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Week of Prayer Issue



Revival and the Word

ARE WE READY TO COMMIT?

Introduction

Message From the President

Dear Church Family:

What an exciting and important topic we will be studying together during this Week of Prayer in 2012—“Revival and the Word.”

The theme of revival is found again and again in the Scriptures. God’s hand is constantly restoring and reviving those who were lost, giving life and strength to the weary, and seeking to bring about a revival in the relationship between Himself and His people.

Throughout this week we will focus on several specific ways in which the Word is integral to revival in our own hearts and homes, as well as in the church. Certainly there can be no true revival without the study of God’s Word and by experiencing a deep and continuing fellowship with Jesus Christ.

I invite you to join with your world church family in a special way during this Week of Prayer. As you read and contemplate the main points of each reading, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how you can appropriate that message in your life that day. Pray that the Lord will send the latter rain of the Holy Spirit to revive each one of us individually and corporately. If you have children in the family, be sure to include them by sharing the special children’s readings together.

God’s Word urges us, “O taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the man who trusts in Him! O fear the Lord, all you who belong to Him. For those who fear Him never want for anything” (Ps. 34:8, 9, NLV).*

Jesus is coming soon! May He strengthen and revive each one of us and His remnant church with the latter rain as we seek to proclaim the three angels’ messages and prepare to meet the Lord in the air.

With kind Christian regards and sincerely yours,

Ted N. C. Wilson
President

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SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST

Our vision is to be a church that...
knows
experiences
and shares
our hope in Jesus Christ!



First Sabbath

Revival and the Word

ARE WE READY TO COMMIT?

BY TED N. C. WILSON

As we begin a week of special emphasis on revival and the Word you may wonder why we need more messages on revival. Perhaps you are a Seventh-day Adventist Christian who feels contented to see things continue as they have. A nice church service on a Sabbath morning and a basically moral life may be the essence of what being a Seventh-day Adventist is to you. If this seems to be sufficient for you, then you are missing out on the best part of being a Seventh-day Adventist!

Perhaps the idea of revival is appealing to you. As you look at world events and cultural and social changes you feel that everything is headed for disaster. You may long for a revival, thinking that revival will mean going back to the basics of society—back to the security of a well-ordered time and way of doing things.

Security and order are not appealing to everyone. Perhaps you are interested in a revival to shake things up. You would like to see more power, more action, more miracles, and rapid church

growth. Although all these things can and will take place as a result of revival, they are not the heart of revival.

We stand, individually and as a church, poised for a wonderful spiritual experience as we study about revival. While a great experience is a good beginning, true revival must go beyond a brief experience. It must be even more than a new beginning. Revival implies going all the way back to the beginning. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1-3).

The Heart of True Revival

Revival is more than going back to basics or shaking things up. It is more than about power or influence. Revival is about renewing our focus on Jesus. Through Jesus creation took place, and it is only through Jesus that a re-creation or revival can take place. Jesus is, and must be, central to any revival.

Do we need this kind of revival? We are still here. Jesus has not yet come to

take us home. We have not yet experienced the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will enable us to finish the task of taking the three angels’ messages to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6, KJV). We as a church need this revival, but this revival will not come to us corporately without its first being a personal experience.

Do we need revival personally? Each of us can administer the simple self-test by asking ourselves, “Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ’s our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.”¹

Reviving Relationship

For a revival to begin, we must each focus upon our relationship with Jesus. If we understand that we are saved by grace and are completely dependent on and indebted to a pow-



erful God who has not only created us but redeemed us, we will not opt for a mechanistic, legalistic approach. Our grateful and complete surrender to our Lord will result in a Spirit-filled, dynamic, and vibrant Christian life and witness.

We all need to understand fully where we are in the flow of time and where we are in reference to Jesus' soon coming. We must remember that the great controversy is raging all around us and often in us, and that the devil wants to derail our spiritual life and connection with Christ to prevent the loud cry of Revelation 14 from being heard around the world.

Knowing Means Sharing

The revival we need is not based on emotionalism or miracles. We want to

know Jesus better so we can share Him more. We need the motivation and power of the Holy Spirit for evangelism. We need Jesus to send the promised Spirit as He did to His waiting followers at Pentecost (John 16:7). Our need is perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in the challenge of reaching the big cities. More than half the world's population is already living in cities, and yet in many cities we barely have a foothold. Remembering the words of the prophet Zechariah, we realize that the Great Commission will be fulfilled, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6, NKJV).²

How will we be able to make an impact? New plans and strategies may have their place but what we really need is the miracle-working power of the

Word that created all things in the beginning. We need to open ourselves to be God's agents in bringing the good news of Jesus' saving victory and soon coming "to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

Experiencing Growth

In order to know Jesus better so that we can share Him better, we need to cultivate a relationship with Jesus and continue to grow in our walk with the Lord. Accepting Jesus is not a one-time experience. It has to be a growing experience. Like the apostle Paul, we have to be willing to die to self daily (1 Cor. 15:31).

The idea of cultivating a relationship with Jesus is not new to us, but because we cannot see Him, we often struggle with really making it work. Any rela-

tionship is about communication. Prayer opens our hearts and draws us into an intimate relationship with Jesus. The walls that keep us from this intimate experience with Jesus fall as we plead with God to take them down. All pride, bitterness, complacency, and materialism can be broken through by the Spirit as we spend time with Jesus in prayer.

In our busy lives it is challenging to keep our love for Jesus vibrant, with so many demands on our time and attention. We will have to proactively carve out time to listen to God.

WE WANT TO KNOW JESUS BETTER SO WE CAN SHARE HIM MORE.

Although God speaks to us through His providential workings and the impressions of the Holy Spirit on our minds, the clearest way God communicates with us is through His Word. As we take the time to study the Word of God we should prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to be present and remove anything separating us from God.

As Seventh-day Adventists we have been given a wonderful treasure. The Spirit of Prophecy is one of God’s greatest gifts to His end-time remnant people. It is, in Ellen White’s words, the “lesser light” leading to the “greater light.”³ Study the counsels of His messenger. Let them draw you to the matchless charms of Jesus and encourage you to a deeper study of His Word.

The Truth as It Is in Jesus

As we live in this momentous time of earth’s history it is particularly important that we understand how all of our doctrines are centered in Jesus.

Soon end-time events will be upon us. Soon Christ will return and ultimately place the final penalty on Satan. The blood of Jesus Christ, our sacrifice, on the cross and the ministry of our high priest, Jesus Christ, in the heavenly

sanctuary have one purpose—that you and I and all who submit to Him, confessing our sins and accepting Him as our Savior, may be made right with God and have eternal life through Christ’s all-encompassing ministry. We do not have to fear the judgment if we *know* the Lamb—if we *know* the High Priest and our coming King.

The Coming King

It is important to understand the sequence of what will happen in the near future. When Christ comes at His second coming, all eyes shall see Him. This will be the blessed hope that we are waiting for and that I believe is to take place very soon. We see even now that things around us are falling apart. Matthew 24 tells us of the signs of His coming. We have only to look around us at the economic upheaval, political instability, devastating illnesses, and social and moral decay to see these signs being fulfilled. There already are ecumenical movements aimed at creating a unified religious system that will oppose the worship of God on the seventh-day Sabbath and ultimately eliminate religious liberty and promote a substitute day of worship.

When He does come that second time, His feet will not touch this earth, but we will rise up into the heavenly cloud “to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17). Prior to His glorious return, however, Satan will seek to “deceive the very elect,” as the King James Version of Matthew 24:24 tells us. Satan will attempt to transform himself into an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) and will try to impersonate Christ. How will you and I know this impostor from the real Christ? Imagine the frenzied media coverage that will supposedly “prove” to all that this “christ” is real. “Satan, surrounded by evil angels, and claiming to be God, will work miracles of all kinds, to deceive, if possible, the very elect.”⁴ We will not be able to trust our physical senses. We will have to have our spiritual eyes renewed by the Holy Spirit. We will need to be so in tune with our Savior, so familiar with His voice in the Word,

that we will be able to “live by faith” (Rom. 1:17) in earth’s darkest hour.

Near the Finish Line

I believe that God’s dream of a finished work will soon be realized. I am confident that as we seek to know Jesus better, God will pour out His Holy Spirit without measure. He will use us to proclaim His truth, and “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14, NKJV). The work of God on earth will be completed. Jesus will come as the Mighty Deliverer. He will come as the King of kings and Lord of lords to take His children home. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 58.

² Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 257.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1991), p. 39.



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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

- 1.** In the hum and buzz of our media-saturated world, how can I maintain my focus upon Jesus? What steps can I take practically to let Him fill my life?

- 2.** We hear and speak a lot about “truth.” How does the “truth as it is in Jesus” (see Eph. 4:21, KJV) look between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. at my workplace?

- 3.** Revival is personal, yet at the same time relational. What role does the church community play in this process?



Sunday

Making God's Word Our Own

LEARNING TO BENEFIT FROM ITS POWER

BY ÁNGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ

Life is not self-sustaining. Living organisms depend on elements from outside themselves to remain alive. Water, food, oxygen—to mention just a few—are indispensable for life to exist.

From a biblical perspective, only God can sustain and preserve life in an environment that is in a state of decay and constitutes a constant threat to a meaningful human existence. Life is particularly sustained through the Word of God. This is especially true in our spiritual lives, which need constant power from outside ourselves to remain vibrant.

God and the Word

The psalmist wrote, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made” (Ps. 33:6). Creation in general and life in particular came into existence through the power of the divine Word. Human existence itself is predicated, not on food alone, “but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut. 8:3).

The connection between life and the divine Word is deep, unfathomable, and constant. The Word that created is the same Word that constantly sustains creation. The power of God is revealed to us in His Word, His speaking to us.

