

Title: *Experiencing Jesus Christ as Lord: The Spiritual Life*

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1. people who desire an easier-to-understand version of the adult quarterly;
2. people whose second language is English; and
3. people who are deaf. (The Easy Reading is based in large part on American Sign Language.)

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If you have any questions about this edition of the Adult Bible Study Guide, feel free to contact me at chiomentil@gc.adventist.org.

Sincerely,

Lyndelle Chiomenti
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Associate Editor, Adult Standard/Adult Teachers' Bible Study Guides

Title: *Experiencing Jesus Christ as Lord: The Spiritual Life*

ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Easy Reading Edition

Experiencing Jesus Christ as Lord: The Spiritual Life

by:

Dr. Derek Morris

July, August, September

2005

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Experiencing Jesus as Lord

Jesus is Lord of all. That is because He is the Creator of all. "All things were made through him. Nothing that has been made was made without him" (John 1:3, NIrV). Jesus is Lord of every nation, tribe, language, and people. Not everyone recognizes Him as Lord. But the day is coming when every one will bow and every one will confess (say) that Jesus is Lord.

Jesus came to this earth. "He made himself nothing. He took on the very nature of a servant. He was made in human form. He appeared as a man. He came down to the lowest level. He obeyed God completely, even though it led to his death. In fact, he died on a cross" (Philippians 2:7, 8, NIrV). Jesus will return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. His second coming will be with power and great glory. "Look! He is coming with the clouds! Every eye will see him. Even those [people] who pierced [nailed] him will see him. All the nations of the earth will be sad because of him. This will really happen! Amen." (Revelation 1:7, NIrV).

People who have turned away from Jesus' grace will run

in terror (fear) when He returns. Jesus' glory will be the same as a destroying fire. But to people who have received Jesus as Savior and Lord, His second coming will be a time of joy! They will proudly announce, "He is our God. We trusted in him, and he saved us. He is the Lord. We trusted in him. Let us be filled with joy because he saved us. (Isaiah 25:9, NIrV).

Every one will then confess (say) that Jesus is Lord. But for many people, it will be too late to accept Jesus as Lord. For wicked people, saying that Jesus is Lord is just admitting a truth they cannot deny. They are not surrendering to His love and authority.¹

The Bible appeals to (begs) us to accept God's grace freely given through Jesus, our Lord and Savior. We are to accept Jesus as our Savior while there is still time. We can accept Him today. Jesus has paid the penalty (price) for our sins. We can, today, stand perfect in His righteousness (holiness). Jesus' righteousness is the righteousness of God Himself. God freely gives this righteousness (holiness) to every willing sinner. "We are made right by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. That happens to all [people] who

¹ authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust.

believe. It is no different for the Jews than for anyone else. Everyone sinned. No one measures up to God's glory. The free gift of God's grace makes all of us right with him. Christ Jesus paid the price to set us free" (Romans 3:22-24, NIV). "We are sinful and unholy. We cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own to meet the requirements of God's law. But Jesus has made a way of escape for us. When He lived on earth, He went through the same trials and temptations we have to face. He lived a sinless life. He died for us. Now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him and accept Him as your Saviour, then God accepts you as righteous (holy). It does not matter how sinful your life may have been. Jesus' character stands in place of your character. You are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."-Adapted by Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ [Jesus]*, p. 62.

When we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord and accept His salvation, we say He is Lord of every nation, tribe, language, and people. We also say His is Lord of every part of our lives. He is Lord of all! As Christians, we are to show that we truly believe in Jesus as Lord. We show Jesus

is Lord by saying He is Lord of our lives and by letting Him rule our lives.

In these lessons, we will study what it means to experience Jesus as Lord, Lord of our priorities,² thoughts, desires, and more. We will look at what it means to live day by day with Jesus as our Lord. We will obey Him in every part of our life. It is not enough to claim Jesus as our Savior. We must also claim Him as Lord. And because He is our Lord, He is able to be our Savior. How we live shows we belong to Him. How we live depends on how much we let Him be Lord of our lives.

This quarter, we will learn what it means to experience Jesus as Lord of our lives.

Dr. Derek Morris helped to write this quarter's lessons. He is pastor of the Calimesa Adventist Church in Calimesa, California. He is also part-time professor of preaching at Southern Adventist University.

² priorities—things listed in order of their importance; a list of things numbered in order of their importance.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 3:9-26; Luke 1:26-38;
John 1:1-18; Acts 9:1-19.

MEMORY VERSE: "But the angel said to them [the shepherds],
'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is
for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has
been born to you. He is Christ the Lord'" (Luke 2:10, 11,
NirV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: The New Testament encourages us to receive Jesus both as Savior and Lord.

SAVIOR AND LORD. Many Christians today are looking for a Savior who does not require obedience. They want salvation without rules. They say they are Christians. But they have their own kind of savior.

An angel told Joseph to call the Miracle child “Jesus, for [because] He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21, NKJV). An angel also announced to the shepherds that “there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11, NKJV).

