “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4, NKJV). Next, Satan quoted Scripture after telling Jesus to jump off the temple’s pinnacle: “‘It is written, “He shall give His angels charge over you,” “and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone”’” (verse 6, NKJV). Jesus again refused him, saying, “‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God’” (verse 7, NKJV). Finally, Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world if He would fall down and worship him, but Jesus told Satan to go away, saying, “‘It is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and...
“Him only shall you serve” (verse 10, NKJV). Finally Satan left and angels came to minister to Jesus.

**Conquering Satan With Scripture (Col. 2:20–23; 1 Pet. 5:8)**

Through Jesus’ experience with Satan, we learn that when faced with temptation, the Bible is the most powerful weapon at our disposal. It is “sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). Memorization and the use of such a powerful weapon will allow us to conquer any foe that comes our way. Along with a strong understanding of the Bible, we must also be alert. As 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (NKJV). Like the serpent in the Garden, Satan is also a vicious lion, waiting to attack us at our most vulnerable moments. However, if we remain alert at all times and focus on God, we’ll never be at Satan’s mercy. When we are changed into God’s people, we possess an even greater power to resist Satan’s attacks because he is no match for the power that is Christ in us.

**Grace Abounds Through Sin (Gen. 3:13–17; John 3:16, 17; Rom. 5:12–21)**

In Jesus’ victory, we also discover the depth of God’s grace. Satan came to tempt Jesus at His weakest moment, but Jesus did not let him win. By conquering Satan, Jesus gained the victory for us. When we accept Jesus’ death on our behalf, we receive His grace. Paul explains that this gift gives us life, rather than death, because “where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20, NKJV). Even though God punished Adam and Eve for their disobedience, His judgment holds a wonderful promise—the promise of life: “‘I will put enmity / between you and the woman, / and between your seed and her Seed; / He shall bruise your head, / and you shall bruise His heel’” (Gen. 3:15, NKJV). In His judgment, God promised to stand between Satan and humanity. He promised that Eve’s descendant would crush Satan by paying the price of our sins with His own life. Such a promise reveals that God’s love and grace is more powerful than our sins. He loves us so much that He sent us His only Son to die in our place, so “that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). Christ’s mission on earth was to show His undying love by saving a sinful human race. Without His amazing love, we would not know what grace is, and we would never have the promise of eternal life.

**REACT**

1. Looking at the Fall in Genesis 3:15 and John 3:16, 17, ponder further what God’s grace means to you.

2. List verses that encourage and empower you to stand firm against the devil’s attacks. Then follow Jesus’ example and memorize these verses. When you find yourself facing that crafty serpent, recite those verses and be amazed at the results.

The story of Adam and Eve, and the penalty of their disobedience, is often recounted, while God’s grace is often overlooked. The devil introduced sin, which resulted in fear, shame, and separation from God, but the Father in His mercy went on a search for the lost. “The divine presence was manifested in the garden. . . . ‘The Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?’ ”

Intrinsic to the record of the Fall is that God was and still is the Initiator of saving grace. God sought to save humanity while we were in sin (Rom. 5:8). The Bible teaches that it is not characteristic of our Creator to destroy (Ezek. 18:32), hence even mingled in the curse of the couple (Gen. 3:16, 17) was the plan of salvation. The “life of toil and care . . . was appointed in love. It was a discipline rendered needful by his sin, to place a check upon the indulgence of appetite and passion, to develop habits of self-control. It was a part of God’s great plan for man’s recovery from the ruin and degradation of sin.”

“The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. . . .

“The Son of God . . . was touched with pity for the fallen race. . . . But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. . . . Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. . . . Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.”

Immediately as sin entered the human family, Christ stood as Intercessor on our behalf. “The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth. . . . Oh, the mystery of redemption! the love of God for a world that did not love Him! Who can know the depths of that love which ‘passeth knowledge’? Through endless ages immortal minds, seeking to comprehend the mystery of that incomprehensible love, will wonder and adore.”

**REACT**

1. What was the cost of God’s love? (See John 3:16.)
2. How can we, through God’s example, seek to love others?

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2. Ibid., p. 60.
3. Ibid., p. 63.
4. Ibid., pp. 63, 64.
In Genesis 3:1–6, we read how sin entered the world through the devil disguised as a serpent. New Testament writers must have realized that the pre-Fall beautiful serpent would be hard for us to relate to, so in true “a picture is worth a thousand words” fashion, 1 Peter 5:8 rolls out the canvas, mixes the colors, and creates for us an image worthy of a second look. In this picture Peter shows us the devil as he prowls around like a lion stalking prey. How does this apply to us? We need to respect the fact that because we have such an extremely dangerous foe, we must be on guard at all times.

**Take a second look before you act.**

Although Peter suggests that the lion is roaring, I suspect that the roaring does not take place during the prowl, but during and after the kill. In Eden, Eve was not presented with the alarming sound of a snake’s rattle. What she saw was a beautiful serpent. Likewise, the temptations we face will present themselves in a similarly enticing manner. They won’t be accompanied by ominous music as they are in films or television shows. Not only must we be on guard, we must look at situations carefully and realize that things are not always as they seem. Lies are mixed with truth to give them credibility. Poor decisions are made because they have perceived outcomes we find attractive. Take a second look before you act.

So how can we guard ourselves against the devil’s attacks? Have an emergency plan. Where I teach, if we go into a lockdown because an intruder is threatening the lives of our students, we have this motto: “Never give up! Fight! Fight! Fight!” The devil has intruded upon and perverted the perfect world God created. When he tries to threaten our Christian walk by leading us into temptation, never give up. We are in a war. Fight with the strength and power of God! He is ready to send in troops of angels if we but only ask.

**REACT**

1. Why is it so easy to forget that the devil is a real and dangerous force?
2. When have you been tempted to give in to something wrong because it had a little “right” mixed in?

Cheryl Forster, Uniontown, Washington, U.S.A.
I often think of Eve’s temptation as a strange, solitary moment, unique and unreplicable in human history, not to mention in my own life. For instance, I know that in my life if a snake started talking to me, I’d first check the expiration date on last night’s soup can before I believed anything the snake told me. I’d never fall for the talking-snake trick. Or would I?

During Jesus’ time, the serpent used the well-regarded Pharisees to deceive the people. Matthew 15:3–9 explains how Jesus rightfully accused the Pharisees of nullifying God’s command to honor their parents by telling people it was OK not to help their parents if they donated the money they would have used for them to God instead. Thus, the devil was tempting people to defy the fifth commandment, which calls for children to honor their parents. To these Pharisees, Jesus quoted a prophecy from Isaiah: “‘These people honor me with their lips, / but their hearts are far from me. / They worship me in vain; / their teachings are but rules taught by men’” (Matt. 15:8, 9, NIV). Paul wrote, in 1 Timothy 5:8, that “those who won’t care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers” (1 Tim. 5:8, NLT). Thus, we learn that the proximity of our hearts to God is a direct corollary to our worship of Him and to our humbleness before Him and His Word.

John relates the consequences of altering God’s words: “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Rev. 22:18, 19, NIV). We forget this warning at our own peril.

**REACT**

1. How do we stop the temptation to elevate ourselves above God? How do we remain aware of this human inclination?
2. What defenses does God have for us to use when faced with our own self-confidence and pride and Satan’s temptation?

Jeremy Vetter, Moscow, Idaho, U.S.A.
**CONCLUDE**

Humans and sin have a tangled relationship. Even Christians wrestle with issues of circumstance and motivation. Is it a sin to do the right thing—for selfish reasons? Can God still bless actions tainted by ignorance and pride? Paul gives us an ironclad rule—we’ve got to keep our connection with God. The devil’s first—and perhaps still his most frequent—trick was to damage Eve’s faith in her Creator. Satan knows that if he can distract us from our God, he can lead us anywhere. Thus, the devil exploits our fears, our failings, our vanity, and our fatigue to fracture our faith. Only as we nourish our connection with the Divine are we truly safe.

**CONSIDER**

- Comparing the details of Eve’s temptation in Genesis 3 with that of Jesus’ temptation in Matthew 4.
- Memorizing powerful texts that testify to God’s love and power.
- Discussing with a spiritual mentor or loved one ways in which God has bolstered and sustained your faith.
- Role-playing how you’d handle temptations to put your faith in yourself, the world, finances, or anything other than God. Then role-play how you’d handle putting your faith in God.
- Focusing on God and His promises throughout the day by listening to faith-affirming music.
- Evaluating your personal points of weakness that are most easily exploited.

**CONNECT**


Through a Glass, Darkly

“The wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness’ ”

(1 Cor. 3:19, NIV).
The cool wind caressing my face. The fresh scent of pine wafting through the air. I gaze at the lush forest around me. My eyes travel up and up and up at the tall, stout trees waving to the craggy mountains standing guard in the distance. Not an industrial sound can be heard. *This is peaceful,* I think. *This is church.* How can this place, this moment, this feeling come from anywhere but God? I don’t see how the cleverly camouflaged lizard crawled out of the primordial ooze or that the efficiency of fungi cleaning the forest floor was anything but planned. Evolutionists base their theories on the concept that nature evolved out of the instinct for survival—the dog-eat-dog world. But what about the things in this world whose only function is beauty? Or what about the thoughts and actions that cannot possibly stem from competitive survival, such as human kindness?

What about the tropical bird fluffing its colorful feathers in unusual ways and doing little dances to impress a mate or the natural instinct of a mother to protect her child. Such things did not evolve. They were designed. From the little ants working together to carry their meal to the giant unmovable mountains; from the quiet chirp of a single cricket to the roar of a lion heard from miles away—all of these things come together for the glory of God. He has staked His claim on this earth by His word alone. We are His.

Why do we take for granted the beauty God creates? Why do we constantly demand proof that we belong to Him? What does nature tell us? That He provides. He cares. He loves. “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; / your works are wonderful, / I know that full well. / My frame was not hidden from you / when I was made in the secret place” (Ps. 139:14, 15, NIV). You have all been “churched.” You know this verse; so why continue to ignore it? Take a walk through a forest. Smell the flowers. Praise Him. And as you study this week’s lesson, may you learn more about what nature does and does not reveal about God.

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*Tamara Naja, Bowling Green, Kentucky, U.S.A.*
God Made a Perfect World (Isa. 43:1; Ps. 24:1)

When God first created the world, it was exclusively His, and it reflected Him perfectly. In this glorious place, He created two people for the beautiful home He had made. It was flawless, just like its Creator. The time Adam and Eve spent in nature was to be for their benefit.

In Isaiah and the Psalms, the Bible declares that God made everything and everything is His. Everything about this planet—from the blades of grass to the nations and their peoples—are all reflections of His design. And at the beginning of this world, it was an unspoiled reflection.

Humans Ruined It (Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:20–22)

Adam and Eve made a devastating mistake. They disobeyed God—first Eve, then Adam. Both became equally guilty. Through their sin, the Bible tells us that the natural world in which we live was cursed by its Creator, but not, as many assume, purely to punish sinners. It was cursed “in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20, 21, NIV).

So by their sins, humans ruined God’s perfect work. In an attempt to bring us back to repentance, the world was cursed. Even though to some degree nature still reflects God’s glory, sin has marred what God designed. Even what seems to be the most perfect scene is spoiled by sin. Roses have thorns. Bees sting. Waterways are polluted. What God made as a flawless work of art and architecture, humanity has defiled. But even in our sin, God has made a way for us to be saved. Sometimes it may not seem that the cursing of this world is to our advantage. God, however, is still in control. We can trust Him. By studying nature and the marvels it still contains, we even now can see how creative and powerful God really is.

The Devil Gained Control . . . Sort Of (John 12:31, 32; Eph. 2:1, 2)

When Eve and Adam chose to believe the serpent over God, Satan became the ruler of this world. Fortunately for us, it’s only a temporary position. In fact, God has already won the war for this world. Satan rules over those people who don’t let God govern them, who choose not to follow His perfect instruction. Despite the Fall, God is still in control. It is still, ultimately, His world. God still controls nature too. Without His intervention,
the devil would have destroyed everyone and everything by now.

Granted, there is still evil in the world, even in nature. Animals kill and maim, and people do even worse things to themselves and to each other. It can be all too easy to focus on the bad and miss the good God has given us. Praise Him that He has already defeated the enemy! Soon we will be going home, and this world will be remade as God intended it to be—perfect and perfectly like Him.