Through His Word God speaks to us in our particular situations and reveals to His people His plan and His will for them. His Word always aims at our well-being, because it is “good” (Isa. 39:8). At Sinai the Israelites heard the Word of the Lord speaking to them and giving them “regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good” (Neh. 9:13). The Word often takes the form of a promise on which we can always count and that anticipates the full realization of God’s saving plans for us (Ps. 105:42-45).

Solomon spoke to the people about the power of the divine Word: “Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses” (1 Kings 8:56). God’s Word is reliable and dependable because He ful-

fills what He promises: “For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does” (Ps. 33:4). God acts in accordance with what He says; He is a God of honor.

Jesus and the Word

The Word of God is much more than an audible utterance coming from the divine mouth. It is visible: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made” (John 1:1-3). This is the same reliable, trustworthy, and powerful Word of God that addressed His people in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament something glorious and unexpected happened: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (verse 14).

In Jesus, the Word, we see God’s will for us and His saving activity on behalf of sinful human beings. The audibility of His Word is efficacious because in

Jesus God speaks to us (see John 14:10). But as the incarnated Word of God Jesus is the Word of truth (see 2 Cor. 6:7), the Word of reconciliation (see 2 Cor. 5:19) and salvation (see Acts 13:26); He is the Word of the cross (see 1 Cor. 1:18). He is the truth, as well as the one who in the mystery of the Incarnation united God and humankind, and who on the cross exhibited the saving power of the Word of God.

God can indeed accomplish what He utters. When God says something, it happens. It may not take place as quickly as we would like, but it will happen.

God's Word performs that which it announces or expresses. The psalmist wrote that God "sent out his word and healed them [His people]; he rescued them from the grave" (Ps. 107:20). Referring to the Word that goes out of His mouth, the Lord says, "It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). When the Lord speaks, things happen!

When the storm on the Sea of Galilee threatened the safety of His disciples, Jesus stood up, "rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm" (Mark 4:39). He commanded demons to leave their victims, and they came out of them (see Mark 1:25). He healed people by saying the Word (see Matt. 8:8)! But above all, His word proclaiming forgiveness brought forgiveness to the sinner (Matt. 9:1-7). It delivered what it announced!

God's Word and Me

We are the addressed of the Word of God. He speaks to us as Creator and Redeemer because we have to know His plan and His will for us. We have to come out of our existential darkness into the light of a meaningful life.

God's Word is the source and fountain of eternal life (see John 5:24; 6:63). We have to come to know that Word because, as demonstrated in the life of Jesus, God's Word touches every aspect of our lives. Listening to the Word is a matter of life or death. Consequently,

God is eager to be heard by us: "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I'" (Isa. 65:1).

Therefore we are challenged to *listen* to the divine Word speaking to us in Scripture (see Isa. 66:4). This is a dynamic hearing that is accompanied by doing what the Word says. Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matt. 7:24; cf. 2 Chron. 34:21).

Our obedience to the Word reveals that we have indeed heard it speaking to us and that we have appropriated it. But it is also important to *read* the Word under the guidance of the Spirit, for it is only the incarnated Word of God who can transform us (see 2 Cor. 3:15-18). We should *search* it because it testifies about the only One who can grant us eternal life (see John 5:39). In the process of appropriating the Word we have to *meditate* on it, to allow our thoughts to dwell on the content of the Word and on its significance for us as individuals. We can meditate in the Word as it expresses itself in commands (see Ps. 119:48), testimonies (verse 99), and promises (verse 148).

Appropriating the Word requires us to invest time with it. This is unnatural to the human heart and requires breaking away from spiritual inertia. Prayer becomes indispensable because through it we can ask the Lord to place in our hearts the desire and the willingness to listen to His Word.

We should act out our prayer by opening the Word every day. The more we read it, the better we will come to understand its message. We mustn't quit because we are unable to understand everything we find there. Just read it, allowing its message to penetrate our minds. In that process God's thoughts will bathe our minds, and we will slowly be transformed by the power of the Spirit.

When we listen, read, and meditate on the Word, something glorious hap-

pens: Christ, the Word, comes to dwell in our hearts through faith (see Eph. 3:17).

The Word is alive; therefore it can revive us: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, . . . it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Since it is still alive, it can perform in our lives what it announces. We can believe in it because the One who speaks to us through the Word is reliable and has the power to bring to reality what He has promised.

Therefore, let's allow the Word to instruct us every day (see 2 Tim. 3:15). Let it comfort us as we face difficulties, temptations, and suffering (Ps. 119:161, 162). Let the hope found in its pages fill our hearts with joy (see Ps. 56:10, 11; 2 Cor. 1:20).

Let's allow the Word of the cross to fill our hearts and burn like a fire, in order to sanctify us in service to the Lord and to others (cf. Jer. 23:29). ■



PRIOR TO HIS RETIREMENT IN 2011, **ÁNGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ** SERVED AS DIRECTOR OF THE BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE. HE NOW LIVES IN TEXAS.

QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. God speaks to us in creation. In what works of nature do you especially recognize God's creative and sustaining power?
2. The power of God's Word is also demonstrated in the life and earthly ministry of Jesus. In which stories from Jesus' life do you see the power of God's Word revealed?
3. God's power is also displayed in His Word of redemption revealed in each of our lives. How have you felt the power of God's Word in your own life?



Monday

Heart and Soil

WHAT ARE YOU MADE OF?

BONITA JOYNER SHIELDS

Jesus' parable of the sower in Luke 8:4-15 speaks to the condition of our hearts. God seeks to plant the seed of His Word into our hearts; but its ability to bear fruit depends on the condition of our hearts.

What does a heart open to God's voice look like? How can we nurture it so that the seed of God's Word will grow and take root? How can God's Word produce a spiritual revival in our lives?

The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil

The parable of the sower is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15). All versions contain three main elements: the sower, the seed, and the soil.

The Sower. To sow means to scatter seed over the ground. In biblical times farmers carried seed in baskets or pouches attached to their waists. Taking a handful of seed, they threw or scattered it with a sweeping motion of

the hand and arm.¹

When a sower *scatters* seed, he/she doesn't merely take one seed, place it gingerly onto the ground, and go on! While sowers designate an area of ground onto which they will sow, they throw as many seeds as possible because they know that not all of the seeds will grow to maturity.

Scripture recognizes God as the sower (see Matt. 13:37). Ellen White wrote, "Like a sower in the field, [Christ] came to scatter the heavenly grain of truth."²

The Seed. Scripture identifies the seed as the Word of God (see Luke 8:11). Just as the seed contains the life of a plant, God's Word is life to those who receive it. Just as a farmer scatters seed with a sweeping motion, it seems as if God *throws* His Word in some of the most unlikely places!

Many years ago, in a Moscow theater, matinee idol Alexander Rostovzev was converted while playing the role of Jesus in a sacrilegious play entitled *Christ in a Tuxedo*. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and cry out,

"Give me my tuxedo and top hat!"

But as he read the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matt. 5:3, 4), he began to tremble. Instead of keeping to the script, he kept on reading from Matthew 5, ignoring the coughs, calls, and foot-stomping of the other actors. Finally, recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood in a Russian Orthodox church, he cried, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev had trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.³

God *throws* His Word in the most unlikely places in order to try to save as many of His wayward children as He can. We often limit the scattering of God's Word by underestimating its power.

While Christ came to scatter seeds of truth to human hearts, He also calls *us* to sow seeds of truth in human hearts. Sowing seeds of truth is not always easy, as Christ's life revealed to us. Ellen White wrote, "He left His home of

security and peace, left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, left His position upon the throne of the universe. He went forth a suffering, tempted man; went forth in solitude, to sow in tears, to water with His blood, the seed of life for a world lost.”⁴

We may also be called to suffering, solitude, tears, and sometimes death, as we sow the seeds of God’s truth. But we will not sow in vain. Who can forget our forerunners in the Christian faith: the Waldenses, John Wycliffe, John Huss? They, and others, gave their lives for the sake of Christ and His Word. Ellen White wrote of them, “They were hunted to death; yet their blood watered the seed sown, and it failed not of yielding fruit.”⁵

The Soil. Four elements are necessary for healthy soil: nitrogen, lime, phosphoric acid, and potash. When one is out of balance, it affects the life of the plant. When plants are strong and healthy, they have the ability to resist their “enemies”: weeds, bugs, drought, etc.

The condition of the human heart—our soul—is of utmost importance to the life of the Spirit. Just as strong, healthy plants are more capable of resisting their enemies, when our souls are strong and healthy we also have the ability to resist the enemy.

In this parable the work of the enemy is obvious. In the hard surface of the path, where the seed of God’s Word is trampled and undervalued, Satan *steals* the Word out of hearers’ hearts. When the rocky soil produces plants that have no root/depth, Satan *removes* the Word from the heart. When the thorns of care, worry, and riches/pleasure are allowed to crowd out the plants, Satan *chokes* the Word from the heart.

But notice the plants in the good, healthy soil. *In this soil Satan couldn’t take the seeds of God’s Word from the heart!* The enemy became powerless! The seeds grew and “yielded a crop a hundred-fold” (Luke 8:8, NKJV).⁶

Feeding the Soul

If you’re like me, you find yourself described in more than one of the soils

above! What can we do to keep the condition of our souls strong and healthy so we can bear fruit? I suggest three things:

1. The first description of the good soil in Luke 8:15 mentions that the people heard the Word “with a noble and good heart.” Pray for a clean heart and a right spirit. Read Psalm 51:10-12. Sing it. Pray it. We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (see Rom. 3:23; 7:14). And because of sin, even our good works are tainted with impure motives.