More New Testament verses speak of Jesus as Lord than as Savior. If Jesus is your Savior, He must be your Lord. Peter called Jesus “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11, NKJV). Paul encourages us to look for “the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20, NKJV). In this week’s lesson, we will study both the importance and the results of the question: Have you received Jesus both as Savior and Lord?

Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 2.

Sunday

June 26

OUR NEED FOR A SAVIOR (Romans 3:9-26).

Paul warned the Romans that "God shows his anger from heaven. It [God's anger] against all the godless and evil things people do. They are so evil that they say no to the truth" (Romans 1:18, NIV). Rebellion against God's will and the Bible has bad results. "When you sin, the pay you get is death" (Romans 6:23, NIV).

What important point does Paul make in Romans 3:9-26?

We like to compare³ ourselves with other people to make ourselves look good. We point to people who are worse sinners than ourselves. But we forget we also are guilty. We try to make ourselves right with God. This is proof of our fallen condition. Paul says we cannot make excuses. All people have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We all are guilty before God. We can look at the world around us and see so many examples of sin.

³ compare—show how things are the same.

What are some of the examples you see of sin? How far do you have to look to see these examples?

Do you see anything within yourself that can make you look good to God? Why is looking at yourself the best way to understand that the only hope we have comes from a forgiving God?

Monday

June 27

HEAVEN'S GREATEST GIFT (Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1-18).

Sunday's lesson taught us that, if God had not acted for our good, we would have no hope. But the good news is that God did act for our good through Jesus.

Many people who follow other religions admire Jesus as a holy prophet or a great teacher. But few of these people accept how Jesus came to this world.

What message did the angel Gabriel give to Mary, Jesus' mother? Luke 1:26-38.

The New Testament writers boldly announced that Jesus was created by the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit will come to you [Mary]. The power [Holy Spirit] of the Most High God will cover you. So the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35, NIV). Born of a human mother, Jesus could call only God His real Father. Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man.

What important message does John give about Jesus? John 1:1-18.

Jesus is more than a holy prophet. He is more than a great teacher. He is the Word made human. He is God's thoughts made see-able and hear-able. Jesus was one with the Father from eternity⁴ past. The Son of God became human in the person of Jesus. He is Immanuel (God with us). But He was “with us”—not in the thunder, lightning, and clouds of Sinai—but as one of us. He was as fully human as we are. That the Son of God was willing to come down to our level is amazing (wonderful)!

⁴ eternity—life without end.

Sin required God to become a human and then die to save us from sin. What does this tell us about how bad sin really is? How does God dying to save you help you to trust Him?

Tuesday

June 28

GOD'S PERFECT PLAN (Isaiah 53:3-7).

Jesus came to the river Jordan to be baptized. John the Baptist announced, "' Look! The Lamb of God [Jesus]! He takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29, NIV). In this short announcement, John the Baptist gave a summary of God's salvation.

How do the following verses help you understand God's salvation?

Genesis 22:6-14: _____

Isaiah 53:3-7: _____

Revelation 5:1-14

We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. The price of that sin is death. We all deserve to die. But Jesus, the Son of God, took our punishment upon Himself. "The servant [Jesus] was pierced [nailed] because we had sinned. He was crushed because we had done what was evil. He was punished to make us whole [well] again. His wounds have healed us" (Isaiah 53:5, NIrV).

When Jesus died on the cross, He was putting down His life as the Lamb of God. He was fulfilling God's plan of salvation in every way. "Christ died for our sins, just as Scripture [the Bible] said he would" (1 Corinthians 15:3, NIrV). "Christ didn't [did not] have any sin. But God made him become sin for us. So we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21, NIrV).

"Christ was treated as we deserve. Now we might be treated as He deserves. He was punished for our sins, which he had not done. Now we might be made right with God through His righteousness (holiness), which we did not have. He suffered the death which was ours. Now we might receive the life which was His. 'His wounds have healed us (NIRV).'"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. Read this quote again, putting yourself in it:

"Christ was treated as I deserve. Now I might be treated as He deserves. . . ." Read it again and again until you understand what Christ has done for you.

Wednesday

June 29

ACCEPTING GOD'S GRACE (1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

Our kind heavenly Father has made a plan for everyone to be saved. We are dead in our sins. But we can be made alive in Jesus. Paul preached the good news: "Say with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord.' Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. Then you will be saved" (Romans 10:9, NIRV). The jailer asked Paul and Silas what he needed

to do to be saved. They answered: “‘Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you and your family will be saved’” (Acts 16:31, NIV). Salvation is for all people who accept it. When we believe in Jesus, we will be saved.

But, not everyone wants to accept God’s salvation. Some people see the message of the Cross and blood sacrifice as very old-fashioned. Other people want to trust their own wisdom rather than God’s wisdom.

How does Paul describe the different answers to God’s perfect plan of salvation? 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. How do some people today show these same answers?

During the time of the apostles,⁵ some people looked upon Jesus’ death as a scandal.⁶ How could someone who died as a criminal be the Messiah? Other people saw the Cross as something foolish. How could one Man’s death influence the future end of the human race? Both groups of people refused to accept God’s salvation. They laughed at His grace. Some

⁵ apostles—the disciples of Jesus whom He chose to preach the gospel after He returned to heaven.