**God Won the World Back (Psalms 8; 19)**

It is a wonderful thing to know that God is the ultimate Power in the universe and that through Christ’s sacrifice, this world has been won back to God. Some days, it certainly doesn’t seem like it, but that is where faith comes in—faith in the Bible, faith that Christ has saved and lives in us through the Holy Spirit. Sin still has consequences and death still exists. Even though we are saved through Christ, there are still repercussions from our sins. And because Jesus lived a perfect life in an imperfect world, death is not forever.

God is so merciful that we don’t even have to know how to pray right to receive His mercy! When we do not even know what to tell God or how to express ourselves, the Holy Spirit speaks on our behalf. Romans 8:26 tells us that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (NIV). Despite our sin, God still listens and cares.

Even with the encouragement that abounds in Scripture that instructs us regarding God’s mercy, it can sometimes still be discouraging to continue on in the world surrounded by sin. That is why God has given us more than just the Bible to encourage and guide us. Even though nature is nowhere near as stunning as it was when God first created it, each thing in this world—trees, animals, people, the stars, and so on—all still show the unique mark of their Creator. The psalmist wrote, “The heavens keep telling the wonders of God, and the skies declare what he has done” (Ps. 19:1, CEV). Whether the shining stars at midnight, the brilliant blue sky in summer, or the breathtaking colors at sunrise or sunset, nature keeps telling us how amazing, glorious, and present God is. Next time you see a particularly stunning vista, remember that God made it all, and that it is an expression of His love and care for you.

**REACT**

1. What in nature strikes you most as glorifying God? How have you seen His hand in creation this week?
2. Do you see the continued destruction of the earth as a sign of God’s soon return? Why or why not?
"In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. . . . It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father's love.

"Now sin has marred God's perfect work, yet that handwriting remains. Even now all created things declare the glory of His excellence. . . . There is no leaf of the forest, or lowly blade of grass, but has its ministry. Every tree and shrub and leaf pours forth that element of life without which neither man nor animal could live; and man and animal, in turn, minister to the life of tree and shrub and leaf."1

"Our Father in heaven is the source of life, of wisdom, and of joy. Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. Think of their marvelous adaptation to the needs and happiness, not only of man, but of all living creatures. The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love. . . .

"Even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed. . . . The thorn and the thistle—the difficulties and trials that make [a human's] life one of toil and care—were appointed for [man's] good as a part of the training needful in God's plan for his uplifting from the ruin and degradation that sin has wrought. The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. There are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are covered with roses.

" 'God is love' is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy."2

**REACT**

Why does God allow difficulties and trials in our lives? What encouragement can we find in nature?

Theologian William Paley authored *Natural Theology* in 1802, in which he wrote about how animals exhibit the care and skill of the Creator. Despite his failing to recognize the effects that the Fall has on nature, his thesis has never been refuted, despite numerous claims to the contrary.

**Answers are found in a place where only faith can lead.**

Charles Darwin argued that a God who designed every feature of nature would not be good. As evidence, he referred to a parasite that feeds within the living bodies of caterpillars and the cruel way in which a cat will play with a mouse.

Today, especially within postmodern society, some Christians are not appalled by Darwin’s argument. If a few Christians buy into Darwin’s view, then that’s between them and God. Right? The problem here, however, isn’t just about creation versus evolution or Christianity versus Darwinism. It’s attacking the existence of God and His character as an all-powerful Creator. Restated in modern terms, Darwin’s argument would sound more like this, “Cancer is destroying millions of lives and making them suffer! Humans consistently do evil things every day! A Creator God could not be a loving one. He would be only bitter and vengeful!”

This argument addresses the following age-old questions: Why do bad things happen? And why does God allow bad things to happen? Answers are found in a place where only faith can lead. Eve made the costly mistake of believing she would be on equal ground with God if she ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And look where the world is now; look how corrupt, and full of war, disease, and hunger it is. But it isn’t our fault, is it?

Sin has infected our world much like that parasite Darwin refers to. Yes, there are some beautiful things in this world much like what Paley refers to. But because sin entered this world and because many of us consider ourselves as great as God, we, too, have made the world what it is today. We must thank God daily for His Son’s sacrifice for sinful humans who have perverted and destroyed His perfect creation. One day everyone will know the true power of God. Not everyone, however, will experience the new beautiful creation He has in store for us. Let God help you not to be a member of that group!
All of Christ’s followers are fighting against darkness. But when we let Christ clean the glass daily, we can draw strength from Him. We can be encouraged to uplift other Christians who are trying to see through dark glass. Here are three ideas about how to let God clear a view through the darkness.

**He created you with a purpose. Let your roots grow deep in Him.**

*Acknowledge your own poor sight.* One thing we know for sure: when we actively seek God, He will not hide from us (Jer. 29:12). When we are looking to grow in His wisdom, we will see His wisdom everywhere.

*Decide what you will look for.* Will it be darkness or light? Deciding to look for what is positive and realizing that the difficulties are not ours to conquer is crucial to this step. If we think we are able to advance in life through self-discipline, we must think again: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12, NIV).

*Beware of self-confidence.* Self-confidence is imperative for personal growth; but what is faith if it is not letting go of what we are sure of? It is when we are most sure of certain strengths in our daily walk that we begin to regard them as infallible. This is when Satan blackens the glass with temptations in areas we thought we had conquered. This is when we become unable to see beyond the darkness and where recognition of and faith in Christ’s all-knowing and creative power must step in. “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10, NIV).

God knows when the sparrow falls (Matt. 10:29); do you not believe that He knows when you fall because you’re trapped in darkness? He created you with a purpose. Let your roots grow deep in Him. Let your eyesight be guided by His healing hands. Let Christ clean the glass.

**REACT**

1. Recall a time when you thought you had worked on a defect of your character only to find it still governing a part of you. How did you feel when you realized that your strength alone could not get rid of that character defect?

2. Think of ways you can strengthen your relationship with God this week.

Aimee Shantell Burchard, Lookout Mountain, Georgia, U.S.A.
I’d been so busy during the week with classes and extracurricular responsibilities that I couldn’t get my dorm room cleaned for Sabbath. Now it was Friday night, and I sulked in the messy room I desperately wanted to clean. As I sat there looking at everything I could be doing but “couldn’t because it was Sabbath,” I was confused. If Sabbath was made for man and cleaning my room would actually relax me, why was I just sitting here? Then I realized that I really didn’t know what the Sabbath was about. We can’t do this, but we can do that. Not all the rules and obligations made sense. Nor did they answer my question about where the Sabbath came from, why it was instituted, and what its purpose was. So I decided to learn for myself what it meant to keep the Sabbath from God’s point of view, because where I was, I could only see through the glass dimly. And what I discovered literally changed my life.

The Sabbath is about building a relationship with God.

I discovered that the Sabbath isn’t about a list of dos and don’ts. Instead, the Sabbath is about building a relationship with God. Think of it this way: the Sabbath is like a wedding ring (or watch). Such a wedding gift signifies a commitment to a relationship. And that’s what the Sabbath is for Christians. It shows the world that we are committed to the God who made the heavens and the earth. This relationship signifies that He justifies and sanctifies us. He alone can save us and when He does, He places His robe of righteousness on us.

With Christ’s robe covering us, He then sees us without sin; and even though we still may sin, if we ask for repentance, His robe continues to cover us. Sabbath is a reminder that we are seen as spotless and that we are saved as long as we remain in Him. And the beautiful thing is that all of creation points to that one day, that one relationship. Now for me, the Sabbath is not about a list of dos and don’ts but about building that relationship with God.

REACT
1. How do you keep the Sabbath, and why?
2. What do you not understand about what Seventh-day Adventists believe?
3. How can you start discovering for yourself what our doctrines mean to you personally?
CONCLUDE

Some days we feel like crash-test dummies—locked in a vehicle (earth) hurtling uncontrollably toward certain destruction. The cumulative effect of generations of selfishness, coupled with our own sinful errors, guarantees a shattering conclusion to the ride. Piercing this dark hopelessness is a ray of hope that, miracle of miracles, the One who designed and created us is anxious to restore His shattered creation. Although our self-centeredness has marred His creation, He will restore us as only our Creator can. Entrust your wrecked and mangled soul to the One who loves His creation and who will spare nothing to make it new.

CONSIDER

- Interviewing one or more scientists about their understanding of nature’s origin and their viewpoint about earth’s future in light of human wrong-doing (sinfulness).
- Making a class video during a Sabbath afternoon walk in which various class members select a nature item and explain how it speaks to them about God’s love.
- Meditating on the vastness of God’s creation by observing the night sky on a moonless night or by visiting a planetarium.
- Shattering a lightbulb or other glass object during class before estimating how many pieces there are after the shattering, calculating the probability that the object can be restored, and discussing how much God must love us to undertake such a formidable task as restoring our shattered lives. Heighten the effect by passing out bottles of glue and/or mending tape and telling the class to restore the object! (For safety, shatter the lightbulb or glass object in a box to prevent pieces of glass from flying into any class members.)

CONNECT


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Dan Solis, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.
Jesus, Provider and Sustainer

“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19, NIV).
Not a year goes by without natural disasters causing chaos somewhere in the world. Floods, hurricanes, and tsunamis destroy lives, homes, and livelihoods.

No one would argue that the seas have a “right” to violate their established boundaries and crash across coastlines. In fact, people agree that disaster occurs whenever the sea breaches the shoreline, even though God Himself has “placed the sand for the bound of the sea” (Jer. 5:22).

God also established boundaries for human behavior. Yet not a day goes by without countless violations of His commands, resulting in disastrous physical and spiritual consequences. Amazingly, we often argue that we have the “right” to violate these boundaries.

In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, God’s people had stepped out of bounds, using deceit to become rich and refusing to defend the needs of the poor among them (Jer. 5:27, 28). The result was disaster. God told them, “ ‘Your sins have kept good from you’ ” (verse 25, ESV).

Because of the laws of creation, there is inherent order. Therefore, violating these laws has inherent consequences. God, in His kindness, simply and lovingly communicates to us the order of things so we can avoid those consequences. We are wise to know and to stay within His prescribed boundaries. Disregarding God’s order leads to disorder!

The wonder of God’s creation leaves us amazed. Read how Job reacted to it in Job 37 and 38. Listen to what the Lord’s role is in nature’s majesty: “ ‘Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes His lightning flash?’ ” (Job 37:15, NIV). “ ‘What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?’ ” (Job 38:19, NIV). God’s majestic creations—whether dazzling warbling birds or glowing fish—are mysteries to us. But as God reminded Job, all of the wonders of our world are His creative handiwork. When we observe His amazing creation, our only response can be that of Job’s: these are “ ‘things too wonderful for me to know’ ” (Job 42:3, NIV).

As you study this week about how God “holds it all altogether,” consider how He also sustains you and provides for all your needs.

Rachel E. Leer, Lebanon, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
As Sustainer and Provider, God has a to-do list that includes revealing Himself and His glory through nature and His people. In 1 Peter 2:9, we see that God has made us “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” (NKJV). As we tell others how He has called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light” and has shown us His mercy, He receives the glory that is due to Him alone (1 Pet. 2:9, 10, NKJV). We also point others to Him when we obey laws and authority “for the Lord’s sake” (verse 13). And when we use the gifts and abilities God has given us to help sustain others as well as ourselves, He is “glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever” (1 Pet. 4:11, NKJV). If God’s top priority is to reveal His glory, our privilege and responsibility as His people is to reflect that glory.

In Genesis 1, when God spoke something into existence, “it was so.” (See verses 7, 9, 11, 15, and 24.) In other words, God’s words are true and powerful. When He speaks, something happens. As I read about the beginning of our world and the power of God’s words, I think about other things God and His Son Jesus have said, other things we can count on. When Jesus was talking about His followers, He said, “‘I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand’” (John 10:28, NKJV). If we put our trust in Him, we can be assured that we have eternal life and will live with Him forever.

The writer to the Hebrews said, “Be content with such things as you have. For [God] Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Heb. 13:5, NKJV). Thus, we can be sure that God will provide for us and sustain us in all circumstances. He will never abandon us.

One of Jesus’ most comforting promises is, “‘I will come again and receive you to Myself’” (John 14:3, NKJV). And because He said it, we can believe it, and wait confidently for that day.