2. The second description of the good soil said that the people *kept* the Word. In order to keep Satan from stealing, removing, or choking the Word out of our lives, we must *keep* it. In order to keep it, four things must take place: We must *hear* God’s Word. Spending time with the Lord in His Word, listening to the preaching of His Word, and studying God’s Word with fellow believers are all excellent ways to hear God speaking to us.

We must *understand* God’s Word. Do we take the time to wrestle with it? study it? ask others for guidance regarding it? God’s Word isn’t always easy to understand, but He promises that His Spirit will help us (see 1 Cor. 2:10-12).

We must *accept* God’s Word. Acceptance involves a willingness to receive, to possess. Once we understand what God is saying to us, sometimes (quite honestly), we just don’t want to receive it! But for me, in those times I finally accepted His Word for my life, the peace that passes understanding filled my soul (see Phil. 4:7).

We must *obey* God’s Word. Accepting is one thing; taking the action to obey is another. Whether it’s overtly committing to follow the Lord in truths such as Sabbathkeeping or giving up harmful actions to oneself and/or to others, or whether it’s more private surrender, obedience calls for action.

3. The third description of the good soil said that the people will “bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15, NKJV). How often have you prayed, “Lord, how long will it take for me to become *perfect*? How long will it take for John to make a decision for Christ?” We want our

souls—and the souls of others—to spring up quickly.

Good Soil, Good Harvest

What is your heart made of? Do you value God’s Word? Are you rooted in His Word so that you can withstand the temptations of the enemy? Do you want Him to calm your anxious heart? Whatever the condition of your heart, God is willing and able to plant His seeds of life within it.

Pray for a pure heart. Hear, understand, accept, and obey His Word. Abide in Him, looking to Him for growth. He will accomplish it—even in the most unlikely places. ■

¹ Taken from www.middletonbiblechurch.org/biblecus/biblec6.htm.

² Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900), p. 33.

³ Taken from http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/b/bible_power_of.htm. Quoted from J. K. Johnston, *Why Christians Sin* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1992), p. 121.

⁴ E. G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 36.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 78.

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DEPARTMENT.

QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. Think about your present situation. Is the soil of your soul good, hard-packed, rocky, or weed-infested? Why?
2. What one thing would you do to improve the soil of your soul so that God’s Word can find it easier to grow?
3. In the context of this parable, what does it mean for you to grow into maturity?



Tuesday

Revived—and Ready to Cross

THE WORD OF GOD AND THE JORDAN RIVER

BY GALINA STELE

It was a time of great uncertainty and an overwhelming task for Joshua. Facing the Israelites was the full-flowing Jordan River and Jericho, a large and strong fortress on its western bank. On the eastern side of the river was the beautiful valley Shittim, full of acacia trees and multitudes of God's people.

It was time to cross the Jordan—just imagine how Joshua felt. Moses was dead. He died at the very moment he was most needed, at the border of the Promised Land! How to cross the Jordan, especially when it was in flood stage (Joshua 3:15)? How to conquer the strong walls and giants of Jericho? The wisdom and experience of Moses was much needed in this crucial period. How would Joshua lead these people to the Promised Land? These people were willing to trade the land of their dreams for a moment of pleasure in the acacia groves. In whom could Joshua trust?

Moses' death was a great loss for the people of Israel. Nevertheless, they knew that God was still with

them. "The pillar of cloud rested over the tabernacle by day, and the pillar of fire by night, an assurance that God would still be their guide and helper if they would walk in the way of His commandments."¹

Joshua waited for the Lord's directions. Born in slavery, he spent 40 years in Egypt and 40 years being Moses' right-hand man (Num. 11:28). Originally his name was Hoshea (Num. 13:8), meaning "salvation" or "deliverance." But sometime during his service to Moses it was changed to "Joshua," which means "Save, Yahweh!" or "Yahweh saves."² The word "Yahweh" pointed to the name of the Lord that had been revealed to Moses in the burning bush: "I am who I am" (Ex. 3:14). Joshua's name became a living reminder for all that God Himself was the one who saves His people. It would not be Moses, or Joshua, or any other man, but the Eternal One who would lead His people across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Later this very name was given to Jesus. Thus, Joshua was a type of Christ.

Waiting for God

Joshua had experienced the power of God many times. He was at Mount Sinai when it was covered with the sparkling cloud and glory of God's presence. He saw Moses descend the mountain with the law written by God's hand (Ex. 32:17). He was the one who had fought the Amalekites and won the battle when Moses held up his hands (Ex. 17:8-16). Joshua was among 12 spies sent by Moses to explore the Promised Land—and one of two who believed that God was powerful enough to give them victory over giants.

Joshua "certainly had some, if not most, of the qualities which make a great general—firmness and gentleness, winning ready trust and obedience from his men, decision and rapidity."³ Joshua did not, however, rely on his talents and qualifications. He had learned from Moses the most important thing: you have to rely fully only on God. "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here" (Ex. 33:15). That's why Joshua faithfully waited for the Lord's instructions.

And God spoke to Joshua. Interestingly, it was not about a strategic plan of conquest, detailed descriptions of maps, or troops needed for the conquest. God started with unexpected guidelines. He directed Joshua's attention to the thing that would always keep God's presence with him and make him successful. The Lord said: "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:7, 8). The success of Joshua as a leader—and the people of Israel as a nation—would depend on their obedience to the law of God, to His Word. Only then, after this introduction, did God begin to give Joshua some particular instructions on how to move forward.

Lessons for the Promised Land

As world history rushes to its end we are standing again as a church at the border of the Promised Land. Sometimes we forget this, especially when the valleys of acacias are in blossom. And as individuals we often face our own Jerichos. What lessons can we draw from this story and the instructions given by God in Joshua 1:7, 8? What questions should we be asking ourselves?

1. *Questions about God's presence:* Do we share Joshua's conviction that there is no use in going forward if the Lord's presence is not going with us? Do we recognize that His presence is in His Word?

2. *Questions about courage:* Are we as daring as God wants us to be? Will we show the courage it takes to follow Him and be faithful to His Word, no matter what? Did the people of Israel look silly in the eyes of others when they had been walking around Jericho seven days? Such courage will be much needed again at the

border of the Promised Land.

3. *Questions about success.* Doesn't everybody want to be successful? What does this story reveal that is the secret of success? Often we desire to witness God's direct intervention. We want to see the water of our Jordan divided, and we are surprised by God's apparent silence. But do we follow God's instructions that have been already revealed to us? Or are we waiting for something new?

THE POINT OF DESTINATION IS THE PROMISED LAND.

4. *Questions about immersion into the Word of God:* How deeply do we plunge ourselves into the Word of God? What kind of methods are we using to fill our mind with the Scriptures?

5. *Questions about "everything written in it."* How faithfully shall we follow? If we follow just a part of God's instructions, it "shows respect for certain parts of the law only, but not for the Lawgiver."⁴ Are we willing to obey faithfully everything that is revealed in the Bible?

Revived and Ready to Cross

The book of Joshua tells us that the promise of God was fulfilled in Joshua's life. He was faithful, and God exalted him. He led God's people across the Jordan. Jericho's walls fell down. The people of Canaan were full of awe and fear. The Lord's presence was with them, and the Promised Land was given to the people of Israel.

Joshua let God be his general. He did not look for his personal glory. He wanted to build an altar to God in people's hearts and minds, passing the Word of God to new generations. "There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them" (Joshua

8:35). Joshua chose to serve the Lord until his last breath. At the end of his life he testified that God was faithful, that His promises were not mirages. He said, "Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed" (Joshua 23:14). God relied on Joshua because Joshua relied on his Lord.

I want to be like Joshua. I know that my point of destination is the Promised Land, not the valleys on this side of the Jordan River. But how should I cross the Jordan? My enemy is cunning and cruel, and my wisdom is limited.

The presence of the Lord is promised to me in the Scriptures. God desires to dwell within me by His Word. He wants to revive, inform, and transform me through it. Because of this I will be able to go forward and cross the Jordan. I am willing to do it with Jesus, the Lord who saves. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 481.

² Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), vol. 3, p. 257.

³ A. Plummer, "Introduction to the Historical Books: Joshua to Nehemiah," *Joshua, The Pulpit Commentary* (Peabody, Miss.: Hendrickson Publishers), vol. 3, p. iv.

⁴ Madvig, p. 257.



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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. When do you delve into the Bible? Mornings, or evenings, or both? At lunchtime? Think about how you can develop the habit of nourishing yourself regularly with the Word of God.
2. Joshua had great faith in God—and wasn't afraid to share this with others. How can you share your faith in practical ways?



Wednesday

A Call to Leadership

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS?

BY JERRY PAGE

The story is told of a young man who loved to drive his sports car fast on curvy mountain roads. One day another car came careening toward him around a blind curve. The car pulled out of his lane just in time, and as they passed each other the driver leaned out of her window and yelled, “Pig!”

He was furious! “Hog!” he shouted back. “She was on my side of the road,” he muttered. “How dare she call me a pig!” His only satisfaction was that he’d had the presence of mind to yell an appropriate insult back at her.

Then he rounded the blind curve—and hit the pig that was standing in the middle of the road!

Sometimes apparent threats are actually helpful warnings. Our Lord always sees around the corner into the future. In every crisis He wants to warn us of the dangers and show us the opportunities available if we listen to His inspired words.

I see a major “pig” in the road ahead for Christians living in these last days.

Many are following the example of our culture to “do what is right in our own eyes” instead of turning to God’s Word.

As this earth careens toward its final hour, God has exciting and sobering plans for each one of us. He is calling you and me to be influential leaders, to give the call to “come out of her [Babylon], my people” (Rev. 18:4).¹ The only obstacle that stands in the way is our own choice to respond to the warnings.

Nehemiah’s Example

Nehemiah is a powerful example of the leader our Lord is calling each of us to be.