⁶ scandal—something that people are ashamed of.

people laughed because God's grace went against their own religious views. Other people laughed because God's salvation did not seem reasonable and "scientific." But some people accepted the good news of salvation through Jesus. They saw that Jesus' death for their sins was the power and wisdom of God. God's salvation had many enemies. But Paul announced, "I am not ashamed of the good news [God's salvation]. It is God's power. And it will save everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16, NIV).

Think about your own answer to Jesus' saving grace. What helped you accept His salvation? Or have you not yet accepted His salvation?

Thursday

June 30

SAYING THAT JESUS IS LORD (Acts 9:1-19).

John wrote the news that Jesus "came to what was his own. But his own people did not accept him" (John 1:11, NIV). The people wanted a Messiah who would save them from their Roman rulers. For this reason, many refuse to accept

God's plan for their salvation. But John also wrote, "Some people did accept him [Jesus]. They believed in his name. He gave them the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, NIV). Many people fail to understand John 1:12. When we accept God's perfect plan of salvation through Jesus, we receive Jesus as our Savior and our Lord.

Study the story about how Saul (Paul) accepted Jesus. Acts 9:1-19. What does it mean to your own life when you receive Jesus as Savior and Lord?

Saul realized (understood) he was facing the risen Jesus. He did not say, "Lord, What do you want me to believe?" or "Lord, what do you want me to say?" Instead, he asked, "'Lord, what do You want me to do?'" (Acts 9:6, KJV). By calling Jesus "Lord," Saul recognized who Jesus really was. For this reason, Saul needed to obey Him. So when the Lord said, "'Arise [get up] and go,'" Saul arose (got up) and went. Ananias gave the same answer. At first, Ananias argued with Jesus. He questioned Jesus' judgment. But when Jesus said, "'Go,'" Ananias went. The message is clear: When

we say that Jesus is Lord, we recognize His full authority⁷ over our lives.

What did Jesus say to people who said they believed in Him but did not obey Him? Luke 6:46-49.

When we receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, we will obey Him. As a result, our lives will be greatly changed.

Suppose Jesus were to suddenly appear to you, as He did to Saul. And you said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" What do you think He would say to you? Why?

Friday

July 1

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read 2 Peter. Notice all he says about Jesus. Second Peter begins and ends with Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

Read about the people below who struggled with accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Nicodemus—John 3:1-21; John 7:50-53; John 19:39-42

⁷ authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust; power.

The rich young ruler—Matthew 19:16-26

Zacchaeus—Luke 19:1-10

Thomas—John 20:19-29

Why did they struggle?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we encourage one another to accept Jesus Christ as Lord in every part of our lives without becoming legalistic⁸ or judgmental?⁹ How can we avoid legalism¹⁰ when we ask Jesus to rule in every area (part) of our lives? Why is a proper understanding of righteousness (holiness) by faith¹¹ the only way to protect yourself against legalism?
2. As a class, what could you do to help members in your local church understand the importance of letting Jesus be Lord of their lives? What could you do to encourage members to obey Jesus faithfully?

⁸ legalistic—believing that obeying the law will save you.

⁹ judgmental—find fault with people; pointing out to people the wrong things they have done.

¹⁰ legalism—obeying the law to earn salvation; keeping the Ten Commandments to be saved.

¹¹ righteousness by faith—God saves us when we have faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

3. What encouragement would you give to a friend who wants to experience salvation but who is afraid to surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord?

4. Ask each class member to answer to following question, "What is salvation?" Discuss the answers.

Lord of our Priorities¹²

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 19:5; Romans 3:24;
Ephesians 1:7.

MEMORY VERSE: ``But put God's kingdom first. Do what he wants you to do. Then all of those things will also be given to you' '' (Matthew 6:33, NIrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Jesus does not ask to be first among

¹² priorities—things listed in order of their importance; a list of things numbered in order of their importance.

equals in our lives. He asks to be first without equal.

JESUS' STRANGE CLAIM. Jesus asks us to give Him unequalled first place in our lives. To all people who would follow Him, Jesus says, "'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life-he cannot be my disciple'" (Luke 14:26, NIV).

Clearly, we cannot take Jesus' statement at face value. As followers of Jesus, we are to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Then we should certainly love people who are close to us, such as our family members. Jesus is not asking us to hate our family members. Instead he is saying we must give Him first place in our lives. He must be first in our lives because He is our Creator and Savior. He saved us with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19). We owe Him everything. So He is asking us to recognize our debt to Him by making Him first in our lives. How could we dare make anything else more important than Jesus?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 9.

Sunday

July 3

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S (Exodus 19:5).

How do the following verses help us understand the claims Jesus has over our lives?

Genesis 1:1 _____

Exodus 19:5 _____

Isaiah 45:18 _____

Psalm 24:1 _____

Psalm 50:10, 11

Colossians 1:16

The idea of Jesus being first in our lives depends on who He is contrasted¹³ to who we are. Understanding this contrast can help us understand why Jesus should be first in our lives. The leader of one nation does not have the right to make rules for another country. For example, the president of France does not have the authority¹⁴ to tell people living in Paraguay how they must live.