Rachel S. Tandug, Davao City, Philippines
**Frozen Solid (Gen. 1:1)**

I love my garden. But living in the Midwest region of the United States, winter reduces its beauty to a frozen, snow-covered, barren landscape.

It wasn’t like that in the Garden of Eden. Eden was a breathtakingly beautiful garden year-round. And it was in that garden that Adam and Eve basked in the stunning creation of God and the joy of perfect harmony with Him and with each other. Until, that is, Satan arrived on the scene, bringing weeds, thorns, destruction, and death.

**Great Contrast (Genesis 1; Matt. 4:1–17)**

You can’t help but notice the contrast between the landscape in Genesis 1 and Matthew 4:1–17. In the latter text, the same tempter who once entered God’s garden now welcomes God to his turf—the dangerous, barren wilderness.

The wilderness can be a picture of what the world—and life—becomes when Satan has his way. With one decisive blow, the joy of Eden was replaced with the barrenness of shame. But Jesus was victorious on Satan’s turf! This gives us hope that we, too, can have victory—a victory that assures us the day is coming when we will no longer toil in Satan’s wilderness but will be ushered into heaven, where the joy of Eden will be ours forever.

**The Work of the Almighty (Gen. 1:27; 2:15)**

As we observe nature and the people around us, we are reminded that God made each one of us unique, that we each serve a unique purpose. One person’s natural tendency is to look up and see the “big picture,” while another looks down and focuses on the details. Both the big picture and the details are important. One is not better than the other. God provides and sustains us by giving us individual talents and spiritual gifts so we can work together as a body known as the church.

In the Bible, we see God taking delight in His creation. Genesis 1 records the crowning achievement of this divine creative process. “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them” (verse 27, NIV). Then God charged humankind with the task cultivating the Garden (Gen. 2:15).

Before Creation “the earth was shapeless and lifeless. Its elements were all mingled together, completely unorganized and inanimate.”* Then, through the work of the Almighty, disorganization became “the heavens and the earth,” teeming with stars, a sun and a moon, all manner of trees, flowers, bird, animals, fish, and, finally, a man and a woman. Through the magnificent workings of the Godhead—with the Son enacting the will of the Father as the Agent of creation and the Holy Spirit as the hovering Presence—the earth became a wonder to behold. And history began its long march toward today.

Genesis 1:1 provides us with sufficient concepts to contemplate for a lifetime. The Bible’s first verse speaks of enough glory, enough majesty, enough awe to leave us speechless before God. Just as we would have no existence without His sustaining action, neither would we have the cosmos without His mighty act at the moment of creation.

In awe, we wonder what went on before “the beginning.” With breathless praise, we marvel at the words, “God created the heavens and the earth.” We read—and we stand in adoration. “Nothing” has ever been so fascinating!

God’s love for us is so deep that we have a hard time comprehending it. It reaches down to us through the darkness of this sinful world, even though we are hopelessly undeserving. The Bible says that before God created our planet, He had decided to display the depth of His love for us through His Son’s death on the cross (1 Pet. 1:13–21; Rev. 13:8).

In my imagination, I look back over time and see the Lord raising mountains to majestic heights, cutting valleys for flowing rivers, and stretching out vast plains. I envision Him creating the mighty oceans and beautiful lakes. Then I see Him pause and reflect on the goodness of His creation. He gazes at that part of the world where His Son will be born. He knows that Jesus will be rejected and crucified. With a sweep of His hand, He could obliterate the world and spare His Son from the agony of the cross. But He did not. Because of His love, the Son came to earth and was slain. He paid the penalty for our sins. In John 3:16, we read, “‘God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life’” (NKJV).

**REACT**

What does the Creation account in Genesis 1 and 2 reveal to you personally about God as your Sustainer and Provider?

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We live in a hectic world, and it seems that simplifying our lives has never been more complicated! God, however, provides a time of rest that sustains us physically and spiritually. For six days, He worked to bring order to our world. But on the seventh day, He rested, thus demonstrating that rest is appropriate and right. Jesus showed us the importance of rest when He sat beside a well after a long walk (John 4:6) and when He slept in a boat (Mark 4:38). He also rested when He and His disciples got away from the crowds (Mark 6:31, 32). If the Lord rested from the work of creation and from His earthly ministry, we also need to rest from our work. Our times of rest refresh us for times of service.

“The Sabbath bids us behold in His created works the glory of the Creator. And it was because He desired us to do this that Jesus bound up His precious lessons with the beauty of natural things. On the holy rest day, above all other days, we should study the messages that God has written for us in nature. We should study the Saviour’s parables where He spoke them, in the fields and groves, under the open sky, among the grass and flowers. As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love.

“And Christ has linked His teaching, not only with the day of rest, but with the week of toil. . . . In every line of useful labor and every association of life He desires us to find a lesson of divine truth. Then our daily toil will no longer absorb our attention and lead us to forget God; it will continually remind us of our Creator and Redeemer. The thought of God will run like a thread of gold through all our homely cares and occupations. For us the glory of His face will again rest upon the face of nature. We shall ever be learning new lessons of heavenly truth and growing into the image of His purity. Thus shall we ‘be taught of the Lord,’ and in the lot wherein we are called we shall ‘abide with God.’ ”

* Ellen G. White, Counsels on Health, p. 165.

**REACT**

Answer these questions to determine if you need rest: Do I feel stressed when functioning in my normal day-to-day activities? Is it difficult to find joy? Do I wake up tired?

Mark Andrew Paterniti, Taylor, Michigan, U.S.A.
Genesis 1:1 is not the only place in the Bible where we read about creation. Woven throughout Scripture are reminders that God fashioned our world—telling us again and again how vital it is to believe that the universe and our world exist because of God’s mighty hand and that He alone is our Sustainer and Provider.

God’s goodness is the point of His creation.

One of the main reasons to explore what God’s Word says about creation is so that we will give Him the praise that is due to Him. How do we praise God? The following are a few of the many possible ways.

Praise God with thanksgiving. David urges us to “offer to God thanksgiving” (Ps. 50:14, NKJV) and to “magnify Him with thanksgiving” (Ps. 69:30, NKJV). When we are thankful for what God does for us, bad times are easier to bear. What bad time might you be facing now that can be made lighter by thanking God for something He has given you or done for you?

Praise God through music. When the Israelites escaped from Egypt, Miriam and the other women played their timbrels, sang, and danced in thanks to God for freeing them from slavery and leading them safely through the Red Sea. Consider how you can praise God through music. You can’t play an instrument, or you sing out of tune? Listening to your favorite Christian music that inspires you to love God more is also a form of praise.

Praise God through His creative works. God’s goodness is the point of His creation. He is “good to all, / and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Ps. 145:9, NKJV). Psalm 148:3–6 instructs the sun, moon, and stars to praise Him because He created them and “marked out the orbits in which the heavenly bodies move. They perform their revolutions with unerring accuracy within the bounds that He has prescribed.”* His creative work also includes the work He does for us and in us in terms of our salvation. He died for our sins. And He lives in our hearts through His Holy Spirit so we can become like Him. What about nature inspires you to praise God? How has His salvation inspired you to praise Him in word or deed?

**REACT**

Why is it important to praise God for the multitude of ways He sustains and provides for us?

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As Adam and Eve faced temptation for the first time, many things were true for them that are not true for us. They lived in a perfect environment and an uncorrupted society. No family influence could be blamed for their choice to do what was wrong. Adam and Eve stood in the morning of creation as creatures of great wonder. No sinful heritage, no ravaged surroundings could be blamed for their downfall.

Pointing out what’s wrong is easy.

There were also many sins that Adam and Eve couldn’t commit. They couldn’t commit adultery. They couldn’t steal from anyone. They couldn’t dishonor their father or mother. They couldn’t bear false witness against their neighbor. They couldn’t covet their neighbor’s property.

But the essence of sin back at the dawn of creation was the same as it is today—defiance of our Provider and Sustainer. At the crucial point of their temptation, Adam and Eve did not take seriously what their Provider and Sustainer had said.

In the temptations we face today, we, too, must decide if we will believe that the Lord will provide us with the strength to help us do what is right. We, too, must realize that sin can devastate our relationship with Him. We, too, will need His forgiveness when we fall.

Glance at any newspaper, and the headlines will tell you what’s wrong with the world. Watch television, surf the Internet, or talk to friends, and you will find no shortage of opinions as to what’s wrong on planet Earth. That’s because pointing out what’s wrong is easy.

When terrorists hijacked passenger planes and slammed them into the Pentagon, two New York skyscrapers, and a Pennsylvania field, the world quickly called it evil. The destructive power of these events paralyzed people and made them feel helpless. And that’s what evil does best—it makes us feel powerless. But we’re not. The apostle Paul outlined the proper response. We are to abhor evil (Rom. 12:9), not repay evil with more evil (verse 17), and not be overcome by it (verse 21).

The true victim of evil is goodness—the goodness that God designed as part of creation for everyone to enjoy (Gen. 1:4–31), the goodness that He provides us as our Sustainer and Provider.

Yes, evil gets all the headlines, but God’s goodness is stronger, and He wants us to use it on His behalf to overcome His and our enemy.
CONCLUDE
From the opening words in Genesis to the closing promises of Revelation, God presents Himself as the One who supplies all of our needs. As our Creator, He relates to each of us with a Father’s heart. He is deeply concerned about His children’s wants. Scripture overflows with stories of people who looked to Him and found what they needed. He says He will open the floodgates of heaven and give us good gifts, including His kingdom. He will even make us a new earth! May we accept our dependence on Him, praising Him in our success and turning to Him in our need.

CONSIDER
• Reading through Genesis 1 and 2 and making a list of specific ways God provided for Adam and Eve’s physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs.
• Setting Philippians 4:19 to music. Teach your new song to your Sabbath School class.
• Reading the following stories of God’s provision: Genesis 21:9–20 (Hagar); Genesis 22:1–19 (Isaac); Exodus 16 (the Israelites); Isaiah 53 (the Messiah); Matthew 14:13–21 (the 5,000).
• Making a list of some of your personal needs and setting aside time each day to pray through that list.
• Asking God to show you a person whose need you can fulfill in His name. Give that person a gift of food, clothes, gas, or a word of encouragement, according to his or her lack, along with a note letting the person know just how much God loves him or her.
• Reading through one of the Gospels and highlighting every promise you can find, knowing that you can count on God your Provider to keep them.
• Finding a place in nature to sit and read Isaiah 40. If you live in a cold place, find a room where you can look at nature through a window. As you read the passage, meditate on what it says about the One who has promised to supply all of your needs.

CONNECT
Deuteronomy 8:6–18; Psalm 23.

Sonia Huenergardt, Chehalis, Washington, U.S.A.
Marriage: A Gift From Eden

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’”

(Gen. 2:18, NKJV).
Marriage. We usually think of a big white dress for her and a penguin suit for him—a fancy wedding and they live happily ever after. But the reality is that “forever” often ends soon after the wedding. The bride and groom end up being worst enemies instead of best friends and are left to wonder about what went wrong.

So many couples think that they can easily prance through marriage—that “becoming one” will be a piece of cake. It often isn’t long, however, before both bride and groom realize that the ideal marriage as described in Ephesians 5:22–33 is difficult to obtain. It’s hard to submit. It’s hard to love your spouse “just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25, NIV). Still, that is exactly what God expects from us.

However, being committed and loving your partner is not enough. To create a successful marriage, for it to be a blessing, both husband and wife must invite the Creator to be a part of their personal lives and their marriage. This is because Christ is the definition of love: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Cor. 13:4–8, NIV). Not experiencing Christ and His love leaves us unable to love fully.

Thus, we are to honor God by including Him in our marriages. We must let Him guide us to our future spouse. Yes, God is love. He makes all the difference, not just in helping us to make a marriage work, but in making it a gift from heaven.

This week, as you study about marriage, may you either be able to enrich the marriage that you have, or learn how to successfully enter into a marriage to come. In addition, through the metaphor of marriage, may this lesson help you to better understand the relationship that Christ has with His church.
Preparation (Gen. 2:1–10)

Just as an expecting couple prepares for the birth of a baby, so, too, did God prepare everything for Adam—the first representative of the human race. In Genesis 2, we read about these preparations God had made. He carefully planted a garden and made sure there was water and food. Then He placed man in it. And right from the start, God gave Adam an assignment—naming the animals He had created.