When we first meet Nehemiah, he is serving the Persian king Artaxerxes as his cupbearer. Though Nehemiah held an influential position in the Persian court and was surrounded by riches, his heart was with his father’s God and the people who had been given the sacred writings.

Nehemiah’s ancestors were captured when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem some 70 years before. Now under

the Persian Empire’s rule, the Hebrews in captivity received permission to return home, fulfilling a promise that God had given the children of Israel years before (Jer. 29:10).

Many had grown comfortable, however, in their foreign land and chose to stay. Rebuilding from burned rubble was too hard. The Lord needed a leader who put the service and honor of God above all earthly things.

Messengers arrived with bad news about the conditions in Jerusalem: “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire” (Neh. 1:3).

Nehemiah was heartbroken and turned to two sources of help: prayer and the Word of God. He wept, fasted, prayed, and confessed his sins as well as the sins of his people. Then he praised God for being faithful to His Word and took courage in God’s promises of mercy and restoration if His people returned to Him in repentance and faith (verses 5-11).



Direction Through Prayer

For four months Nehemiah poured out his heart before God. Then the Lord gave him a mission. Nehemiah was called to lead in rebuilding Jerusalem. He prayed, “Let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man [the king]” (verse 11). And he waited.

Jesus discovered God’s will for His life in the same way. Through His prayerful study of God’s Word He received a clear understanding of His mission as our Savior. He learned the Father’s will for each day, as Nehemiah did, and as we can.

Immersing themselves in God’s Word and prayer filled the disciples’ time as they awaited the descent of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2). Praise God that the moving of God’s Spirit in our lives will bring the same wisdom, understanding, gifts, and zeal for the salvation of those we know and those to whom God sends us.

Individual Areas of Influence

One day King Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah’s gloomy face and asked why he was so sad. Nehemiah told the king of the needs of his people in Jerusalem. “What do you request?” the king asked. Nehemiah quickly listed off his desires and was given everything for which he had asked (Neh. 2:2-8).

Nehemiah was not a contractor or an architect. He hadn’t been to the “right” schools. Yet God had given him this mission and sent him to Jerusalem as His designated leader.

In the book *Ellen White and Leadership: Guidance for Those Who Influence Others*, author Cindy Tutsch, associate director of the White Estate, writes: “If you are a Christian, you are a leader! Part of our responsibility as followers of Jesus is to use our influence to lead others to follow Jesus. We do this in different ways, according to our spiritual gifts. But unless you’ve been living in an isolated cave for the past ten years and have seen

no one during that time, there are people in your life.”²

Leadership is really influence over people—your children, family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. Jesus is calling you to be a Nehemiah, someone who is willing to meet God and His Word in prayer daily so that He can gift you with a ministry of leadership. He is preparing a people for heaven and wants to use your influence to lead others to a revival of true godliness.³

Leading to Success

Nehemiah’s example is a lesson to all God’s people, teaching us that we are not only to pray much, but also to plan wisely and work hard. Nehemiah understood the word of the Lord given to Zerubbabel: “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). But he also knew by experience that men and women of prayer are believers of action, and that careful consideration and well-matured

plans are essential to the success of spiritual efforts for our Lord.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he toured the city to assess conditions. His heart was sorrow-stricken when he saw the devastation. The outlook seemed bleak. But he won the hearts of the people as he recounted the answered prayers and providential happenings that had brought him to Jerusalem. Convinced, the people responded, “Let us rise up and build” (Neh. 2:18).

There was fierce opposition: ridicule, physical attacks, discouragement, compromise, slander, and treachery. Taunts used to mock the workers claimed their God had rejected them. But Nehemiah answered each attack with the Word of God (verses 19, 20).

Under Nehemiah’s leadership the walls were rebuilt in just 52 days (Neh. 6:15). Even the enemies of God’s people saw that the Lord was with them (verse 16).

Nehemiah Takes His People to the Word of God

Bricks and mortar would not keep the inhabitants safe. Nehemiah knew that the only true security for the people of Jerusalem was the rebuilding of their hearts. He brought the people together to hear the reading of God’s Word, which had not been done for many years.

As they were reminded of God’s warnings, they wept (Neh. 8:1, 8, 9) and made “an oath to walk in God’s law” (Neh. 10:29). Nehemiah urged them to remember God’s wonderful forgiveness and grace, adding, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).

Then Nehemiah went back to the Persian palace. In time he returned to Jerusalem and found that the people had fallen into serious backsliding. As God’s chosen leader, he did not shrink from the very specific work of reformation needed if God’s blessings were to remain with His people.

He took on the issues, such as mingling in dangerous ways with the unconsecrated and unbelievers (Neh. 13:23-28), failing to return tithes and offerings (verses 7-13), and disregard-

ing the Lord’s Sabbath (verses 15-22). He understood that while some of his reforms seemed severe, they would prove a loving blessing. God’s warnings are always for our present and eternal good.

Accepting God’s Call

We are living on the edge of eternity. Solemn and frightening days threaten our safety. How the angels must weep as they see the condition of the Laodicean church—a people who are blind to their needs and the dangerous times.

“There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation. If Satan had his way, there would never be another awakening, great or small, to the end of time.”⁴

God is calling each of us to become one of His leaders, to pray and study Scripture with others, to be like Nehemiah and share what God has done in our lives, to be a contagious influence wherever we are.

Walking down the street one day, a man was stopped by a zealous young Christian who pressed a piece of literature into his hand. Not wanting to be overly offensive but still frustrated, he took the tract and shoved it into his pocket.

Later, at home, he felt the crumpled literature, pulled it out, and threw it into the fireplace. But he made the mistake of watching it burn. Before it was completely consumed, the last sentence glowed in brightness, “The word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Peter 1:25, KJV).

Believing that the God of his earlier life was speaking to him in love, he surrendered his life to Jesus before the night was over!

The transforming power of Jesus that created the universe is in His written Word. He promises that His Word “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish . . . the purpose for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:11, NIV).

Our Lord wants leaders who boldly speak God’s Word. Jesus is coming, and we’re told that Christ’s return will be preceded by a revival in prayer, the reading of the Word of God, and a commitment to complete surrender to Jesus. Around the world the signs of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are rapidly increasing. What a marvelous time to be alive!

We have a choice to make, however—whether or not to be leaders for Christ. Let’s open our hearts to our Savior, confess our sins, accept His cleansing power, and ask Him what He wants for us. He will not fail to lead us to where we need to be. ■

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Bible texts in this article are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Cindy Tutsch, *Ellen White on Leadership: Guidance for Those Who Influence Others* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2008), p. 7.

³ See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 121.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.



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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. What does being a leader really mean? Must it involve holding a high-level position in the church?
2. Some people feel they are “called” to be followers rather than leaders, that they have no special talents to offer. What would you say to such individuals?
3. One of Nehemiah’s “secrets of success” was his ability to wait for the Lord to answer his prayers at the right time. Have you developed this level of patience and trust in God?

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Thursday

The Richness of the Word

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD?

BY EKKEHARDT MUELLER

Many of us have experienced the power and richness of the Word of God. We can confess that “the word of God is alive and active” and “sharper than any double-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God has the power to lead us to Jesus our Savior, to change and transform our lives so that they resemble Christ, and to provide new and refreshing insights. And there have been individuals who, through the ages, have tapped into the reviving power of the Word of God. One such person was Daniel.

Faithful Student

It was the sixth century B.C. The people of God had lost their land, Jerusalem, and the Temple with its worship services. They had to live in a foreign country among a people that worshipped strange gods.

Among God's people was Daniel. He had grown old in the service of the Babylonian kings, exerting a positive influence at the royal court and being a constant and faithful witness of the true

God. Even after 70 years of captivity he had not yielded to the unbiblical elements in the prevalent culture. He still continued to care for the cause of God and the future of his people.

In Daniel 9 we encounter him under the rule of the Medes and Persians, who had conquered Babylon. In verses 1 and 2 we read: “In the first year of Darius . . . I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.”

Daniel must have had access to various Old Testament scrolls, among them the book of Jeremiah. These scrolls were the inspired Word of God (Dan. 9:2). In verses 11-13 Daniel refers to the “Law of Moses” and “the words spoken against us,” which are the words of God found in Deuteronomy 28 and 29, the blessings and the curses. Daniel studied these sacred writings diligently and thoughtfully.

Daniel understood that Jeremiah's prophecy was about to be fulfilled and Judah to be restored to the Promised

Land. Reading and studying Scripture, Daniel knew the will of God, paid attention to what God had said, and relied on the divine prophecies. He realized the signs of his times. He noticed that a reversal of the fate of God's people would take place soon. At the same time, those who knew him recognized him as a man in whose life the Spirit of God was a present reality (Dan. 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 12, 14; 6:3).

Daniel Prays

While the study of Scripture leads to deeper insights into God's plan with humanity, it also leads to prayer. In Daniel 9:3-19 Daniel pours out his heart to God in confession and petition, deeply regretting that God's people had rebelled against the Lord. He recognizes God's justice in bringing about the predicted curse. Yet he counts on God's love and great mercy (verses 4, 18) and asks for forgiveness. The prayer ends with the request that God restore the destroyed sanctuary in Jerusalem. Daniel prayed for a new beginning and restoration.

Here we notice a remarkable sequence: Daniel studies Scripture; this leads him to deeper insights; still puzzled (see also Dan. 8:27), he turns to God in prayer. This is a model for us. The solution to our problems is the Word of God and prayer. Whether we want to have a new beginning in our spiritual life, grow in our relationship with Jesus, understand God in a deeper way, comprehend God's plan for us and all of humanity, or learn about the future, Scripture study and prayer are of immense help.