As our Creator, Jesus is the greatest Ruler of the universe. It does not matter if we accept Him as ruler or not. He still has authority over us. Jesus has given us

¹³ contrasted—show how things are different.

¹⁴ authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust.

stewardship¹⁵ over things on earth. But whatever we “own” we have only because God first created these things and gave them to us.

It is very important to remember this, because God does not force us to use the gifts He has given us. He has made us free to choose what we think is important. We can put His claims over us in words, in how we live, and in how we make choices. Or we can do what we want. If we do what we want, we “earn” the sad results of our wrong choices.

**Are you a good singer? Do you own a lot of property?
Are you a powerful speaker? Are you successful farmer? No
matter what you have or do, think carefully about how
everything comes from God. How can understanding that
everything comes from God help you to make your choices?
What changes might you need to make in order to be sure
Jesus is first in your life?**

¹⁵ stewardship—God gives us responsibility to manage property, money, time, and talents. This kind of management is called stewardship.

Monday

July 4

SAVIOR GOD (Romans 3:24; Isaiah 44:22).

In yesterday's lesson, we learned that God claims us because He is our Creator. He is our Owner. But in a fallen world, that might not be enough to make us want to serve Him or surrender our lives and choices to Him. In a way, we might be responsible to God as someone is responsible to his or her employer.¹⁶ But God does not want us to serve Him, because we think we have to. He wants us to serve Him because we love Him for what He has done for us as our Creator and Savior.

Remember a time when you did something for someone because you had to. Then remember when you did something for someone because you really loved and appreciated that person. How do these two situations help you understand the way Jesus wants us to serve Him?

The Bible is clear that Jesus is both our Creator and

¹⁶ employer—the person you work for.

our Savior. Many verses talk about Jesus as our Savior. He has done the work of salvation for our sake. It is impossible to understand His death on the cross separate from salvation.

How do the following verses help you want to serve Jesus? Romans 3:24; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Galatians 3:13.

In the Old and New Testaments, the word for "redeem," or "redemption," comes from different words that mean "to buy back," "to ransom,"¹⁷ to "deliver." These meanings suggest what Jesus did for us. Jesus is both our Creator and our Redeemer (Savior). He ransomed us from the power and the final result of sin (Romans 6:23). Understanding what this redemption (salvation) means for us personally helps us to make Jesus Lord of our choices.

¹⁷ ransom—money paid for the return of a kidnaped person. Jesus' death paid the ransom for our freedom from sin and Satan.

Tuesday

July 5

JESUS' EXAMPLE (John 4:34).

Doing His Father's will was the number one item on Jesus' list. His plan for life was simply this: To discover the Father's will and do it.

What is the common theme in the following verses?

John 4:34 _____

John 6:38 _____

Luke 22:42 _____

Phil. 2:8 _____

Hebrews 10:9

John 17:8

“Jesus gave Himself so completely that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God’s plans for Him. Day by day, God unfolded His plans to Jesus. In the same way, we should depend upon God so our lives may always reflect His will.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 208.

Jesus’ life of complete surrender is a powerful example. Both His actions and His words were from God.

What does each of the verses you have just read mean to you personally? What do you need to change to follow Jesus’ example?

Wednesday

July 6

FIRST ON YOUR AGENDA¹⁸ (Luke 6:46).

What question does Jesus ask his hearers at the end of His Sermon on the Mount? Luke 6:46. How different would your life be if you did everything Jesus told you to do?

Obedience is the greatest proof we have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord. His will becomes our will. His plans become our plans. We surrender ourselves completely to Him as Lord of every part of our lives, because we love Him and are thankful to Him for saving us.

We must not call Jesus "Lord," then fail to recognize His Lordship over our lives as we plan our daily schedules. Too often we make plans, then ask God to bless these plans. But Ellen White suggests something different for people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord: "Surrender all your plans to Him, to be done according to His will. Day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God. In

¹⁸ agenda—a list of things to do.

this way, your life will change more and more to be like the life of Jesus.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ [Jesus]*, p. 70.

Read the following stories about certain Bible characters. Where did God’s plans for them not agree with their personal plans?

Exodus 2:11-15 _____

Jeremiah 1:4-10 _____

2 Timothy 4:10 _____

Matthew 19:16-22 _____

Who cannot see himself or herself in these stories?
Some of the stories had a good ending. Some of the stories
had a bad ending. What made the difference between a good
ending and a bad ending.

Thursday

July 7

FIRST IN YOUR DAY (Mark 1:35; Psalm 5:1-3).

Jesus showed how important it is to seek God first in the day. "It was very early in the morning and still dark. Jesus got up and left the house. He went to a place where he could be alone. There he prayed" (Mark 1:35, NIV).

"The early morning often found Jesus in a quiet place. He was studying the Bible or praying. From these quiet hours He would return to His home to take up His duties again, and to give an example of patient work."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 90.