Good Versus Bad (Gen. 1:1, 4, 10, 21, 25; 2:18)

As God created the world and the conditions for life on earth, He stated that everything He had made was good. The only thing He did not like was that Adam was alone. In fact, even Adam noticed this. “Adam’s study of the animal creation supplied him with considerable knowledge, but did not satisfy his longing for companionship with another being, his equal.”

So because God knew that it was not good for Adam to be alone, He created a helper for Adam “comparable to him” (Gen. 2:18, NKJV).

The Hebrew word for “helper” used in Genesis 2:18 is ‘êzer and can be translated as “corresponding to man or equal to him.”

The Wedding Vows (Gen. 2:23–25)

Adam’s response after seeing Eve was one of admiration: “‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh’ ” (Gen. 2:23, NKJV). Finally here was someone with whom he could connect. In a sense, his words represent the first wedding vow, as the phrase “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” was often used in Old Testament times to describe an affirmation of loyalty and relation.

In other words, Adam was expressing that he would be loyal to Eve for life. His response was “an oath, a covenant, never an arbitrary relationship of convenience.”

The Perfect Marriage (Eph. 5:22–33)

Like marriages today, Adam and Eve’s marriage probably was not ideal. Paul writes about a perfect marriage relationship in Ephesians 5 and even
uses the symbol of the flesh that appears in Genesis. He is drawing parallels between the partnership of a husband and a wife with Christ and His church. Just as Christ gave everything for us, His church, so must spouses give all of themselves to each other. In marriage, both the husband and the wife are to reflect Christ’s love for each other.

**Guidelines (1 Corinthians 13)**

Two wonderful institutions came from Eden and continue to exist despite sin. These institutions are the Sabbath and marriage. When discussing marriage, it is helpful to learn what God intended marriage to be when He first created it. First Corinthians 13 can help us with this. In this chapter, we find helpful advice on how to have a good marriage. As you read verses 4 through 7, replace the words love and it with your name. As you do so, be honest with yourself about which characteristics of love you lack. Then ask God to help you to develop these characteristics, which are really characteristics of Christ.

In a marriage, there is no room for selfishness. A marriage is a perfect environment for self-improvement. Living with a spouse who has different ideas and desires, and who comes from a background different from yours can sometimes be difficult. On the other hand, a spouse should view these differences as opportunities to grow, to learn more about the variety life has to offer, and to discover more about his or her own personality. A marriage might not be in the honeymoon stage anymore, but God still wants us to explore the beauty such a relationship has to offer. He wants us to learn that in a marriage we can use our skills and imagination, our gifts and oneself as a whole person, to be a helper suited for our spouse.

What we learn in a marriage about how to grow and to get along with one another is easily transferable to all of our relationships. God wants us to be helpers to one another. In this way, every day can be a little piece of heaven.

**REACT**

1. What thoughts, ideas, and truths can you find in today’s lesson that you could use in a discussion with someone who believes that Christ’s love in marriage doesn’t matter?
2. How can you be a helper to others whether you are married or not?
3. What characteristics of God’s love described in 1 Corinthians 13 do you lack? Think about the areas where you could improve and ask God to help you.

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3. Ibid., p. 29.
4. Ibid.

Veronika Lipohar, Požega, Croatia
“Christ honored the marriage relation by making it also a symbol of the union between Him and His redeemed ones. He Himself is the Bridegroom; the bride is the church, of which, as His chosen one, He says, ‘Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.’ [Song of Sol. 4:7].”

“Christ did not come to this world to forbid marriage or to break down or destroy the relationship and influence which exist in the domestic circle. He came to restore, elevate, purify, and ennoble every current of pure affection, that the family on earth might become a symbol of the family in heaven.”

“To gain a proper understanding of the marriage relation is the work of a lifetime. Those who marry enter a school from which they are never in this life to be graduated. . . . Make Christ first and last and best in everything. . . . And as your love for Him increases, your love for each other will grow deeper and stronger. . . . Neither husband nor wife is to make a plea for rulership. The Lord has laid down the principle that is to guide in this matter. The husband is to cherish his wife as Christ cherishes the church. And the wife is to respect and love her husband. Both are to cultivate the spirit of kindness, being determined never to grieve or injure the other.”

“God wants the home to be the happiest place on earth, the very symbol of the home in heaven. Bearing the marriage responsibilities in the home, linking their interests with Jesus Christ, leaning upon His arm and His assurance, husband and wife may share a happiness in this union that angels of God commend. “Marriage does not lessen their usefulness, but strengthens it. They may make that married life a ministry to win souls to Christ.”

**REACT**

1. If marriage teaches us about Christ’s relationship with His church, how does the history of God’s dealings with His people show us how to treat our spouses?
2. If you are not yet married, how can you follow Christ’s example in courtship?

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Matija Kovacevic, Zagreb, Croatia
The book of Genesis is a book about beginnings: the beginning of our world and humankind, the beginning of sin, and the beginning of salvation for the lost human race. It’s also a book about relationships: the relationship between God and His creation, the relationship between God and the humans He created, and the relationship between husband and wife.

Marriage is a covenant between a man, a woman, and God.

In the beginning, God created a relationship between Adam and Eve. He meant for their relationship, and indeed for all marriages, to be the closest, most satisfying of all human relationships. The “Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him’” (Gen. 2:18, NCV). Everything God had created before Adam was good (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31), but with Adam something was missing. Why? Because from the start God planted in us the need to share our lives with others, the need for comfort and compassion, the need to belong to someone apart from ourselves. So God made a companion for him (Gen. 2:21–23).

God joined the first couple in marriage as one flesh. That is why Jesus said that no one should separate a husband and wife (Mark 10:8, 9). When the marriage vows are said and a couple commit themselves to each other, they become as one in body and mind. Such a union only God can create. It’s not always easy to walk on the same path together. Married couples have their differences, and sometimes it seems they can’t overcome them. Without God’s intervention, it is difficult if not impossible.

Marriage is a covenant between a man, a woman, and God. God joins the two together, and if they are faithful and surrender their lives to Him, their marriage will succeed. A healthy marriage is built on a mutual desire to submit to each other’s needs. Christ is our greatest Example. He showed us unconditional love, mercy, grace, and how to submit to God’s will. From His example, we learn how to have a good marriage and how to help our spouse become Christlike in character. How great is the type of love that helps us to live in such a way? As the vows say, “Till death do us part.”
God knew from the beginning of time what condition the world would be in today. Wars and rumors of wars increase by the day, people trample one another to get the latest flat screen television in time for Christmas, and the world economy teeters on the brink of collapse.

**God can teach us to love others more than ourselves.**

However, God also knew from the beginning that Christ would come to show us how to live and how to love, how to spread the Word of God, how to have strong marriages and families, and how to persevere in our walk with Him so that one day we can live with Him in heaven.

But how is this supposed to happen? In a world full of sin, when things are not what they seem to be, when evil is disguised as good, how can humanity find a way to return home? How can we have healthy marriages and families? The following texts guide us.

Matthew 22:34–39. When we put God first in our lives, when we love Him above all else, He can help us love the way we should. In fact, we are not keeping God’s law if, through the help of the Holy Spirit, we do not cultivate love for God and for other people.

First John 4:7–11. When we become children of God, we love one another as He loves us—unselfishly. And just as He loved us enough to send us His only Son to save us, so we should love our spouse enough to give our all to him or her.

Revelation 19:5–9. In these verses, we read about the wedding of the Lamb (Christ) and the Lamb’s bride who made herself ready with “fine linen, bright and clean,” which “was given her to wear” (NIV). This garment symbolizes “the sanctified deeds of the Christian, his victorious life developed by the grace of the indwelling Christ [Gal. 2:20; James 2:17, 18, 20].”* It is such deeds that strengthen marriages and grow strong families. We are to love each other more than we love ourselves, and we are to love God more than anything else. Through marriage, God can teach us to love others more than ourselves.

**REACT**

How would you explain the purpose of marriage to someone who is in a difficult marriage?

* *The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 2nd ed., p. 872.*

Bledar and Armanda Barmeta, Durres, Albania
A couple has been dating for quite some time. Everything seems to be going well. They love each other and spend a lot of time together. All in all, everything appears to be perfect. So he proposes. She says yes. And they begin to prepare for their wedding. Finally, everything is ready for the big day. The wedding invitations have been mailed, the flowers chosen, the tuxedo rented, and the wedding gown tailored to the bride. But then, in the middle of all the last minute preparations, one half of the happy couple sees the other half entering a hotel with another person. When confronted, the offending person admits that this has been going on for a while.

Can you imagine something like this happening to you? How would you feel if you were to see your beloved in such a situation? Yet this is often what happens between Christ and His church. The Bible compares Christ’s relationship with His church to marriage. However, when we read the Bible and when we look at the church today, we find occasions when God’s people have been unfaithful to their Groom. Ezekiel 16 provides us with one such example.

Many couples would give up on their future marriage in such circumstances, but Christ does not. Although His wife (the church) is painfully unfaithful to Him, He longs for her to return to Him.

Thankfully, Christ’s endeavors are not in vain. When He returns to earth, He will gather His bride to Himself. “ ‘Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear’ ” (Rev. 19:7, 8, NIV). From then on, their marriage will be pure. She will be ready to go with her Groom rather to a hotel with one of her former lovers. This marriage, Christ’s marriage, will be celebrated by all of heaven and for all eternity.

**REACT**

1. Why does the Bible compare the relationship between God and His church to marriage?
2. Does God ever give up on His church?
CONCLUDE
The recurring theme in Genesis 1 is God proclaiming each aspect of His new creation as “good,” “very good,” and “excellent.” The first “not good” recorded in the story comes before the entry of sin into the world when God recognizes that “‘it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him’” (Gen. 2:18, NLT). So He created a partner for Adam and the first marriage. Throughout the Bible, the marriage relationship is affirmed and is also used as a symbol of the intimate but sometimes difficult relationship between God and His people.

CONSIDER
• Interviewing a married couple who have been married quite a while. Ask them about their marriage experience and seek their advice for what makes a good marriage work.
• Designing a poster or making a film clip that could work as an advertisement for marriage at its best. Where might you be able to post or show what you have made?
• Thinking about what you could give friends as a wedding gift that will affirm and bless their marriage. If there is a friend’s wedding on your calendar, plan how you might be able to make or give that special gift.
• Planting some flower seeds in a garden bed or pot. As you water and tend these seeds and growing plants, consider the conditions and ingredients needed for them to flourish, just as a relationship—in marriage, with others and with God—requires the right conditions to flourish. When the flowers appear, give them to someone you love, either as a living plant or as cut flowers.
• Planning an event with a group of Christian friends that includes wholesome fun in which single males and females can interact in healthy ways. How might you be able to encourage male–female relationships to grow in healthy ways while avoiding awkwardness and pressure?
• Writing a love letter to God, responding to what you know and appreciate about how He cares for you.

CONNECT
Song of Solomon.
Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home, chap. 3.
Rob Bell, Sex God, chap. 8; C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves, chap. 5.
Stewardship and the Environment

“God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’ ” (Gen.1:28, NKJV).
The pitiful meows came from downstairs. When we crept down there, we found the scrawniest, dirtiest abandoned kitten you could possibly think of. But for us it was love at first sight. Over the years, many a cat and fish has passed through our house. And with the death of each, we held a little funeral and placed flowers on its grave. Some of these animals we were extremely close to, and their deaths touched our household with as much grief as if we had lost a dear human friend.

“Faith should lead to Action!”

God created within us a desire to take care of and protect the animals. This is demonstrated at a young age, when little children’s hearts are touched by flea-infested, tick-ridden strays that they drag home and then beg their parents for permission to keep them. Genesis 1:26 teaches us that God wants us to take care of the planet on which we live and the animals that reside here with us.

Taking care of God’s creation doesn’t necessarily mean that we eat a strict vegetarian or vegan diet, go on hunger strikes to save the whales, or refuse to wear leather out of remorse for the cows. But as far as possible, taking care of God’s creation does mean that we do what we can to be good stewards of the earth.

Nathan Creitz asks these important questions about how Christians view God’s creation. “What do we believe about the world? That God created it? That since creation, humanity has fallen and has brought suffering in the world? If so, how does that cause us to act? Do we seek to fight injustice? Do we desire to protect the environment? Do we care for people’s physical and spiritual needs? Faith should lead to Action!”*

This week you will study about stewardship in relationship to our natural environment. As you study, consider your own life and how you can be a better steward of all that God created.