While Daniel is still praying, God responds and sends Gabriel to him (Dan. 9:20, 21). Daniel is told that he's "highly esteemed" (verse 23).

God reacts to the prayers of His people. He may not send us a visible angel or a dream, but He opens our eyes to Himself, His work, and His interventions, uses fellow humans to reach out to us, encircles us with His peace, and fills us with assurance.

Daniel finally receives further "insight and understanding" (verse 22). Gabriel tells him about a 70-week period of 490 years. Toward the end of this period the Messiah would come to "put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy" (verse 24). Daniel not only learned aspects of the plan of salvation that were not fully known before, but was also pointed to the Messiah, His ministry, and His death. Daniel received "new light." But the new light grew out of—and was consistent with—the light given to prophets before him. And the light was not only about time elements and future events—it was about Jesus Christ.

New Light

A revival of sincere Bible study will lead to a deeper understanding of Scripture and God Himself. When we, under prayer, study Scripture, new light will be received.

What is new light? Oftentimes it is associated with the discovery of biblical truth that was formerly overlooked. Early Adventists discovered, for instance, the sanctuary doctrine and the health message. New light could also refer to a better interpretation of a biblical passage. But new light benefits not only the church. It also has a personal dimension. The individual who studies Scripture is led to new personal insights. This is exciting, gratifying, and enriching.¹

GOD IS WILLING TO REVIVE US, CHANGE US, AND ENRICH OUR LIVES.

Why does God give us new light? By better understanding the past, present, and future we learn to appreciate more deeply the plan of salvation. We rejoice when we see how God works to bring to an end to sin, suffering, and death and receive us home. Most of all, new insights lead us to better know and love God and have a vibrant relationship with him.

Voiced With Sincerity

True new light must be distinguished from the so-called new light of heresy. We do this by checking Scripture. The Holy Spirit will not contradict Himself in what He teaches. We also check with the community of true believers. On a personal level, we study broadly and avoid hobby horses. We do not think too highly of ourselves. And we allow Scripture to remain "the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history."²

Daniel's experience teaches us that great things will happen if we sincerely study Scripture and seek God in prayer. There will be new insights, sometimes on a broader scale, sometimes on a personal level. While we need to remain open to new light, we must not allow culture to determine our convictions. Rather, we need to compare new insights with Scripture and, if found true, follow them.

God is willing to revive us, change us, and enrich our lives. He is willing to live with us, even in us, so that we can grow strong in our love and faith, our service and perseverance (Rev. 2:19). "When the heart is brought into harmony with the word, a new life will spring up within you, a new light will shine upon every line of the word, and it will become the voice of God to your soul."³ ■

¹ Adventists also talk about "present truth," which points to theological emphases that are of special importance at a certain time.

² See Fundamental Belief No. 1.

³ Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (International Tract Society, Battle Creek: 1894), p. 80.



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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. Daniel studied Scripture thoroughly and prayerfully. What scriptures have you studied that have helped you personally?
2. New light helps us understand Scripture and its teachings better. How can it help us come to grips with pain and affliction in our lives? How can it show us God's love?



Friday

Singing the Scriptures

SINGING SCRIPTURE SONGS SENDS SATAN SCURRYING AWAY

BY DEREK J. MORRIS

Three thousand years ago the Holy Spirit inspired one of the psalmists to write a song. The focus of that Scripture song was the Word of God. Perhaps you will recognize some parts to that psalm: “Revive me according to Your word.” “The entrance of Your words gives light.” “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

Have you recognized the psalm yet? That’s right! Psalm 119 (verses 154, 130, 105, and 11).¹ I encourage you to read that inspired Scripture song in its entirety. The message is clear. God has revealed His Word to us, and that Word can bring light and revitalizing power to your life today.

More Than Mere Words

Jesus accepted that inspired Scripture song and the rest of the Scriptures as more than a helpful collection of religious ideas—more than words of human beings *about* God. The Scrip-

tures were, and still *are*, the inspired Word of God. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus responded to Satan’s temptations by quoting from the Scriptures. He said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4, quoting Deut. 8:3).

How do we receive that word which proceeds from the mouth of God? Through the oral and written testimonies of the prophets. The apostle Peter gave this testimony under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

When the Lord called Jeremiah to be a prophet, Jeremiah responded, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a

youth” (Jer. 1:6). But the Lord said to Jeremiah, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak” (verse 7). Then the Lord touched the young prophet’s mouth and said, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (verse 9).

God’s Word a Defense

God’s Word is a defense against the enemy. When Jesus went into the wilderness after His baptism, Satan saw this time of prayerful solitude as an opportunity to attack Him. Jesus responded to Satan’s every temptation with God’s Word. How was He able to do this? Did He have a scroll or two hidden under His cloak? No. Jesus believed the Scriptures were the Word of God, so He hid God’s Word in His heart. He took time to memorize and internalize it. Then, when the enemy attacked, Jesus had a defense against him. He used “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

The Greek noun translated “word” in Matthew 4:4 and Ephesians 6:17 is

rhēma, which implies a specific word or saying. When Satan attacked, Jesus didn't just hold up the Bible or a Bible scroll like some kind of lucky charm and say, "The Bible, the Bible, the Bible." No, Jesus responded to Satan's attacks with *specific* words from the Scriptures.

So why are the Scriptures a defense against the enemy? Because Satan is a liar and a deceiver, but the Word of God is truth. So when Satan says to you, "You're a sinner. You're a loser. You might as well just give up and be damned," God's Word points you to Jesus and tells you the truth: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The truth of God's Word dispels Satan's lie.

When Satan tries to intimidate you and fill you with fear, God's Word points you to Jesus, who tells you the truth: "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Rev. 1:17, 18).

When Satan tries to overwhelm you with the burdens of this life, God's Word points you to Jesus, who tells you the truth: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Three Practical Suggestions

God wants you to experience the revitalizing power of His Word in your life. Here are three practical ways to fill your heart with God's Word: (1) *saturation*—read the Bible every day; as you saturate your mind with God's Word, you can be sure that the Holy Spirit will bring it to your remembrance when you most need it (John 14:26); (2) *Scripture memory cards*—choose a portion of Scripture

and write it out word for word on a small card; take the card with you everywhere and repeat it frequently, to intentionally "hide God's Word in your heart" (see Ps. 119:11); (3) *Scripture songs*—learn Scripture songs or compose your own songs. Jesus used Scrip-

JESUS USED SCRIPTURE SONGS AS A MEANS OF HIDING GOD'S WORD IN HIS HEART.

ture songs as a means of hiding God's Word in His heart.² As you sing Scripture songs in worship or during your daily activities, the Word of God will be reinforced in your mind. Then share God's Word with those around you.

Some years ago a pastor received a phone call asking if he could come and pray a blessing of God over someone's house. Apparently a woman named Glenda³ had recently been widowed, and the superstition of her culture had taught that her dead husband's spirit would come to visit the house for 40 days after his death. About a week after his death she began to hear rapping sounds in the part of the house in which he had died. Glenda was an educated woman, but she didn't know how to handle this supernatural phenomenon. As the pastor prepared to go to Glenda's house, he was impressed to take a CD of Scripture songs with him. He encouraged Glenda to play it in her home and to hide God's words in her heart. The next morning Glenda called excitedly: "The rapping is gone!" The

evil spirit harassing Glenda had been expelled from her house by the power of the Word of God! Glenda experienced the revitalizing power of God's Word, and her life was transformed.

Conclusion

God's Word is still a defense against the enemy. We need its power more now than ever. For "the devil has come down to [us], having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (Rev. 12:12). Take time to study the Word of God. Take time to hide it in your heart. Pray with the psalmist, "Revive me according to Your word" (Ps. 119:154), and experience its revitalizing power in your life day by day. ■

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² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 73.

³ Glenda is a pseudonym.



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QUESTIONS FOR

Reflection and Sharing

1. Why does the Word of God silence the devil?
2. Is it really possible to be saturated with the Bible?
3. How does memorizing Scripture work to keep us from sin?



Second Sabbath

Revival and Mission

OUR RESPONSIBILITY, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

We have a sacred message to bear to the world. The third angel's message is not a theory of man's inventing, a speculation of the imagination; but it is the solemn truth of God for these last days. It is the final warning to the perishing souls of men.

... The commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus must be brought to the attention of the world. The tidings of the coming of the Savior must be proclaimed. The judgment scenes must be portrayed before the unenlightened minds of men, and hearts must be aroused to realize the solemnity of the closing hours of probation, and prepare to meet their God.

The light that has shone upon your pathway has been given you, not simply that you may rejoice in it, and better understand the Scriptures, and see more clearly the way of life; but that you may become a light-bearer, and carry the torch of truth into the darkened pathways of those around you. We are to be colaborers with Christ. We are to follow the example that He has left us

in the daily steps of His life on earth. His was not a life of ease and devotion to Himself; but He toiled with persistent, untiring, earnest effort for the salvation of lost mankind. . . . He said: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).*

Christ's Example of Mission

When but twelve years of age, the Son of God was found among the learned rabbis, executing His mission; and when asked as to why He had remained after the feast, He replied, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). This was the one great object of His life. Everything else was secondary and subservient. It was His meat and drink to do the will of God, and to finish His work. Self and selfish interest had no part in His labor. Love to God and man demands the whole heart, and leaves no place for selfishness to flourish in the life. Jesus declared, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4). . . .

There is a great work before us. The work that engages the interest and activity of heaven is committed to the church of Christ. Jesus said: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The work for our time is attended with the same difficulties that Jesus had to meet, and that the reformers of every age have had to overcome; and we must set our wills on the side of Christ, and move forward with firm confidence in God.