We would do well to follow Jesus' example. It is

important always to make Jesus first in our lives (Psalm 16:8). But we also need to set aside special times of prayer. David prayed in the morning, at noon, and in the evening (Psalm 55:17). Daniel followed almost the same habit. (Daniel 6:10).

Read David's prayer in Psalm 5:1-3. Why do you think the morning is such an important time to focus our attention on Jesus?

Most Christians agree that it is important to pray first thing in the morning. But many people have a hard time doing this. Going to bed late at night or working early in the morning seem to crowd out that special time of fellowship with Jesus. As a result, our time with God often becomes reactive. Reactive means crying out to Him when things go wrong. It is not proactive. Proactive means seeking Him *before* face the challenges of the day. Many people seriously cripple their spiritual life because they do not pray, read the Bible, or think about Jesus first thing in the morning. If you miss breakfast you soon run out of physical fuel. If you miss morning prayer, you will soon

run out of the spiritual "fuel" that helps you meet temptation (1 Peter 5:8).

What things prevent you from having daily morning prayer? Decide in your heart to begin each day with prayer.

Friday

July 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Think of people in the Bible who put God first in their lives and who let Him be the Lord of their choices. For example, think about the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Read Luke 1:26-38. Notice her answer to God.

The idea of surrendering our lives to the authority of some one else is not very popular today. People want to control their own lives. Christians have a different view point. Jesus, who calls us to live under His lordship, is our loving Savior. He is the One who gave His life to save us. Under His lordship, we find freedom. We are His sons and daughters.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus "made no plans for Himself." he let God lead His steps? How can we let God lead our steps?
2. How can you let Jesus be Lord of your family and your finances?
3. Look up as many verses as you can find that talk about Jesus being the Sacrifice for our sins. Then write a paragraph about what these verses say. Have class members read aloud what they wrote. How do these verses encourage you to surrender to Jesus and to serve Him?

Lord of Our Thoughts

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 2:16; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:2-5; Romans 12:1, 2.

MEMORY VERSE: "You have been raised up with Christ. So think about things that are in heaven. That is where Christ is. He is sitting at God's right hand. Think about things that are in heaven. Don't [do not] think about things that are on earth'" (Colossians 3:1, 2, NIV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Jesus desires to renew our minds so He

can be Lord of our thoughts. It is God's plan that all our thoughts be under Jesus' will and control.

THE BATTLE OF THE MIND. Many new Christians think that once they have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, the battle is over. But really, the battle has only just begun. The same as in Jesus' earthly life, Satan increases his attacks after our baptism (Mark 1:9-13). The battle is fought in our minds. One of Satan's big temptations is trying to get us to remember our past. He tries to tempt us back to our old, sinful ways. But Jesus wants us to forget what is behind us so we can "be transformed by the renewing [making pure] of [our minds]" (Romans 12:2, NKJV). The Greek verb translated "transformed"¹⁹ comes from the same verb used in Mark 9:2, when Jesus was "transfigured."²⁰ What a wonderful example of perfection Jesus wants for each of His saved children. He desires to so renew (make pure) our minds that His glory will shine through us.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 16.

¹⁹ transformed—to be changed so completely that we have new thoughts, goals, desires, et cetera.

²⁰ transfigured—changed into something glorious. Read Matthew 17:1, 2.

Sunday

July 10

THE POWER OF THOUGHT (1 Corinthians 2:16).

What is the common theme in the following verses?

Exodus 20:17; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Matthew 5:8; 1 Chronicles 28:9.

The Bible has so much to say about our actions and our words, because our actions and words have a powerful influence on ourselves and others

The Bible also makes it clear that God cares about our thoughts. Why should God care about what we think? Genesis 6:5; Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 5:27-30.

Our thoughts are the basis of all our words and actions. For this reason, what we think is important. Every evil action we do, every evil word we say, started as a thought. How many millions of people first had evil thoughts which led to words or actions that caused terrible damage? Who can know what thoughts will remain only thoughts or hat

thoughts will become actions that hurt someone? We can never know for sure. This is why we should try to control our thoughts before they turn into something painful to ourselves and others.

Imagine if your thoughts were suddenly put on a screen for everyone to read! What would be on that screen? What does this tell you about what is in your mind? What thoughts do you need to change? How can you change them?

Monday

July 11

KEEPING EVERY THOUGHT UNDER CONTROL (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Then answer the following questions:

1. What kind of battle does Paul say we are in?
2. How is this kind of battle different from a battle in which people fight people?
3. What are some of the worldly weapons Christians should

not use? What are the weapons God provides for us? Ephesians 6:10-18.

4. Paul says he destroys "every....reason that keeps people from knowing God" (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIrV). What are some of these reasons?

The word for "strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4, NKJV), means "castles" or "fortresses." Paul is thinking of the inner fortresses of our hearts. They are the "castles" of our minds, the habits of sin and self that decide our character. The battle is one of truth against error. The battle is between the knowledge of God against ignorance.²¹ The battle is a struggle of true worship against all idol worship. In the end, it is a great battle between Jesus and Satan for control of the human race. This battle happens in the mind and in the heart. We can keep the enemy out only with God's power working in our lives.