Foreign Policy magazine lists Lester Brown as number 78 in its Top 100 Global Thinkers for 2011.* His most recent book, World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse, outlines “Plan B” for turning around the looming environmental crisis and saving civilization. Is Brown fulfilling God’s command to care for the earth? The Bible contrasts with the thinking of many environmentalists in that it recognizes that God is in control. It reveals His lofty purpose for humanity, and He knows how earth’s story ends.

While environmental activists take seriously the responsibility to care for the earth, their perspectives vary about who is in control. Some acknowledge the Creator God. Some see divinity in nature itself. In World on the Edge, the word god does not appear even once. But the Bible reveals God as the Lord of the earth. Read Psalm 50:10 and Revelation 4:11. Into His magnificent and vast creation, this sovereign God placed humanity. While many environmentalists view man as just another species struggling to survive, the Bible reveals that we are God’s children, entrusted by Him to care for the earth (Gen. 2:15).

Unfortunately, we have not always been faithful to that trust. The prophecy is coming true that “‘the earth will wear out like a garment’ ” (Isa. 51:6, NIV). As Lester Brown and others point out, a crisis looms. Brown urges a plan that he believes could prevent this crisis if only humanity would cooperate. But if they do not, will we be doomed to extinction? According to the Bible, the script doesn’t end that way. The One who created the earth has revealed the final chapter. Earth’s story will end with a new beginning, and the sin that destroyed our planet will be no more.

God’s faithful children may be just as serious as Lester Brown about caring for the earth, but their reason for doing so is different. They’re keeping a trust with the earth’s Sovereign, and they trust Him for the outcome.

**REACT**

1. How can Christians keep God’s command to care for the earth?
2. What biblical principles might guide Christian leaders in managing environmental issues?

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The Context of Dominion (Gen. 1:26–28)

It is the last day of Creation. God has just composed humanity’s functioning DNA, cells, tissues, organs, body fluids, and neurons from mere dust and His own life-giving breath. After beholding their Maker’s face, wonder and amazement glow on the faces of the first couple. The beauty of Eden, prepared for Adam and Eve to enjoy, shines glorious in color and radiance. As they stand before the God of all creation, He blesses them and presents their mandate to them: “ ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’ ” (Gen. 1:28, NKJV).

The Blessing and the Humbling (Gen. 1:28; Exod. 20:1–3)

The verb “to bless” (barak) has two meanings: “to bless” and “to (cause to) kneel.” The former gives an action, while the latter gives both an action and a desired effect. Applying either meaning indicates that Adam and Eve’s creation was a gift from God that necessitated a proper reaction. “Kneeling was a ritual expression of the willing surrender of the life of the worshipper to God.” In several cases, God’s commands to someone are predicated by a personal encounter or gift of love to that person (Exod. 20:1–3; Jer. 31:3, 31–34).

Responsibility to Each Other (Gen. 1:28)

God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to multiply, and to replenish and subdue the earth. In doing so, they would enjoy the “privilege of participating in [earth’s] creation,” and the increase of humanity’s social circle through procreation.

The final command to “subdue” can pose some trouble if taken out of biblical context. Typically, “to subdue” means to “overcome” or “bring under control.” However, in this context, to subdue grants humans “the right to utilize . . . the vast resources of the earth” from agriculture to mining and even scientific discovery. This implies that our proper use of the earth’s assets will benefit both present and subsequent generations.

Responsibility to the World (Gen. 1:28; Rev. 11:18)

In the Bible, “dominion” can be seen in several contexts: (1) God’s rule over His creation (Ps. 103:22); (2) political rule (1 Kings 9:19); (3) enslavement to sin (Rom. 6:14); and (4) power and lordship (Eph. 1:21). God intended that humanity would rule over creation. We were to become God’s representative
or viceroy over this planet. God also gave us the responsibility to manage His creation and to protect it against pollution. This is such an awesome responsibility that judgment will be meted out to those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18).

**Turning Profit Into Loss (Genesis 3)**

Sad to say, our first parents disobeyed God, and so were exiled from Eden. “When man cast off the dominion that God had placed over him, he lost the dominion that God had put under him.” The Bible acknowledges Satan as the “god” and “prince of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30). No wonder he sought an audience with God and His “sons” in heaven (Job 1:6). Based on this alone, it seems as if the world is doomed to Satan’s rule.

**Hope for Today (Ps. 8:5, 6; Luke 19:10)**

All is not lost. We are still treated as humans created with “glory and honor” and possessing “dominion over the works of [God’s] hands” (Ps. 8:5, 6). And Christ came to redeem us from our enemy (Jer. 31:11; Rev. 5:9). “By His vicarious sacrifice, He made possible the restoration of all that man had lost” including dominion over the earth. And so Jesus declares, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

**Avoiding Extremes (Eccles. 7:17, 18)**

Our care of the world should be balanced. We must not be so earth conscious that we forget our responsibilities to our fellow human beings (Matt. 22:39; 28:18–20). In the same vein, we should not neglect our God-given responsibility to “dress and keep” the earth He has given us (Gen. 2:15). As Solomon said, “It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes” (Eccles. 7:18, NIV).

**REACT**

1. Does the theory of evolution assist or detract from our responsibilities to God’s earth? Explain your answer.
2. How can you balance caring for the earth with your duty to spread the gospel?

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6. Ibid., p. 216.
9. Ibid., 83.
“Wherever we turn, we hear the voice of God and behold His handiwork. From the solemn roll of the deep-toned thunder and old ocean’s ceaseless roar, to the glad songs that make the forests vocal with melody, nature’s ten thousand voices speak His praise. In earth and sea and sky, with their marvelous tint and color, varying in gorgeous contrast or blended in harmony, we behold His glory. The everlasting hills tell of His power. The trees that wave their green banners in the sunlight, and the flowers in their delicate beauty, point to their Creator. The living green that carpets the brown earth tells of God’s care for the humblest of His creatures. The caves of the sea and the depths of the earth reveal His treasures. He who placed the pearls in the ocean and the amethyst and chrysolite among the rocks is a lover of the beautiful. The sun rising in the heavens is a representative of Him who is the life and light of all that He has made. All the brightness and beauty that adorn the earth and light up the heavens speak of God.”¹

“God never meant that man should have nothing to do.”

“God gave Adam and Eve employment. Eden was the school for our first parents, and God was their instructor. They learned how to till the soil and to care for the things which the Lord had planted. They did not regard labor as degrading, but as a great blessing. Industry was a pleasure to Adam and Eve. The fall of Adam changed the order of things; the earth was cursed: but the decree that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, was not given as a curse. Through faith and hope, labor was to be a blessing to the descendants of Adam and Eve. God never meant that man should have nothing to do.”²

How we take care of this planet is not a one-time environmental protest, or the wearing of a “please recycle” T-shirt. It is a daily act of stewardship.

**REACT**

1. We are called to be in the world, but not of it. Should we then take part in legal petitions and protests that speak against environmental degradation, such as coal mining, whaling, and deforestation? Explain your answer.

2. How can you be a steward of God’s earth in your daily life?

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It’s time to look for your first job. Or maybe you want to change directions with your career and look for something more purposeful. Imagine reading through the help wanted section of your local newspaper or Craigslist where three job openings catch your eye.

**A love for others . . . should be clearly visible.**

**National Parks Director.** Individual needed to coordinate the efforts of the National Park system to protect and restore the natural beauty and splendor of some of the nation’s most beautiful and pristine locations. Applicants must demonstrate a strong conviction, resolution, and love for the environment. For special job qualifications, read Genesis 1:28 and Matthew 25:14–30.

**Veterinary Staff.** Regional pet clinic is in need of veterinary emergency medical staff to serve the area’s animal population. The individual will coordinate and direct emergency rescue team operations as called upon to save animals from a number of life-threatening situations. A love of animals, an in-depth knowledge of their behaviors, anatomy, and physiology are critical. Beliefs of outstanding candidates include those found in Exodus 23:5, 12; Proverbs 12:10; and Luke 14:5.

**TV Show Host for The Biggest Loser.** Program host needed for popular TV show that focuses on helping overweight individuals become healthier through exercise and a healthful diet. A love for others, coupled with a life-style that reflects a love for one’s self in the caring for one’s own body should be clearly visible. Applicant must have a positive, encouraging nature, along with a desire and appreciation for helping others to see what they may become as described in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20.

**REACT**

1. For which of these jobs would you most likely apply?
2. How might your beliefs influence the way you’d perform your duties?
3. What qualifications do you have or could develop that would make you the top applicant?
People argue about whether our natural environment is damaged and getting worse or whether it is just showing normal wear and tear, and therefore we shouldn’t worry. This has become a divisive and, at times, an irrationally argued topic in politics. For some, political positions hold sway above the actual situation. Fortunately, Christians can stand apart from the political shenanigans and consider a godly perspective on the planet that is our present home. In particular, Christians can apply principles founded on God’s own character to help them understand how to be good stewards of His creation.

There’s no doubt that God created the world and then gave humans dominion over it. But what does that mean? Do we have unlimited control? Did He hand over the keys and say, “It’s all yours. I don’t care what you do with it”?

Because God created human beings in His own image, we can expect that we’d be designed to handle creation in the same way He did when He formed it. This suggests that in our consumption of earthly resources, we would build rather than destroy, tend rather than pillage, plant and reap rather than slash and burn. We would take care of what is in the world just as God took great care in creating it.

One of the ways the theory of evolution fails as a theory of origins is what we can see happening in life processes. God clearly designed these processes for productive sustentation rather than depletive exploitation. The theme of fruitfulness and reproduction is one of the clearest themes in the Creation account. It does not suggest that we avoid using resources, because God gave them to us to use for our good. God’s loving nature, however, would engender the kind of responsible, constructive use of resources that would sustain them for future use.

As God says in Psalm 50, the world and everything in it are His. We did not make any part of it. He did. We are the managers, the caretakers of His world. We have no other choice but to care for the world in the most responsible ways we can.

**REACT**

1. How did a recent (50–100 years) discovery of environmental damage become an issue for Christians?
2. Do you feel as though you’re jumping on some secular bandwagon when you take up environmental causes? Why, or why not?
CONCLUDE

God created the world and everything in it. The first few chapters of Genesis tell us this quite unambiguously. And if we fail to understand these verses, John 1:3, several thousand years later, informs us that “through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (NIV). Everything God does is important, therefore His creation is important. And from the very beginning, He wanted it to be important to us as well. As followers of God, we are called to care for the natural habitat of humankind and the animals as if it mattered. Because it does.

CONSIDER

• Listening to or singing “Morning Has Broken,” a hymn about the God-given beauty and glory of nature (no. 44 in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal or http://www.streetdirectory.com/lyricadvisor/song/lla/morning_has_broken/).
• Planning a devotional or a worship based on the theme of stewardship of the natural world.
• Searching the Internet for organizations or individuals working in positive ways for the preservation of the natural environment, and considering how you can become involved.
• Creating a nature-themed computer background or screensaver that includes a rendering of Genesis 1:28 or a similar passage. Make it available to others.
• Thinking about ways you can integrate concern for God’s creation into your daily life and habits. For example, how can you reduce your dependence on plastic shopping bags?
• Writing to media outlets or elected officials about any concerns you might have regarding the local environment. You don’t have to be an ideologue, but you can make yourself heard.

CONNECT

Romans 8:22; Revelation 11:18.
Sabbath: A Gift From Eden

“The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day”

(Matt. 12:8).
Introduction

Do Superman and Wonder Woman Need Sabbath Rest?

When God created the earth, He had in mind a special gift for His people—the gift of time. Nothing says more about His love for us than His desire to set aside a special time to be with us. Time is such a special commodity. Once it has passed, we cannot do anything to bring it back.

In the last days, Satan’s most furious attacks will be on the matter of worship.

The seventh-day Sabbath is not a day to be remembered and kept only by Jews or any other selected group of people living in any specific period of time. God intends the Sabbath for everyone, and it will never go away. ‘As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’ declares the Lord, ‘so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the Lord” (Isa. 66:22, 23, NIV). Yes, God’s people will keep the Sabbath for eternity in heaven.

God created the Sabbath not only because we need both physical and mental rest, but also for it to be a sign between us and Him. “‘You must observe my Sabbaths. “This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy” ’” (Exod. 31:13, NIV). The Sabbath is a sign that He is our God and we are His people whom He has chosen and set apart.