Key to Revival

The work of the apostles of Christ was to educate and train men and women to publish the good tidings of the crucified and risen Savior. Every soul converted to the gospel felt under solemn obligation to the Lord Jesus, to teach others the way of salvation. This is the spirit that should animate us; but there is a marked indifference upon this point in our churches, and this is the reason why there is not more spirituality and vigor in our Christian life. If you would go to work as Christ designed that His disciples should, and win souls to the truth, you would feel the need of



a deeper experience and greater knowledge in divine things, and would hunger and thirst after righteousness. You would plead with God, and your faith would be strengthened, and your soul would drink deeper draughts at the well of salvation. Encountering opposition and trials would drive you to the Bible and to prayer, and then you would go forth as laborers together with God, to open the Scriptures to the people. You would grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth, and your experience would be rich and fragrant. . . .

Go to work, brethren. It is not alone the large camp meetings or conventions and councils that will have the especial favor of God; the humblest effort of unselfish love will be crowned with His blessing, and receive its great reward. Do what you can, and God will increase your ability. Let no church think it is too

small to exert an influence and do service in the great work for this time. Let no one excuse himself because there are others who have talents to employ in the cause. Do your part. God will excuse no one. Jesus has given to “each his work” (Mark 13:34), and every man will be rewarded “according to his work” (Rev. 22:12). Everyone will be judged “according to what he has done” (2 Cor. 5:10), and will “give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). . . .

Take up the work anywhere and everywhere. Do that which is the nearest to you, right at your own doors, however humble and uncommended it may seem. Work only for the glory of God and the good of men. Let self sink out of sight, while with earnest purpose and solemn prayers of faith you work for Him who has died that you might live. Go to your neighbors one by one, and

come close to them till their hearts are warmed by your unselfish interest and love. Sympathize with them, pray for them, watch for opportunities to do them good, and as you can, gather a few together and open the Word of God to their darkened minds. Keep watching, as he who must render an account for the souls of men, and make the most of the privileges that God gives you of laboring with Him in His moral vineyard. Do not neglect speaking to your neighbors, and doing them all the kindness in your power, that you “might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). . . .

Revival Begins With One

When churches are revived, it is because some individual seeks earnestly for the blessing of God. He hungers and thirsts after God, and asks in faith, and receives accordingly. He goes

to work in earnest, feeling his great dependence upon the Lord, and souls are aroused to seek for a like blessing, and a season of refreshing falls on the hearts of men. The extensive work will not be neglected. The larger plans will be laid at the right time; but personal, individual effort and interest for your friends and neighbors will accomplish much more than can be estimated. . . .

Those who have been most successful in winning souls were men and women who did not pride themselves in their ability, but who went in humility and faith, and the power of God worked with their efforts in convicting and converting the hearts of those to whom they appealed. Jesus did this very work. He came close to those whom He desired to benefit by personal contact. . . .

He did not wait for congregations to assemble. The grandest truths were spoken to single individuals. The woman at the well in Samaria heard the wonderful words, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The interview with the humble Samaritan was not in vain. The words that fell from the lips of the divine Teacher stirred the heart of the listener. She gladly acknowledged Him. She felt the power of His holy character and the heavenly influence that went with His words of truth. Perfect trust filled her heart. Forgetful of her errand to the well, she hastened to publish His fame to her townsmen. Many left their employment to come to the stranger at Jacob's well. They plied Him with questions, and eagerly received the explanation of many things that had been dark to their understanding. The perplexity of their minds began to clear away. They were like people in darkness tracing up a sudden ray till they had found the day; and the result of the work of Jesus, as He sat weary and hungry at the well, was widespread in blessing. The one soul for whom He had labored became a means of reaching others and bringing them to the Savior of the world.

Revival Fuels Mission— and Mission Revival

This is ever the way the work of God has made progress in the earth. Let your light shine, and others will be kindled. . . . Idleness and religion do not go hand in hand; and the cause of our great deficiency in the Christian life and experience is inactivity in the work of God. The muscles of your body will become weak and useless if they are not kept in exercise, and it is so with the spiritual nature. If you would be strong, you must exercise your powers. Exercise faith in God by proving His promises as

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE, AND OTHERS WILL BE KINDLED.

you take up your cross and lift your burden. Put on the yoke of Christ, and prove His words that "you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Open the Scriptures to someone that is in darkness, and you will not complain of weariness and lack of interest in the cause of truth. Your heart will be awakened to an anxiety for souls, and joy in the evidences of the faith will fill your heart, and you will know that "he who waters will also be watered himself" (Prov. 11:25). With living faith claim the promises of God. . . .

There are too many talents hid in a napkin, and buried in the earth. . . . When Jesus went away, He left to every man his work, and "nothing to do" is an unwarrantable excuse. "Nothing to do" is the reason of trial among brethren; for Satan will fill the minds of idlers with his own plans, and set them to work. Your unemployed heart and mind afford him a plat to sow the seeds of doubt and skepticism. Those who have nothing to do find time for gossiping, tale-bearing, backbiting, and mischief-making. "Nothing to do" brings evil testimony against the brethren, and dissension into the church of Christ. Jesus says, "He who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matt. 12:30).

The law of God is being trampled underfoot, the blood of the covenant is being despised; and can we fold our hands and say that we have nothing to do? Let us arouse! The battle is waging. Truth and Error are nearing their final conflict. Let us march under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel, and fight the good fight of faith, and win eternal honors; for the truth will triumph, and we may be more than conquerors through Him who has loved us. The precious hours of probation are closing. Let us make sure work for eternal life, that we may glorify our heavenly Father, and be the means of saving souls for whom Christ died. ■

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS BELIEVE THAT **ELLEN G. WHITE** (1827-1915) EXERCISED THE BIBLICAL GIFT OF PROPHECY DURING MORE THAN 70 YEARS OF PUBLIC MINISTRY.

QUESTIONS FOR Reflection and Sharing

1. What is the link between revival and mission? Instead of calling for a revival, should we not focus our resources on spreading the gospel and "getting the job done"?
2. Read the story of the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. What principles did Jesus use to reach her heart? How are these principles relevant in our mission outreach?
3. We often feel that our contribution to mission is insignificant and feeble. What do you think Jesus would tell us when we feel like this? What lies at the center of mission?

FIRST SABBATH

Memory Gem
 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105, Clear Word/Kids).*

God's Precious Book

High up in the mountains of northern Italy and France lived a group of people called the Waldenses, who loved God. They loved the Bible and tried to live faithfully according to God's Word. When the priests and the monks of the Roman Church were the only ones allowed to read and teach the Bible written in the Latin language, the Waldenses had a copy of the Bible, and they translated it into their own language. Many of them even memorized portions of the Bible.

The Roman Church taught people to pray to the virgin Mary and to confess their sins to the priests. But the Waldenses believed what the Bible taught them: that they could pray directly to God.

Whenever the Waldenses met people who showed an interest in God's Word, they shared what the Bible says about a loving God who had sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to take the punishment for our sins.

The only thing they had to do was believe in Jesus, confess their sins, and ask Him for forgiveness.

When the priest and the monks heard what the Waldenses were teaching, they became very angry and threatened to put them in prison and even kill them if they did not stop. But the Waldenses faithfully continued to study the Bible and share its message. The pope became angry and decided to send his soldiers to punish the Waldenses. When the news that Rome's soldiers were on their way, the Waldenses fled

to the mountains and hid in caves and deep valleys, where the soldiers could not find them. But sometimes the soldiers did find some of them and put them to death. The Waldenses were not afraid to follow God's Word.

They trusted in Jesus as their good friend who helped them through many difficulties. Jesus also gave them courage to share His message with others. Their lives were changed as they followed what the Bible taught them. They became kinder, more helpful, and braver to witness for God. That meant *revival*, and they understood how important it was to live their lives according to God's will.

The Israelites and God's Word

The Israelites were a special people chosen by God to be an example to those living around them. God gave the Israelites instructions, through the prophets, not to worship other gods besides Him. He also told them how they were to live and treat each other. They obeyed God most of the time, and as long as they did, everything went well for them. But then they looked at their neighbors' gods and said, "We want a god that we can see, just like the ones our neighbors have."

So they started to make themselves gods out of stone and precious metals, and they bowed down and worshipped them. God became angry and sent His prophets to tell the Israelites they would be punished for their unfaithfulness. The Israelites realized that they had done something really wrong, so they destroyed their idols and begged God for His forgiveness. God loved the Israelites and forgave them and blessed them with riches and freedom. The Israelites experienced a *revival*, which means they changed their ways and worshipped God with all their hearts. ■

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share
& do

1. Look up the meaning of the word "revival." Share something you can do when your life is changed by Jesus.
2. Memorize a favorite Bible text and share it with a friend.

SUNDAY

Memory Gem
 "I have put Your words in my heart so I won't sin against You" (Psalm 119:11, Clear Word/Kids).*

God's Word in My Heart

Pierre and his wife, Blanche, and their three children, Hubert, Paula, and Gabrielle, lived high up in the mountains in one of the Waldensian valleys. Here among the mountains Pierre built a hut out of stones for his family to live in, and a barn just for the farm animals.

One summer day as Hubert and his two sisters watched their cows and goats up in the hills, they saw a band of Rome's soldiers coming up the valley. They knew right away that the soldiers were coming for them. They ran as fast as they could down the hill, over the field, and into the small kitchen, where Mother had just finished making bread dough. All three children

placed it in the dough, and wrapped it around the Bible so it looked like a loaf of bread. She quickly put the bread into the oven to bake.

Minutes later soldiers banged their fists on the door. Blanche opened the door and invited them in.

"We are looking for forbidden Bibles," the captain of the soldiers snarled. "And we have orders to search your house."

The soldiers looked everywhere, but found no Bible in the house or in the barn. They even looked in the oven, but saw only a loaf of bread baking.