Why is controlling our thoughts so important in the battle we are facing? Why is controlling our thoughts the

²¹ ignorance—lack of knowledge.

whole battle?

Tuesday

July 12

THINKING ABOUT HEAVENLY THINGS (Colossians 3:1, 2).

We have received Jesus as Savior and Lord. But it is still possible to become interested in many earthly things. We easily can become so interested in earthly things that we forget God asks us to think about heavenly things. We live on the earth. We see around ourselves things of the earth. And many things of the earth are not bad (Genesis 1:31). The important thing is to learn to know the difference between what is good and what is bad.

What reasons does Paul give for setting our minds on heavenly things. (Colossians 3:1).

Let us look a little closer at what Paul is telling us. We have been "raised with [Christ]" (Colossians 2:12, NKJV; read also Romans 6:4). We have died to self (Colossians 3:3). Now we have a new life in Him. For these reasons, our thoughts should be on heavenly things. Earthly things are

the kind of things we thought about before we met Jesus. But Jesus died for us (Romans 5:6). He has paid the penalty for our sins (Isaiah 53:6, 8, 10). He has covered us with His perfect righteousness (holiness) (Romans 4:4-8). He is now working for us in heaven (Hebrews 9:24). For these reasons, we must think about Him and the salvation He has given to us (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is sitting at the right hand of the throne of God as our High Priest. We always must remember to focus our attention on His work for us as our High Priest in heaven.

"Keep your thoughts upon the Savior. Go apart from the busyness of the world and sit under Jesus' shadow. Then, among the noise of daily work and struggle, your strength will be renewed."-Adapted from Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 62.

Take as much time as possible to think about the plan of salvation. Think about Jesus becoming human. Think about His death on the cross for your sake. Think about His ministry (work) in the heavenly sanctuary. What does the plan of salvation show about God's character? What hope does

salvation offer you? What promises are yours because of salvation? How different would your life be if you thought about these things many times a day?

Wednesday

July 13

RECEIVING A SANCTIFIED²² IMAGINATION²³ (Romans 12:1, 2).

Focusing on the theme of this week, write down what you believe Paul is telling us in Romans 12:1, 2.

One of the important gifts we all have received from God is the gift of imagination. But sinful thoughts and desires have spoiled our imagination. We need our imagination to be sanctified. The Bible teaches us that our thoughts are important. So we should be encouraged to know God will help us control our thoughts and our imagination.

How will God help us control our thoughts and our imagination? Romans 12:1, 2; Titus 3:5.

²² sanctified—to be made holy; to become like Jesus.

²³ imagination—the ability to create new things or ideas; the ability to put old ideas in to new forms.

Romans 12:1 and 2, and Titus 3:5 are the only verses with the Greek noun translated as "renewing" (NKJV; making pure) or "renewal" (NKJV; to make pure). The great change of our minds in Romans 12:2 is done only by the power of the Holy Spirit. This change is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in Christians who have surrendered to Him. This surrender can require a great struggle on our part. It is easy for our mind to focus on earthly things. In Colossians 3:2, the real translation of "set your affection" (KJV) means "continually think of" heavenly things. Perhaps that is why Paul says we should "pray always" (2 Thessalonians 1:11, NKJV). Nothing can lift our thoughts to heaven like prayer.

How do you use your imagination? Is your imagination working for or against your walk with Jesus? What can you do to receive the "renewal" of your mind?

Thursday

July 14

INFLUENCES (Philippians 4:8).

A drunken homeless man in a big city was sleeping in an

alley. A group of about three young men saw the unfortunate man. They found a can of gasoline. As the man was sleeping, they poured the gasoline over him and set him on fire. He died a terrible death.

The boys were arrested and asked why they did such a terrible thing. One of the boys said they had seen the same thing in a movie. They just copied what they saw.

What is the important principle²⁴ we see in what these young men did?

God cares about our thoughts. He promises us strength to change our thoughts. But we just do not pray, "Lord, change my thoughts." Then quickly we are pure in heart and mind. However nice that would be, it does not work that way. We have an important part in cooperating with God. The things we put in our minds will influence our thoughts. The more you read about Jesus, the more you will focus on holy things. The more you read about unholy things, the more you will think about unholy things.

²⁴ principle—a basic rule of life.

How does Philippians 4:8 describe the principle we are talking about? List things that fit each of the words below from Philippians 4:8 (NirV).

true _____

noble²⁵ _____

right _____

pure _____

²⁵ noble—excellent, magnificent.

lovely _____

worthy of respect _____

excellent _____

worthy of praise _____

(It would be interesting to compare²⁶ your lists with others in your class). How well are you following Paul's warning about your thoughts?

Do you have trouble controlling your thoughts? Do you

²⁶ compare—show how things are the same.

have trouble thinking of heavenly things? The answer to your problem easily could be found in what you are reading and watching. Only you can make the necessary changes. Under the power of the Holy spirit, decide now to censor²⁷ the things that come into your mind. If you do not, you will never have victory.

Friday

July 15

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "The apostle²⁸ Paul tried to teach the believers how important it is to keep the mind from wandering to wrong thoughts or foolish things. People who would not fall into Satan's traps must guard well the avenues of the soul. They must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 518.