In the last days, Satan’s most furious attacks will be on the matter of worship—whom we worship and when we worship. Satan wants to keep us so busy with our secular activities that we will believe we have no time for Sabbath rest. And even if we do go to church on the Sabbath, he will attempt to distract our minds and hearts from the real purpose of the Sabbath. He will try to deceive us into thinking that we are super men and wonder women who need no Sabbath rest and no God.

Let us cherish this wonderful blessing of the Sabbath that God has given to us and strive to fully understand the purpose of Sabbath so we may enjoy its benefits.

Danilla Tham, Singapore
Everything in the world has its own beginning and ending. This is not rocket science. Even the Bible deals with this truth. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (NIV). Even this well-known Bible text is loaded with meaning. As we notice carefully, the word *heavens* is in plural form. Because of all the NASA telescopes, as well as the Hubble telescope, we have learned that there are many heavens out there. God, however, told His people this long before telescopes existed.

The beginning was not just any beginning. It was the beginning of all beginnings because the Creator God linked everything together. He created the world, time, days, animals, human beings, and of course, the Sabbath. All of these are intricately interrelated with each other.

**Sabbath rest isn’t just any rest.**

**The Beginning of the Day (Gen. 1:3–5)**

Genesis 1:3–5 reads, “God said, ‘Let there be light,’’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day” (NIV). Consider most jobs today. They all start when the morning (light) comes and usually end when the light is gone (darkness). But the interesting thing about it is that with God a day begins and ends with the setting of the sun. The simple natural law is that if we don’t have a good night’s sleep, we may not have a good next day.

**The Beginning of Marriage (Mark 10:6–9)**

Have you ever wondered why marriages are falling apart and being redefined so rapidly nowadays? The answer is simple. It is found in Mark 10:6–9: “‘At the beginning of creation God “made them male and female.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate’ ” (NIV). Marriage, like the Sabbath, was instituted by God. And the Sabbath was the first full day of Adam and Eve’s married life! So we learn that the Sabbath can refresh the special relationship married couples enjoy with one another.
The Beginning of the Rest (Gen. 2:2, 3)

The word Sabbath means “rest.” Genesis 2:2, 3 says, “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (NIV). Now we must be clear about one fact: God did not create anything on the Sabbath. Instead, He made it a day of rest, a blessed and holy day. The Sabbath is what it is because He rested from all His work and blessed it. If you don’t want to call it the “Sabbath,” fine. You may call it “the rest and blessed holy day”!

The Beginning of Earthly Relationships (Gen. 1:24–31; 2:1–3)

Adam and Eve rested with God on the very first Sabbath day. Why would they need to rest when they had just been created? Because Sabbath rest isn’t just any rest. Sabbath rest involves a relationship with God, an entire day that is about nothing else but our relationship with Him. We all know that relationships take time to build. So the first thing God did after creating Adam and Eve was to spend an entire day with them.

The Beginning of the End (Exod. 20:8–11)

John 1:1, 2 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (NIV). Second Peter 3:3–7 reads, “They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (NIV). Revelation 12:17 states, “The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Finally, in Exodus 20:8–11, we learn that God included the Sabbath rest as one of His Ten Commandments. Taken together, these texts help us to understand the major role the Sabbath plays in God’s economy of time, including the time of the end.

REACT

1. What lifestyle changes can you make in order to have a more joyful life? How can keeping the Sabbath help you with this?
2. How can you better keep the Sabbath so that it enhances your relationship with God?
3. What blessings have you enjoyed because you have been faithful in keeping the Sabbath?

Benjamin Kipzanang, Singapore
“The Sabbath was hallowed at creation. . . .
“All things were created by the Son of God. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. . . . All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.’ John 1:1–3. And since the Sabbath is a memorial of the work of creation, it is a token of the love and power of Christ.”1

“All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind.”

“God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.”2

“All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life.”3

“Great blessings are enfolded in the observance of the Sabbath, and God desires that the Sabbath day shall be to us a day of joy. There was joy at the institution of the Sabbath. God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All things that He had made He pronounced ‘very good.’ Genesis 1:31. Heaven and earth were filled with rejoicing.”4

“The fourth commandment alone of all the ten contains the seal of the great Lawgiver, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Those who obey this commandment take upon themselves His name, and all the blessings it involves are theirs.”5

**REACT**
Other than taking nature walks, how can we experience the Sabbath with joy?

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4. Ibid., p. 349.
5. Ibid., p. 350.

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Jimmy Quek, Singapore
Is the seventh day Saturday or Sunday?

The internationally accepted calendar is the Gregorian calendar, introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. It is essentially a reform of the Julian calendar, introduced in 45 B.C. by Julius Caesar. While the names of the days of the week have varied through the ages, the seven-day week cycle has been continuously maintained since the establishment of ancient cultures. So while the calendars of certain countries may start their week on a Monday, Saturday is still the seventh day of the week, making it the biblical Sabbath.

The religious observance of Sunday . . . was cemented in A.D. 325.

Why then do so many Christians view Sunday as the day of rest and worship? The answer can be traced to Roman times. In A.D. 135, the Jews revolted against their Roman rulers. Consequently, Emperor Hadrian outlawed Judaism, paying particular attention to unique Jewish teachings, including Sabbath keeping. Christians, previously viewed as a subset of Judaism, thus felt they had to distance themselves from the Jews to escape persecution. One obvious way to do this was to refrain from observing the biblical Sabbath.

So many turned to Sunday, quite possibly because of the influence of sun worship at that time. The cult of Sol Invictus, the “Invincible Sun,” was the dominant Roman religion during the second century A.D.

Because the sun’s day (Sunday) was the most important day of the week in popular Roman culture at the time, it may have influenced Christians with a pagan background to also adopt Sunday. It not only proved their separation from Judaism, it showed their alliance with Roman practices, promising legal recognition of their religion, unlike Judaism.

This separation from the Jews and the religious observance of Sunday as a day of worship was cemented in A.D. 325 when Christian convert, Emperor Constantine, wrote to the Council of Nicea (an attempt to reach a consensus in Christian beliefs), saying, “We ought not therefore to have anything in common with the Jew. . . . We desire, dearest brethren to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jew.”*

**REACT**

What would you have done if you were an early Christian who was faced with the decision to reject the biblical Sabbath to avoid persecution? Why?

Observing the Sabbath is a visible sign between God and us that He is our God and we are His covenant people (Ezek. 20:12). It is a day that had been set aside and sanctified by God at Creation. It is not merely a day of rest, nor is it a day of dos and don’ts. God’s intention is that the Sabbath should be a day of renewal.

How often do we neglect or forget the true meaning of our Sabbath rest when we get caught up with all we have to accomplish during the week, or when we focus too much on what we can or cannot do on the Sabbath day. Then, when the Sabbath comes around, we either treat it as any other day by rushing around, or we swing to the other extreme and do nothing.

The Sabbath should be a day of renewal.

How do we achieve balance in Sabbath keeping? How can we prepare our hearts for this special day on the other days of the week, so when Sabbath rolls around, we will be prepared to observe it the way God intended? Following are some ideas.

**Put God first.** Start out each day with God as your focus. When we put Him first in our lives, everything else will just fall into place (Matt. 6:33).

**Learn from the Ultimate Example.** Jesus healed people any day of the week, wherever He went. He also listened to people and preached wherever He was, seven days a week. But He also spent time alone with God away from the crowds (Matt. 14:22, 23). We can be prepared for our Sabbath rest through daily prayer, through meditating on and studying God’s Word, and through seeking guidance from Him in our daily activities.

**Be prepared.** God provided the Israelites with a double portion of manna on Friday so they would not need to be concerned about preparing food on the Sabbath. Likewise, we can be ready for the Sabbath by preparing certain foods ahead of time and by making sure our Sabbath clothes are ready for us to wear (Exod. 16:23).

**Practice makes perfect.** Practice, practice, and practice some more. Keep on repeating these steps until preparing for the Sabbath and keeping it as God intends becomes second nature.

**REACT**

1. Why do you think it is important to be prepared for the Sabbath?
2. How can we avoid being complacent about preparing for the Sabbath?
3. How can we prepare our hearts for the Sabbath?

*Pan Shuqin, Singapore*
A friend of mine once mentioned to me how a colleague envied her because she had a mandatory rest day every Saturday. Not that this friend was causing difficulties for others by taking Saturdays off and leaving the work for everyone else. She finished what tasks she had so she could rest in the embrace of her Creator Father.

_Six days are worth more than seven._

Some of us might argue that not everyone is lucky enough to be in my friend’s situation. Some of us might feel that we need to put food on the table for our families, pay the rent or tuition, and mow the lawn. But have we really tried honoring God first to see how it works out?

Is it really wrong to work on the Sabbath? After all, even Jesus worked on the Sabbath (John 5), but only to do His Father’s work. If the work you’re doing brings you an awareness of God’s presence and allows you to appreciate His work, then by all means, do it! But if we do not even make the effort to honor God on His sanctified day, how can we expect to have a positive relationship with Him?

My pastor brought up the idea that six days are worth more than seven. At first, this sounded ridiculous. What he meant, though, was that we can accomplish more in six days when we honor God on the seventh day than what we can do in seven days in our own strength.

How we approach the Sabbath signals how we approach God. Out of convenience? Out of sacrifice? Out of obedience? Out of love for Him and what He has done to save us? Look to the Sabbath with anticipation! Appreciate God’s work instead of ours. After six days of hectic living, take a day to slow down and rest in God’s comfort. Even He rested! How about you?

**REACT**

1. How do you view the Sabbath? Is it a burden or a joy? Why?
2. Think of ways your friends in church can help you in keeping the Sabbath.
CONCLUDE

The most valuable gift we can give to anyone is our time and undivided attention. When God created humankind, He gave us both of these gifts in the form of the Sabbath—24 hours each week when we can enjoy fellowship with Him and experience physical, mental, and, most important, spiritual renewal. The Sabbath is a sign that He is our Creator God and that we are His chosen people. It is a weekly reminder that He is unchanging and unchangeable and worthy of all honor, worship, and praise.

CONSIDER

• Interviewing five Seventh-day Adventists, asking them about the benefits of the Sabbath. Then interview five non-Adventists, asking them what they think of the concept of the Sabbath. How do the responses from each group compare and contrast with one another?
• Using a concordance, look up ten references to the Sabbath from the Old Testament and ten references from the New Testament. Note something new about the Sabbath that you learned from these references.
• Looking up the meaning of the word rest in a dictionary. How do the definitions you find there compare and contrast with the concept of a day of rest?
• Planning a special Sabbath activity with some friends that will provide opportunities for worship and fellowship—two essential elements of the Sabbath.
• Cutting out a paper heart. On one side, write words describing how God views the Sabbath. On the reverse side, write words describing your experience of observing the Sabbath.
• Making a plan to organize your week so that when the Sabbath arrives you are ready and not too tired to enjoy it. Consider how such a plan will enhance your Sabbath worship experience.
• Inviting someone who does not usually celebrate Sabbath to experience Sabbath with you.

CONNECT


Richard M. Davidson, A Love Song for the Sabbath (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 1988).

Audrey Andersson, Lindesberg, Sweden
Creation and the Gospel

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive”

(1 Cor. 15:22, NIV).
One afternoon during a student camp meeting, we engaged our discussion leader in a string of questions about Creation, Christ, and the gospel. It went like this:

**Question:** What would have happened if God had never created humans?
**Answer:** Then there would have been no sin.

**Question:** What would have happened if there had been no sin?
**Answer:** Then Jesus would not have had to come to earth to die for sinful humans.

**Question:** But God did create humans. They did sin. So Jesus did come to save us. But what if Jesus hadn’t come to save us?
**Answer:** Then sinful humans could not be saved. They would die with no hope of anything better. And God’s love for us would be incomplete.

These questions and their answers continue to resonate with me. Take Creation, for instance. God did brilliant work for six days. The variety of all that He created is staggering. However, He knew that what He had created would be incomplete without humans. So He created them in His image and instructed them to take care of all that He had created. God loved humans from day one of their existence. As the work of His hands, He placed them in His prized Garden of Eden, where He provided them with everything they needed and could possibly want. Most important, God gave humans freedom of choice. Without that, they could not truly love Him.