"Oh, Mother," said Hubert after the soldiers had left, "I am so happy that they didn't find our Bible. But just in case they come back one day and take it from us, I want to learn even more of it by heart, because nobody can take away what's in my heart."

A Man After God's Own Heart

Do you remember how King Saul wanted to kill David? David had done nothing wrong, but was always faithful toward Saul. One day David cut off a piece of Saul's robe. And another time, David sneaked into Saul's tent and found him asleep but did not kill him.

"God forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed," he declared.

So David took Saul's spear and his water jug and went a safe distance from Saul's camp. He stood on top of a hill and called out: "Saul, why do you want to kill your servant?"

"Where are your spear and your water jug?" he continued.

"Look, here they are," he shouted. "I could have killed you while you were sleeping, but how can I do such an evil thing toward God's chosen king?"

David was a man who kept God's word in his heart. ■

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tried to tell their mother what they had seen.

"The soldiers are on their way up the valley!" Hubert shouted fearfully.

"If they find our Bible, they will take it and burn it, and we will be put in prison," Paula continued.

"What shall we do, Mother?" Gabrielle asked with tears in her eyes.

Blanche thought for a few seconds and quickly said, "Bring me the Bible."

Hubert hurried and brought it to his mother. Blanche took the bread dough and rolled it out flat, then wrapped the Bible in a kitchen towel,

share
& do

1. Why do we need to keep God's word in our hearts?
2. What difference can it make in our lives?
3. Make red hearts and paste on them five Bible texts that can help us do what Jesus wants us to.

Memory Gem
“The seeds that fell in good soil stand for those who hear the message and retain it in a good and obedient heart, and they persist until they bear fruit” (Luke 8: 15, TEV).*

A Changed Heart!

Twelve-year-old Paula was known for her kindness and love for Jesus. One day her mother asked her to bring a jar of preserved fruit to Louisa, a poor old woman in the village.

Louisa answered Paula’s knock. As Paula entered Louisa’s home, a beautiful black cat followed her in.

“Ah, here comes Cordero!” Louisa explained, “He’s my only friend.”

“I am your friend too,” Paula said. “And there’s another friend who has sent you this gift!” She placed the preserved fruit in the hands of the old woman.

“Is this for me?” Louisa asked. “How can I thank you? No one has ever brought me anything; no one even takes time to speak to me.”

Paula understood how lonely Louisa had been, so she spent some time visiting with her.

It was getting late, and Paula had to leave. Louisa took her hands gently and said, “How

can I ever thank you for coming to visit a poor old woman like me whom nobody loves? Do come and see me again soon.”

“Oh, Louisa,” exclaimed Paula, “There is One who loves you. Do you know Him?”

Louisa shook her head sadly. “No, nobody loves me.”

“Jesus loves you, Louisa!” exclaimed Paula excitedly.

“Jesus? Tell me about Him; I have heard that name—who is He?”

And Paula told Louisa about the Lord Jesus, who died on the cross, rose again, and now is in heaven waiting for Louisa to give Him her heart because He loves her.

“He wishes to be your friend,” said Paula. “Just

ask Him and give Him your heart.”

That afternoon Louisa prayed and gave her heart to Jesus.

The Fertile Soil

Once when Jesus was teaching, He told His listeners a parable about a farmer who went out to sow seeds in his field. As he scattered the seeds, some of them fell on the road, and the birds quickly came and ate them up.

Some of the seeds also fell among the rocks, where there was very little soil. These seeds quickly sprouted and grew because the soil wasn’t deep. When the sun came up, the plants dried up and died.

Some seeds fell among thorns and thistles, and the weeds grew so quickly that they overpowered the plants. But most of the seeds that the farmers scattered fell on good soil, and the plants bore lots of grain.

When the disciples asked Jesus what the meaning of the story was, He explained that the farmer is out sowing God’s Word. Some people are like the seeds that fall on the road: as soon as they hear God’s Word, Satan comes and takes the seed or truth away.

Some people are like seeds that fall among rocks. As soon as they hear God’s Word, they accept it with their heads but not with their hearts. When problems come along, they give up and leave God.

Others are like the seeds sown among the thorns and the thistles. They hear God’s Word, but the love of money and all the things *they* want to do get in the way of their desire to follow God’s word.

But some people are like the seeds sown in good soil. They hear God’s Word, accept it, and live their lives according to it. They bear fruits of kindness, helpfulness, and love to people around them. Many learn to love and follow God’s Word, because only God’s Word can change us. ■

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**share
& do**

1. How can we bear lots of good fruits in our lives? at school? in the community?
2. Make two or three get-well cards and decorate them. Then write a message in each and give them to people in need of encouragement.

TUESDAY

Memory Gem
 "Don't forget to read what Moses wrote. Do it in the morning and at night, so you won't forget what I said. I will bless you and give you success" (Joshua 1: 8, Clear Word/Kids).*

God's Word in Our Hearts

Autumn had come, the harvest was over, and the hay for the animals and grain and vegetables were all stored away for the winter. Paula and Gabrielle loved this time of year. It was perfect for indoor activities, such as carding wool, weaving, and knitting. But most of all they loved it, because the neighbors would take turns hosting everyone at their individual huts for worship. Gabrielle loved the singing at these worships, especially when a guest came to the valley and would teach them new songs. Paula loved to listen to her uncle read and teach from the Bible. Sometimes the

Therefore, it was important for them to have it stored in their hearts.

Stones as a Reminder

The Israelites had been walking in the desert for 40 years. After Moses died, God appointed Joshua as their new leader. God asked Joshua to remember every day and night to read what Moses had written.

Then He told him: "Today I will show all the Israelites that I am with you just as I was with Moses."

Finally the day came when the Israelites could cross the river Jordan and enter into the land that God had promised them. God had told Joshua how the crossing should be done, so now Joshua stood on the banks of the river and commanded the priests, who were carrying the ark, to be the first to walk into the river. As soon as the priests' feet touched the water, the flow upstream stopped. The flow downstream also disappeared. The priests were told to stop in the middle of the river, on dry ground, and stand there until all the Israelites had crossed over. When everyone had crossed over safely, Joshua commanded one elder from each of the tribes of Israel to go into the riverbed where the priests were standing and collect one rock and bring them to him. When all the rocks had been delivered to Joshua, he told the priests to come out of the riverbed. As soon as the priests were safe up on the riverbank, the waters of Jordan returned.

That night when the Israelites camped for the first time in their promised land at a place called Gilgal, they gathered for worship. Joshua took the 12 stones from the Jordan and piled them up. Joshua did this so that every time the Israelites passed by these stones they would remember that God is powerful and worthy of their respect and honor, and that His Word should always be in their hearts. ■

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children would have a chance to recite Bible chapters they had learned. Paula already knew most of the book of Matthew by heart, and she had started to memorize the book of Luke as well. Hubert, who had been away at the School of the Barbas (ministers), knew most of the New Testament by heart. He was studying to become a traveling missionary and by the end of his schooling would learn most of the Bible by heart, as well as copy it by hand. The Bible was important to Pierre's family, for a time could come when they would not have one.

share & do

1. Why is it important to study God's Word?
2. Try to memorize today's memory gem and five other Bible verses. Then share them with your Sabbath school teacher and friends.
3. If you memorized one verse from the book of Matthew every day, how many chapters would you know by the end of the year?

Memory Gem
“I will talk about your laws before rulers with no shame whatsoever. I will rejoice in your commandments because I love them” (Psalm 119:46, 47, CEB).*

Ruth's Special Friend

In the valley where Pierre and his family lived, there was a hut completely hidden among the trees. Eleven-year-old Ruth and her family lived there. When Ruth was just a little girl, she had fallen into the open fireplace and burned her face badly, and now she was very scarred. The children in the village were not nice to Ruth, and they used to tease her and call her “catface.”

Laura liked Ruth, so she decided she would be her friend. When all her chores were done, Laura would run down to the hut in the forest and visit with Ruth. The little girl was very shy, and also scared that Laura might tease her. But

as the weeks passed by, Ruth started to trust Laura. One day she asked her, “Why do you come here?”

“I want to be your friend!”

Laura answered.

“No one wants to be friends with me,” Ruth said sadly. “I am too ugly to have friends.”

“Who told you that?” Laura asked.

“The children in the village,” she answered.

“Well, I want to be your friend,” Laura answered, “and I know of someone else who also wants to be your friend.”

Ruth's eyes lit up, and she exclaimed, “I have never had friends before, and now I have two. Who is my other friend?”

“Jesus,” Laura answered. “Jesus is also your friend.”

Ruth bowed her head and with sorrow in her voice said, “He is not going to be a friend to someone like me.”

“Oh, Ruth, He loves you just the way you are. To Him you are beautiful, and He is your friend! You can talk to Him about anything, and He can take away the hurt and sorrow that you feel because of your scars.”

“I want to be His friend as well,” Ruth said. “Help me, Laura; won't you help me tell Him

that I want to be His friend as well?”

Together the two girls prayed, and Ruth accepted Jesus as her friend. Most of all, she thanked Him for loving her as she was.

The Slave Girl's Testimony

Do you remember the Bible story of the little Jewish maid who was captured by the Syrian king's soldiers? She was captured and sold to be the servant girl for the wife of Captain Naaman.

When the little Jewish maid learned that her master, Captain Naaman, had leprosy, she went to Naaman's wife. “I wish that my master could come before the prophet who lives in Samaria. He would cure him of leprosy,” she said.

Immediately Naaman's wife told him what the Jewish maid said, and it brought hope to his heart.

When Naaman finally arrived at Prophet Elisha's house, Elisha sent his messenger out and said to Naaman:

“Go and wash seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will become clean.”

Naaman became really angry and left.