"With the Holy Spirit's help, the training of the heart, and the control of the thoughts will control our words. This is true wisdom. This will give us a quiet satisfied, and peaceful mind. There will be joy in thinking

²⁷ censor—to keep bad thoughts from coming into your mind.

²⁸ apostle—one of the disciples of Jesus whom he chose to preach the gospel after he returned to heaven.

about the riches of God's grace."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, P. 656.

People who would desire wisdom from God must not become fools in the sinful knowledge of this world. They should shut their eyes so that they may not see and learn evil. They should close their ears so that they may not hear that which evil and learn about impure thoughts and acts. They should guard their tongues so they may not speak unclean words or lies."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 404.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What things make it difficult for you to have pure thoughts?
2. How can prayer and Bible study help us control our thoughts?
3. What can you do as a church to help your young members protect themselves from negative influences that make it difficult for them to control their thoughts?

4. What plan does Ephesians 6:10-18 give us for victory in the battle for our minds?

Lord of Our Desires

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1, 2; Romans 1:3; Romans 6:1-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:8; Colossians 2:11-13; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 1 John 2:1.

MEMORY VERSE: "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature [of man], God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned²⁹ sin in sinful man" (Romans 8:3, NIV).

²⁹ condemned—proven guilty of sin.

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: God created us with powerful desires for our enjoyment. As Christians, we should enjoy these desires. But we need to keep them under God's control.

SURRENDERING OUR DESIRES TO GOD'S WILL. The apostle³⁰ Paul warned that in the last days, people would "love what pleases them instead of loving God" (2 Timothy 3:4, NIV). This is a perfect description of people today! The number one rule for many people is: Satisfy your own desires. Christian values are thrown out as old-fashioned and unreasonable. The basic feeling is: If you want to do something that will not hurt anyone else, then you should do it.

But people who follow Jesus are called to surrender all their desires to God's will. Jesus Himself said, "I have not come down from heaven to do what I want to do. I have come to do what the One [Father] who sent me wants me to do." Jesus set the perfect example of surrendering to God's will when He prayed, "But let what you [God] want be done, not what I want," (Mark 14:36, NIV). This should be our prayer, too. We must surrender our will and desires to God.

³⁰ apostle—one of God's disciples who preached the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 23.

Sunday

July 17

FLESH³¹ AND SPIRIT (Romans 8:3).

The Christian faith began among Greek culture. The Greek empire itself had fallen to the Romans (Daniel 2). But the influence of Greek culture remained long after Greek political and military power faded.

One of the beliefs Greek culture influenced was the belief that human flesh was bad, and that human desires and passions were evil. One Greek philosopher (thinker) taught that humans were at first pure spirit. But through a "fall" our souls were made lower and put into flesh. We were then to grow spiritually by working our way back to our original (first) spiritual condition.

But this view does not follow the Bible. According to the Bible, the human body is not bad.

What is the greatest example we have in the Bible that the human body is not evil? Romans 8:3; 1 Timothy 3:16;

³¹ flesh—the body; skin, muscles, tendons, blood, hormones, et cetera.

Philippians 2:8; Romans 1:3; Galatians 4:4.

Sin influences the human body with disease, old age, et cetera. But the body cannot be evil, because Jesus put on a human body when He came to this earth. However, what about New Testament verses that seem to say the spirit is better than the body? Some of these verses are Romans 8:4, 5; Galatians 5:24, 25; and Galatians 6:8. The word *flesh* in the older translations of these verses is not talking about our bodies. Instead, the word *flesh* in these verses is talking about our sinful nature. For example, in the King James, Galatians 5:24 says, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." In the NIV, Galatians 5:24 says, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed their sinful nature to his cross. They don't [do not] want their sinful nature loves and longs for [desires]." So what Paul is really talking about in these verses is turning our sinful desires over to Jesus so He can cleanse us from sin.

Greek culture also taught that the spirit is something within us that is always fighting the body. But in Romans 8:4, 5; Galatians 5:24, 25; And Galatians 6:8, the *spirit* is

our attitude³² of surrender and obedience to Jesus. It is also the Holy Spirit. People who live "by the Spirit" (NIrV) are people who have surrendered their sinful natures to the Holy Spirit.

How can you know if you are walking in your sinful nature or "by the Spirit"?

Monday

July 18

CREATION (Genesis 1, 2).

Review the creation story in Genesis 1, and 2. What proof do you find there that God planned for human beings to enjoy what He had made?

The Creation story shows nothing of the idea that the human body is bad. God created man and woman to enjoy what He had made. Man came directly from the ground, which God had just created. And woman came from the man. Thus, humans

³² attitude—how you think and feel about something or someone.

and the earth are closely connected. Together, man and woman were to live on this earth. They were to get food from it. They were to be "fruitful, and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). They were to be involved in the process of creating more human beings, more human flesh. God gave them "every herb" to eat (Genesis 2:5). He also gave them every tree pleasant to the sight. The trees and their fruit were "pleasing to look at" (Genesis 2:9, NIrV). The fruit was "good to eat" (NIrV). This shows that Adam and Eve enjoy what they ate. Their food would not only feed them, but please them. Truly God's creation was a paradise.³³ What helped make it a paradise was how well it pleased their human senses.³⁴

God created us as physical beings (persons). He gave us physical desires, which are not bad. The problem is not our basic desires, but how we use these desires. The problem also is how we keep them under control so we are not lost. When we surrender our desires to God, He gives us the power to keep our desires under control.