We don’t know how long Adam and Eve lived the perfect life in the Garden of Eden. But we do know that when they both fell for Satan’s lie, that perfect life came to an abrupt end and sin became a cruel reality. Fortunately, we also know that because of His love, God did not abandon Adam and Eve. Even though they had to leave their perfect Garden home, He gave them a second lease on life through the promise of a Savior, His very own Son. Christ would come to restore the relationship between God and humans.

This week we will study how, through the Savior’s grace, we can be restored from the Fall. We also will look into our past sinful lives, learn about what happens to us after we accept Christ as our Savior, and what it means to become a new creation in Christ.

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*Jane A. Felix, Homa Bay, Kenya*
Sin caused a vast separation between humans and God. After God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden, they had little left to enjoy. Their transgression would lead to their deaths and cause great changes in nature. Future generations would know great heartache and sorrow. The human race hung precariously on the edge of extinction.

“Perhaps we need a variety of views of Christ’s work.”

However, God demonstrated His love in a way that no one else ever could. He allowed His only Son to come to earth, where He would die as a sacrifice for all of humanity’s sins. Christ’s death brings justification. When we accept His death on our behalf, we stand in divine favor and rejoice in the hope of God’s glory.

Justification is a result of God’s grace. Some people may argue that God could have just abandoned His creation as soon as things went sour. However, out of love for what and for whom He had created, He chose to offer us His own atoning sacrifice for our sins. Thus, the strength, power, and beauty the first humans relinquished could be regained. One theologian observes, “Perhaps we need a variety of views of Christ’s work. A great natural wonder like the Grand Canyon of the Himalayas invites us to look at it from many vantage points. It never ceases to impress us. And no one perspective captures its grandeur to a far greater degree. Christ’s accomplishments defy our powers of description. The more we reflect upon the meaning of the cross, the more amazing it becomes. God’s condescension in assuming humanity and his mysterious willingness to bear our sins will stir our emotions forever. Eternity will not be time enough to plumb the depths of love revealed at Calvary.”*

Because God reconciles us to Himself through Christ, we are saved from God’s wrath toward sin. Our future is secure as long as we accept Christ and allow Him to live in our hearts.

**REACT**

1. When we accept Christ, how sure can we be that our future is secured?
2. How can we deal with sin and sinners in our dorms, households, communities, or places of work without becoming victims of sin?

The Origin of the Problem (Gen. 3:9–15, 21)

The book of Genesis expresses the Bible’s main focus—the fall of humans and their redemption. Genesis 3:9–15 gives a clear account of God’s first reaction to Adam and Eve’s sin. By asking Adam where he was (verse 9), God was hoping “to bring him to confession.”1 God’s concern that humans confess their sins is just as strong today as it was then. When He asks us where we are, He yearns that we also confess our sins to Him.

Adam’s response to God was disappointing: “I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (verse 10). When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they immediately became ashamed of their bodies and wanted to hide. Ever since, human beings have been “hiding” from each other and from God.

Although Adam and Eve had strayed from the path God had put them on, He did not abandon them. He made “coats of skins, and clothed them” (verse 21). These clothes “were a constant reminder of their lost innocence, of death as the wages of sin, and of the promised Lamb of God, who would by His own vicarious death take way the sins of the world.”2

Sin and Its Results (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12–14; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22, 26)

God pronounced a curse on the serpent, on the ground, and on Adam and Eve. They and their descendants would henceforth have to toil for their food and clothing until the day they died. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

However, God in His love gives us another chance to live eternally. He offers us His Son. You and I deserve death, but “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Just as “by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21, 22). Christ emerged victorious at Calvary. When we accept Him as our Savior, we are made alive in Him.
Our Past Sinful Lives (Rom. 5:6–11)

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Sin weakens us and robs us of our spiritual strength. Then we become ungodly. When this happens, we become afraid of God and move away from His presence. Without intervention, this gap grows ever wider; thus, Christ came to earth as one of us. How amazing that God’s Son would leave heaven so that through His blood, we could be reconciled to His Father!

Our Sin-Bearing Substitute (Matt. 27:46–50)

Christ’s death on the cross helps us to reflect on the magnitude of our sins. His cruel death occurred so that we might regain eternal life. When we accept His death as our own, we are reunited with God, and the mystery of sin is offset by the mystery of grace. In the end, “the story of how God defeated the enemy is surely the most splendid paradox you will ever come across. For he did not horsewhip anyone, begin guerilla warfare, or issue intimidating threats. Instead, he defeated the enemy by an act of powerlessness, by dying at the cross. The testimony of the first believers is that Jesus, son of God ‘Freed us from our sins by His blood’ ”

Our Prospects as New Creations (Ps. 51:10; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:5–10)

Because Christ died, we can have a “clean heart,” and a “right spirit” (Ps. 51:10). A clean heart will help us to be receptive to God’s Word, and a right spirit will direct us in God’s statutes. The Bible describes some of the sinful ways in which we once lived (Col. 3:5–10), but when we accept Christ as our Savior, we “put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (verse 10).

REACT

1. What do you personally need to do to become a new creation in Christ?
2. Christ defeated death on the cross. So why do we still fear death?
3. How would you describe a “clean heart” and a “right spirit”?

2. Ibid., p. 235.

Tony Philip Oreso, Nairobi, Kenya
“To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, ‘It’s finished,’ had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ’s victory.

“Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.

“It was God’s purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security.”

“It was a being of wonderful power and glory that had set himself against God. . . .

“God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan’s government. The Lord’s principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God’s government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

“It was God’s purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop principles which were the foundation of his system of government. . . .

“Satan led men into sin, and the plan of redemption was put in operation. For four thousand years, Christ was working for man’s uplifting, and Satan for his ruin and degradation. And the heavenly universe beheld it all.

“When Jesus came into the world, Satan’s power was turned against Him. From the time when He appeared as a babe in Bethlehem, the usurper worked to bring about His destruction. . . . But he was defeated. He could not lead Jesus into sin. He could not discourage Him, or drive Him from a work He had come on earth to do. From the desert to Calvary, the storm of Satan’s wrath beat upon Him, but the more mercilessly it fell, the more firmly did the Son of God cling to the hand of His Father, and press on in the bloodstained path. All the efforts of Satan to oppress and overcome Him only brought out in a purer light His spotless character.”*

In Colossians 3:5–10, we read Paul’s instructions about becoming a new creation in Christ. His words are no less important today, for we all have characteristics belonging to our earthly nature that we need to “put to death” (verse 5, NIV). Perhaps we are involved in sexual immorality, gossip, anger, drugs, or cheating on class assignments. The list is endless. What are you involved in that you need to stop? Don’t you long to be a new creation in Christ? You can be by following Paul’s advice to the Colossians: “You must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (verses 8–10, NIV).

Our new selves will be characterized by the following traits (verses 12–14):

Compassion. Think about how compassionate Christ was, how He helped the sick and needy. Each day for a week, show compassion to someone by doing something that meets a need that person has. Ideally, showing compassion will become a habit of yours.

Humility. Do not think that you are better than others. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. When we accept Christ as that Savior, we become brothers and sisters with others who have accepted Him. We are family, regardless of what part of the world we come from.

Kindness and gentleness. In addition to humility, these two characteristics help us to peacefully coexist with all types of people. Let us be kind and gentle in our dealings with everyone, and to animals and other aspects of the environment that God created for us to enjoy.

Perseverance. With temptations all around, pray daily for strength to persevere until Christ returns.

Love. “Over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (verse 14, NIV).

**REACT**

1. Which of the above traits do you need the most help with?
2. What can you tell people who think it is impossible for them to develop these traits because they are too sinful?
God never meant for us to die. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, His perfect order was destroyed. From that moment on, humans have been fearful that death might strike at any time. Even when life is going well for someone, death often creeps in to spoil his or her pleasure.

**With Christ, I have hope.**

However, death can also be viewed from a spiritual perspective. People who disdain biblical wisdom are as good as dead even though they might live for a long time. Conversely, people who discern what Christ has accomplished for them on the cross have peace and hope, even though they might be facing an early grave.

That’s why Christ’s death makes more sense to me than any other thing in life. Without Calvary, I am destined to die both physically and spiritually and go off into oblivion. But with Christ, I have hope. I have been redeemed by His blood, which was shed on the cross, and I am transformed into His image through the power of His Holy Spirit living in me. I know there’s a crown waiting for me after fighting the good fight of faith.

That Christ would die was inconceivable to His closest followers. How could the Creator of all things, the Son of God, succumb to death? However, the Old Testament prophesies pointing to the Cross were fulfilled. As a result, I am redeemed from sin and its death. I have hope that on the Judgment Day, Christ’s blood will cover me, and I will be found not guilty. I do not grieve like people who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13) because the “Christ who was raised from the dead was the same person as the one who a few days earlier died on the cross. He arose with a glorified body which was no longer subject to the laws of nature in the way our present mortal bodies are, but which nevertheless, possessed continuity with the human form he had prior to his death and resurrection. He was the same person, recognizable by his outward appearance, his voice and his gestures. That gives us good reason to conclude that in our new glorious bodies, we will be recognized by those we knew in this life and will enjoy the life beyond with us.”

**REACT**

How has Christ’s victory over death made your victory over death possible?

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Dan Odhiambo, Nairobi, Kenya
CONCLUDE

God loves us so much and He has such incredible plans for us. However, Satan brought sin upon us, which causes us to be separated from God. Just as a toy car with a depleted battery does not run, so we cannot function the way we were created to be because of sin. Jesus, however, can bring power to our lives so that the plan of salvation can do its wondrous work in us. There is nothing we can do to make God love us. He already does. He is just waiting to bestow His grace upon us if we come to Him with a contrite heart, longing for salvation.

CONSIDER

- Listing as many reasons as you can as to why God did not destroy Satan and his angels right after they rebelled.
- Reflecting on the goodness, mercy, and love of God in sparing us when we sin. Record these thoughts in your journal.
- Answering these three questions relating to sin and our relationship with God: (1) What have I learned? (2) So what difference does it make? (3) Now what can I do with what I’ve learned?
- Interviewing a friend or a person you consider to be a mentor about a time when she or he went through a spiritual battle. What lessons did that person learn about drawing closer to God and about His power to save?
- Drawing a mind map. Label the center box “New Creation” and put subordinate ideas in surrounding circles. Write additional ideas about the subordinate ideas in boxes that extend from the circles.
- Listening to or singing along with the song “Can Jesus Be Seen in Me?” by the Emmanuel Quartet: http://www.emmanuelquartet.org/?section=music-group-3.

CONNECT

1 Corinthians 1:4–9.
Philip Yancey, What’s So Amazing About Grace? chap. 4.

Prema Gaikwad, Silang, Philippines
Creation, Again

“In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells”

(2 Pet. 3:13, NIV).
After God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, cherubim guarded access to the perfect home. How sad the scene must have been as the first man and woman, God’s own creations, stood outside the gate as exiles. On this dark day, did the fallen couple plead with the angels to let them return home? Later, when one of their sons killed his brother, did Eve exclaim in despair, “I don’t want to stay out here! I want to return to my garden home”? But the doors to their paradise were closed to them for good.

Are you in search of something new?

Sin is horrible, and even the perfect Garden that God designed and created was blighted by the enemy and the thoughtless choices of the first two humans. But wait! Let us not forget the first lesson of God’s grace given to the erring couple by God Himself! Genesis 3:21 tells us that He clothed Adam and Eve with “coats of skin.” These “skins were a constant reminder of... the promised Lamb of God, who would by His own vicarious death take away the sins of the world.” This event, which took place outside the gates of paradise lost, brings hope to us today. It points to the total restoration of God’s creation, including us. Jesus says, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5) Not only will nature be renewed, but also the heart, mind, and impulses of each person who eagerly awaits the new earth.

Are you in search of something new? When we win something or receive a gift, we are excited. But as time passes and what we’ve won or the gift we’ve received has grown old, we want something new or a more modern version of what has aged. We want to work with the new 8.0 rather than with the old 7.0. This is the cycle on earth. All things new become outdated with the rapid passage of time.

I cannot imagine what the 2.0 version of the earth will be like. But we do know it will never need updates or recalls. We know it will be eternal. Let’s look forward to that day, expecting, just as Adam and Eve expected, the day the gates will open and everything in the blink of an eye, will be renewed. This week, dream along with me of this wonderful new earth, as “the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Rev. 22:17).