“I thought for sure that he'd come out and call on the name of the Lord his God and cure the leprosy,” he said. “I could just as well have washed myself in the rivers in Damascus.”

But Naaman's servants said to him, “If the prophet had told you to do something difficult, wouldn't you have done it? All he said to you was ‘Wash and become clean.’”

So Naaman went down to the river Jordan and washed himself seven times, and when he came out of the water the seventh time, his skin was clean.

He hurried back to Elisha and said, “Now I know for sure that there's no God anywhere on earth except in Israel.”

Though Laura and the little Jewish maid were just children, they were willing to witness for God in heaven. They shared Jesus with others, and the results were amazing. ■

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share
& do

1. How can you share Jesus with your friends at school and in your community?
2. Make a bookmark and write your favorite Bible text on it. Give it to a friend at school who doesn't know Jesus.

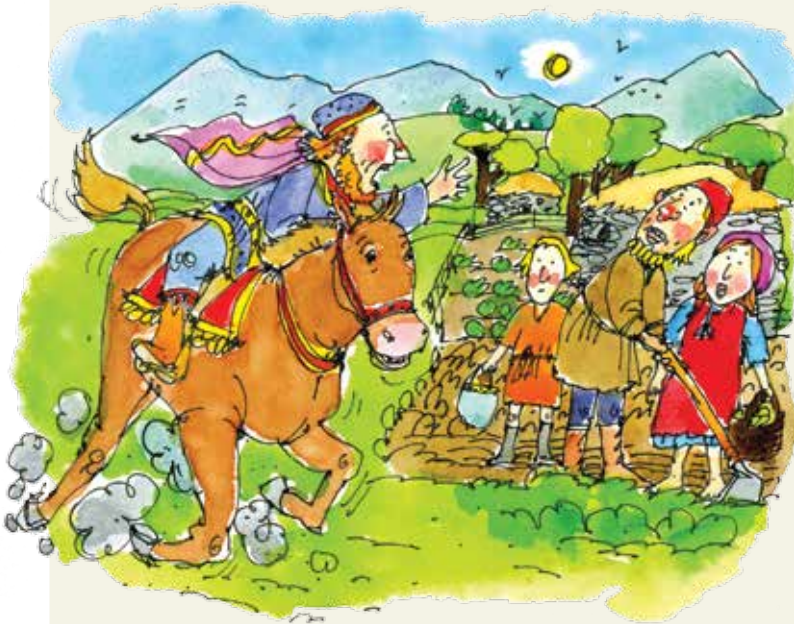
THURSDAY

Memory Gem

“So we have no choice but to preach to the Gentiles so that they can be saved. This is what the Lord has told us to do” (Acts 13:47, Clear Word/Kids).*

A Secret Friend

Pascal lived in the plains below the Waldensian valleys. He was a rich man who believed in the Roman Church. After Pascal met Pierre, who taught him from the Bible, he began protecting the Waldenses. One day Pascal heard that Rome’s soldiers were marching toward the Waldensian valleys, and he knew that Pierre’s family and the other Waldenses were in danger. He took his fastest horse and rode up into the valley to warn Pierre and the others of the danger. On his way up the valley he stopped at every little hut and shouted,



“The soldiers are coming!”

Finally he came to the top of the valley, where Pierre and his family lived.

“The soldiers are coming to kill all the Waldenses!” Pascal shouted urgently. “Pack up today and flee to the mountains in France.”

An hour later Pierre, Blanche, Hubert, Paula, and Gabrielle started their long and dangerous walk across the mountains to safety.

A Persecutor Becoming a Follower

Saul, like the soldiers in the Waldensian story, persecuted the followers of Jesus. Saul believed with all his heart that this traveling preacher, Jesus from Nazareth, who had recently been crucified, was a false prophet and his followers had to be put to death. He had already gotten many Christians killed, and now he was traveling to Damascus with a letter from the high priest giving him permission to take all Christian men, women, and children as prisoners to Jerusalem.

He was getting close to Damascus when suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed all around him. Saul fell to the ground, hiding his face. Then he heard a voice coming down from heaven saying, “Saul, why do you persecute Me?”

“Who are You, Lord?” Saul asked fearfully.

“I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting.” The voice replied. “Now get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told what to do.”

The soldiers traveling with him were completely speechless. They had heard the sound but had not seen anyone. Saul slowly stood up and opened his eyes to see, but to his horror, he could not see anything. He was blind!

The soldiers led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days Saul was blind. But God told Ananias to go and heal Saul, saying, “Go! I have chosen this man, and he is going to be a missionary for Me to the Gentiles.”

Ananias went to the house where Saul was staying. He put his hands on Saul, and his sight returned. Saul was changed when he met Jesus. He became Paul, a follower of Jesus who traveled all over the Mediterranean preaching and teaching about Jesus. He was no longer a persecutor.

By meeting Jesus, we are changed. Pascal became a protector of God’s people, and Saul became a powerful preacher. ■

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share & do

1. Why is God’s Word able to change people?
2. Make a list of things you stopped doing after you made Jesus your friend.

Memory Gem
 “Man can’t live on bread alone, but needs the Word of God” (Matthew 4: 4, Clear Word/Kids).*

A Temptation Almost Too Big

Many of the other Waldensians from the valley joined Pierre and his family as they made their way up the mountain. For supper that first evening Blanche gave everyone just one small piece of bread. They had many more days of traveling, and the food they brought along had to last for the entire journey.

Three days of walking went by, and only one mountain pass had been crossed. Gabrielle was tired and hungry, and all she could think about was food and sleep. That evening she cried herself to sleep, and when morning came, she didn’t want to get up. Paula was worried about her little sister and promised her she would

give her some of her bread if she would get up and get ready. At once Gabrielle got up and was ready for the day’s walk.

Later that day as they continued their climb, Gabrielle saw something fall off the back of their neighbor’s mule. It was half a loaf of bread!

I’ll hide it under my coat and not tell anyone. Then I can eat it when I get hungry, thought Gabrielle.

They will be really hungry when they have nothing to eat, she thought again. *This is not right. It is stealing.*

The Bible says it is wrong to steal, her conscience kept telling her.

She could not do it—it was wrong. So she

took the bread out from her coat and ran up to the family and told them it had fallen off their mule. That evening Gabrielle was happy for the small piece of bread that was given to her.

Jesus and the Tempter

Remember Jesus was also tempted in the wilderness where He spent 40 days praying and not having anything to eat. After 40 days of fasting and Jesus was really hungry, Satan appeared as an angel before Him.

“If You are the Son of God, You could turn these stones into bread.”

Jesus knew it was Satan who was tempting Him, so He answered:

“Man can’t live on bread alone, but needs the Word of God.”

Satan was not about to give up, so he took Jesus with him to Jerusalem, to the highest point on the Temple, and said to Him:

“Show me how much faith you have in God by jumping off this wall. The Bible says that God will send angels to take care of those who love Him.”

But Jesus knew that Satan was mixing truth with untruth and said:

“God does not want us to show how much we trust Him by doing something foolish.”

Satan did not want to give up, so he took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him a beautiful view of the world and said to Him: “You don’t have to die to save the world. I’ll give You all this if You’ll just bow down and worship me.”

“Get away from Me, Satan. For it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve Him only. God is the one who owns this world,” said Jesus.

Immediately Satan left. Jesus was so weak from going without food and water for 40 days that He was close to dying, but God sent His angels to help Him and give Him strength. ■

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1. How can God’s Word help us resist temptation? List four or five ways.
2. List two Bible texts that can help us resist Satan’s temptations.

Memory Gem

“Go and share the good news with everyone. . . . Teach them everything I've taught you. I'll always be with you, right up to the end of the world!” (Matthew 28:19, 20, Clear Word/Kids).*

Going on God's Mission

Weeks had passed since the Waldenses had left their homes in the Italian valley. They had crossed several mountain passes, and now, as they came across the ridge of a high mountain, they stopped and saw a beautiful valley. They had arrived in France, and could settle down and be safe. This lovely place also had tall trees, beautiful flowers, and a rushing river running down from the mountains.

Each family found a new place to make their homes. Pierre and his family found a small side valley where they built a small hut that could shelter them from winter storms. Paula, Gabri-

Everywhere the Waldenses went they shared God's Word with people around them. This was how God's Word spread throughout Italy and France during the time the Bible was thought to be the property of the Roman Church. The Waldenses began a revival, and many people turned their hearts to God.

The Revival in Ephesus

Remember how Saul, who later became Paul, became a changed man when he met Jesus? The revival that Saul experienced in his life made him a powerful missionary who brought many people to Jesus.

Paul caused a revival everywhere he went, especially in a city called Ephesus. Some believed what he was preaching, and some did not. The nonbelievers started to spread rumors about the Christians, so Paul moved his meetings from the synagogue to a school and continued to preach for two years, until almost everyone in Ephesus and the surrounding area had heard about Jesus.

God performed some extraordinary miracles through Paul, and many grew to give the name of Jesus respect.

Some of the believers, who had been playing with magic and trying to talk to the dead, decided to stop doing that. Soon they brought their books about magic to the town square and burned them all on a huge bonfire.

Because of Paul's preaching a revival began, lives were changed, and many people chose to live according to the teachings of the Bible and became followers of Jesus. ■

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elle, and their mother got busy gathering supplies they would need for the winter. They found berries, nuts, and mushrooms in the forest, and collected firewood. Everyone was busy, but they still found time to make friends with many French people who lived near them. It did not take long before Pierre had invited them to join them for worship. He shared the good news of Jesus every day, and soon they came to enjoy the good news that Pierre shared from the Bible.

share & do

1. How can you be a missionary today to witness for Jesus?
2. Make a plan with your parents or Sabbath school teacher for sharing Jesus with others. Remember to pray for each of those individuals.



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