Back to the Beginning (Rev. 21:1–5)

John saw “a new heaven and new earth” (Rev. 21:1). After 1,000 years in heaven and the purification of the earth by fire, the redeemed will witness the earth made new. Here the word new is kainos, which means “fresh,” “different as to nature” as opposed to “old,” “ancient,” “worn out,” and “marred.”1 The new earth will not be created as it was in the beginning (ex nihilo). Instead, it will be “renewed, renovated, and cleansed by fire from all defilement.”2 From inside the Holy City, we will see the indescribable scenes of atmospheric, geological, and biological renewing of the only planet in the universe that was once degraded by sin. In the new earth, God will dwell with us (verse 3). Throughout history, He has sought ways to be with His people, such as the sanctuary (Exod. 25:8), Jesus (John 1:1, 14), and the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–17). In the new earth, God’s original desire to be with humankind will be fulfilled.

God is preparing the unimaginable for those who love Him.

From Dust to Life (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Isa. 26:19; John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:52–58)

At the second coming of Christ, “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:52). We will not become immaterial spirits or intelligent “clouds” as dualistic philosophies suppose. We will still each have a physical body, but that body will be as God originally intended it to be. We will plant and eat from what we plant and we will build houses (Isa. 65:21). With heavenly, incorruptible bodies (1 Cor. 15:40, 52–58) we will no longer be susceptible to diseases, aging, and death. Health and longevity will be sustained by the tree of life (Rev. 22:1, 2).

Owners Again (John 12:31; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; 2 Tim. 2:11, 12; Rev. 5:10; 12:10)

After the Fall, humankind lost control of the earth. The animals became aggressive, and humans had to work by the sweat of their brows to survive. Satan exalted himself as prince of this world, usurping the position of God Himself. But Jesus came to change all that. He became one of us to succeed where we failed, to pay the price for our sins and to destroy the “accuser” once and for all (Rev. 12:10). After Jesus’ victorious death on
the cross, all authority was given to Him “in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18), and the children of God received the right to reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:11, 12). During the millennium, we will rule with Him in heaven and judge the fate of wicked men and angels (1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20:4). God’s books will be opened, and we will understand why the wicked were not saved and that His judgment upon them was fair. Thus, every doubt about God’s character will be silenced.

Eco-friendship (Isa. 11:6–9; 65:25)

“The wolf will live with the lamb . . . and a little child will lead them” (Isa. 11:6, NIV). This is a portrait of one of the most radical differences between the earth now and the earth made new. Life in the new earth will be based on cooperation rather than on competition. “Water will gush forth in the wilderness / and streams in the desert. / The burning sand will become a pool, / the thirsty ground bubbling springs” (Isa. 35:6, 7, NIV). “The lion will eat straw like the ox,” and “the infant will play near the hole of the cobra” (Isa. 11:7, 8, NIV).

“Messiah’s kingdom will see a change in the animal kingdom as well as in human beings. Bloodshed and cruelty will be no more. The basic instincts of the animal world will be entirely transformed. The law of God’s kingdom will be the law of life and love. Neither death, nor sickness, nor pain will be known there in any form.” What a joy it will be to live in such an eco-friendly environment.

Forever United in God’s Love (John 14:1–3; Rev. 22:3–5)

There will be no sanctuary in the new earth “because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Rev. 21:22, NIV). We will worship the Lord face-to-face, and the science of love will endure (1 Cor. 13:12, 13). In the new earth, we will study the mysteries of the universe. However, our greatest pleasure will be to learn every day about God’s love—a love that brought us into existence, that urged Christ to shed His blood on our behalf, a love that touched our hearts in a sinful world and that led us to redemption. God is preparing the unimaginable for those who love Him (1 Cor. 2:9).

REACT

1. Why is the first creation a guarantee of the second creation?
2. Some people don’t like the idea of living forever in heaven. What do we need to say to these people to help them understand what heaven and the new earth will really be like?
3. What specific feature or features of nature do you look forward to being “redeemed”?

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2. Ibid.

Diogo Cavalcanti, Tatui, SP, Brazil
God gave many visions to Ellen White about heaven and the new earth. She wrote, “Let your imagination picture the home of the saved, and remember that it will be more glorious than your brightest imagination can portray.”

“We are homeward bound.”

In eternity, “all the perplexities of life’s experience will then be made plain. Where to us have appeared only confusion and disappointment, broken purposes and thwarted plans, will be seen a grand, overruling, victorious purpose, a divine harmony.”

“Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part.”

“Heaven is a home where sympathy is alive in every heart, expressed in every look. Love reigns there. There are no jarring elements, no discord or contentions or war of words.”

“The loves and sympathies which God Himself has planted in the soul shall there find truest and sweetest exercise.”

Imagine traveling to the most distant places in the universe and meeting the inhabitants of all the worlds created by God. “Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar. . . . The children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. . . . With undimmed vision they gaze upon the glory of creation—suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity.”

Boredom will not be a problem in the new earth. “There every power will be developed, every capability increased.”

“As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase.”

“Heaven is where Christ is. Heaven would not be heaven to those who love Christ, if He were not there.”

This is only the beginning of the story. The best is yet to come.

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6. Ibid., pp. 677, 678.
Throughout this quarter we have been studying the creative acts of God and the glorious power revealed through His works. The care and the love with which He created the world and humans teaches us that He assigns great value to what He creates. But it is the grace He freely gives to the erring sinner that truly shows the extent of the value He places upon us.

The Word of God fills us with hope for a noble future.

How sad that we are still here, hostages of this sinful world, where absolutely everything deteriorates (Matthew 24; 2 Tim. 3:1–7). Today’s social and moral contexts show us that “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19, NIV). It doesn’t matter that humans were made perfect. We are all now suffering from the results of sin.

In Psalm 90, Moses wrote about our impermanence. Our years are short and pass by quickly. That is why the biblical emphasis is not on Eden’s creation, but on salvation through Jesus. It is only through Him that we can recover the status we originally had before sin entered our world. Although our condition is currently chaotic and desperate, the Word of God fills us with hope for a noble future. Yes, there is a blessed hope (Titus 2:13).

Jesus promised His disciples that He would return (John 14:1–4). Are you ready? Now more than ever, we need to cling to that promise. The plan of redemption is almost complete. And when it is, the earth will be restored to its original condition. Until then, because we have Christ, we have a purpose. We are committed to God’s mission—helping others to learn about Him and to be prepared for the day when Christ returns (2 Pet. 3:10–12).

What do you need to know in order to be prepared? Listen! “We hear the footsteps of an approaching God.”

* Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, November 12, 1914.
I was raised in Rio de Janeiro. Since I was a young child, the ocean and Rio’s lush flowers and foliage were everyday scenes to me. Because of this, I grew up loving nature. In fact, I loved it so much that I wished I could live within nature. I hated cities and felt that we were made for something else.

But something else also bothered me. It doesn’t matter how beautiful nature is or how calm the ocean waves can be. Danger is still always around. Forests are filled with hostile animals, annoying insects, and plants with thorns. In the ocean, we find fish that bite and jellyfish that sting.

And what about nighttime? Who dares to be in a forest then or who is eager to swim in the dead of night? No matter how perfect and extraordinary nature appears, it is still dangerous. So how can we find peace while waiting for Christ to return and the earth to be made new?

Believe in heaven. Isaiah paints a beautiful word portrait of what heaven will be like. Read Isaiah 11:6–9 and 65:25. How do these verses encourage you?

Use the end of the world to your favor. Read 2 Peter 3:10–12. In these verses, Peter paints a picture of earth’s destruction to emphasize our need of holiness to reach this wonderful place. Why does Peter paint such a picture? Because destruction and danger are very real. Maybe you cannot believe or imagine heaven, but you know that this world is about to end. That is why he tells us to seek holiness in the same proportion and intensity in which we are aware of our planet’s destruction.

Depend on God for all your needs and submit to His will. Isaiah 26:3 reads, “You will keep him in perfect peace, / Whose mind is stayed on You, / Because he trusts in You” (NKJV). “Perfect submission to the will of God brings the blessing of perfect serenity. The mature Christian is at peace with God, with himself, and with the world about him.”*

May our quest for holiness be as certain as the end is near.

**React**

1. In what ways do you realize the reality of the spiritual world, or does it look like a fantasy to you?
2. Do you think it is possible for us to hasten the Second Coming? Explain your answer.


Diego Barreto, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil
We have the certainty that Christ will return, and one of the goals of this quarter’s study was to strengthen our conviction that He also will recreate the earth. “‘I am making everything new!’” (Rev. 21:5, NIV)—things that are visible and invisible, the animate and the inanimate, nature, even us. Think about the wonders of living without the presence of sin! Think how amazing it will be to live in the presence of Jesus! But until that happen, we still have to live here, with our struggles, disappointments, failures, and defeats.

**When we see Christ returning in the clouds of glory, all of our struggles will be as nothing.**

It’s all part of life, but is that all there is to life? Of course not. Jesus endured all this and much more, yet we know He was filled with peace and joy and that He was victorious. Why? Because of His mission.

What is your mission? What are your goals and dreams? A successful career? Financial status? Or seeking the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33)?

Scripture pictures authentic Christians as people who are controlled and alert where sin is concerned. Read 1 Peter 5:8. To watch involves waiting patiently. Being ready for the daily struggles requires wearing Christian armor (Eph. 6:10–18).

If we want to hear Jesus say, “‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world’” (Matt. 25:34, NIV), then we must, above all things, have communion with God and be transformed into His image.

When we see Christ returning in the clouds of glory, all of our struggles will be as nothing. It will have been worth living for Christ!

**REACT**

1. What is taking up most of your time and energy? Will these things bring you closer to Christ? Why or why not?

2. How much of your daily personal time is devoted to fostering your personal relationship with God? What can you do to give more attention to your relationship with Him?

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*Simeon Tochetto and Heidi Vieira, Curitiba, SP, Brazil*
CONCLUDE

How can we begin to wrap our minds around the reality of the world to come? A world without stress, without pain, without fear. A world renewed, replenished, revamped, and restored. A world where challenges invigorate, relationships are uncorrupted, and we at last experience wholeness. A world where the natural order of death and decay no longer prevails. The defining factor? God’s presence. In the world to come, we will experience and know Him face-to-face, and that will make all the difference.

CONSIDER

• Listing what you’ve lost that you look forward to having restored in heaven. Also list what you look forward to leaving behind.
• Exploring the night sky with binoculars or a telescope and a guide to the constellations.
• Designing your ideal home for the new earth, based on the new priorities you’ll have there.
• Setting ten goals for your first 100 years of a sinless, unhindered life.
• Interviewing older Christians, new Christians, and children about their ideas of the new earth.
• Praying for God to use you to show others the beauty of the love we won’t fully experience until eternity.
• Comparing God’s promises of restoration and renewal throughout Scripture, from Adam and Eve to Moses to the Hebrew prophets to Revelation.

CONNECT

If you have not yet received a copy of CQ for second quarter 2013, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

**Lesson 1 Spiritual Adultery (Hosea)**

**Logos:** Isa. 20:1–6; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 4:1–6; 16:32; Hos. 1:2, 3; 2:8–13; 4:1–3; 14; James 5:1–17; 1 John 2:4; Rev. 14:6–12.

**Memory Text:** “I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called “not my loved one.” I will say to those called “Not my people,” “You are my people”; and they will say, “You are my God” ․” (Hos. 2:23, NIV).

**Key Thought:** Even amid spiritual adultery and divine judgment, God’s love for His people never wavers.

Hosea ministered at the close of a prosperous period in Israel’s history, just before the fall of the nation to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. However, God’s people no longer worshiped Him alone. They also served Baal, a Canaanite god. Hosea addresses the following questions: Does God still love Israel, despite its spiritual harlotry? Does He still have a purpose for it? Hosea’s personal story and prophecy are inseparably tied to his book. Just as he had forgiven his unfaithful wife and took her back, so God is willing to do the same for His people. What can we learn from the experience of Hosea and the Lord’s way of dealing with wayward Israel?

**Lesson 2 Love and Judgment—God’s Dilemma (Hosea)**

**Logos:** Exod. 4:22, 23; Deut. 1:31; 8:5; Prov. 13:24; Hosea 7; 11; 12:6; Matt. 11:28–30; Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rev. 3:19.

**Memory Text:** “But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always” (Hos. 12:6, NIV).

**Key Thought:** Hosea reveals more of God’s love for His wayward people.

Biblical authors often talk about God’s love relationship with His people...