³³ paradise—a beautiful, perfect place.

³⁴ senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching.

Despite the results of sin, what examples do you see of how wonderful Creation was? What are some of the things God gave us that we should enjoy? How do these things show God's love?

Tuesday

July 19

THE FALL (Genesis 3:1-6).

God put Adam and Eve in a garden filled with good things for them to enjoy. But Satan used some of these things to cause the Fall.

How did the devil use the physical senses to deceive the woman and get her to disobey God? Genesis 3:1-6.

Genesis 3:1-6 should be a powerful warning to us. When they were perfect, Adam and Eve let their senses turn them away from God. Satan knows he can use our senses and appetites (desires; wants) to control us. That is why the Bible tells us we have to keep our senses and appetites under control. If not, Satan will use them to destroy us.

How do you see the principles in 1 John 2:16 in the story of the Fall? Does 1 John 2:16 mean that the eyes themselves are bad? Explain your answer?

All around us, we see the results of humans who have let God's gifts control them. God gave us sex. But many people become pornographers.³⁵ God gave us good food. But many people eat too much. God gave us music. But we become half-crazed rock-and-roll singers. He gave us fire. But we become arsonists.³⁶ He gave us words. But we lie and curse. He gave us grapes. But we become drunks. It is hard to think of any God-given gift that we have not abused because of our sinful habits. We see the results of our sinful habits everywhere.

Imagine a world where our God-given senses are in perfect peace with Him. What do you think that world would be like? You cannot have that world now. But what changes can you make so your desires and senses are more at peace with God than they are now?

³⁵ pornographers—people who make sexually filthy movies or books.

³⁶ arsonists—people who start fires because they want to do damage and hurt others.

Wednesday

July 20

TIMES OF SOLITUDE³⁷ (Matthew 4:1, 2).

Read Matthew 4:1, 2 (also read Mark 1:12 and Luke 4:1, 2). Why do you think Jesus fasted³⁸ for so long? What can we learn from His example?

"Many people who claim to be Jesus' followers do not question the reason for His long period of fasting and suffering in the wilderness. His suffering did not come from hunger. Instead, it came from His sense of the fearful result of the indulgence³⁹ of too much appetite and desire upon the human race. He knew appetite would be our idol. He knew appetite would lead us to forget God and would prevent us from receiving salvation."-Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Confrontation*,⁴⁰ p. 51.

Satan caused Adam and Eve to sin through appetite.

³⁷ solitude—being alone with God.

³⁸ fasted—went without food.

³⁹ indulgence—having too much of something.

⁴⁰ confrontation—face-to-face meeting in a battle, in this case, the battle with sin.

After His baptism, Jesus also would be tempted to sin through appetite. Adam and Eve failed. But Jesus succeeded. What a message His self-denial⁴¹ has for us!

What important message does 1 Peter 1:13-16 have for us about our desires and appetites?

Among these warnings is the call to be holy. That is a strong command for sinful people. But being holy is clearly a reachable goal. If not, why would the Bible often call us to holiness? Holiness means to "be set apart." Holiness deals with the control of our desires and appetites. It says to be holy in all kinds of behavior. God has given us these basic desires. But we are to be separate from the world's abuses of these desires.

How much self-denial do you go through? When your desires are leading you where you know you should not go, what do you do? What does your answer tell you about how well you obey the Lord's command about controlling these desires?

⁴¹ self-denial—the ability to reject (refuse temptations over appetites and passions).

Thursday

July 21

SURRENDER (Colossians 2:11:13).

It's one thing to read warnings from the Bible about keeping our desires under control. It is another thing to obey these warnings. We want to do what is right. But sometimes it is so easy to give in to our desires. Perhaps Augustine,⁴² best described this problem. He once prayed, "God give me power over my passions—but just not yet!" Most of us are as human as Augustine was.

But there is great hope for us as Christians. We can have victory over our desires that can destroy us. We can have that victory when we surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit as He works in us. We all surrender to something. We can surrender to our passions, which will bring death? Or we can surrender to the Holy Spirit, who brings life. We have no other choices.

What is the basic message in the following verses? What

⁴² Augustine—a Christian writer who lived in north Africa. He lived from 354-430 A.D.

personal experience are they talking about? Colossians 2:11-13; Romans 6:1-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Some people have totally surrendered their lives to Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, they will die to their old selves and be "born from above" (John 3:3, NRSV). They have surrendered to God their whole life, including the desires of their heart and sinful flesh (Romans 6:13). Now they live under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives them a new life in Jesus (Galatians 5:25). With the Holy Spirit's power, people who have died to self and live again in Jesus can live with their desires and sinful natures under control.

We sometimes hear stories of people who have surrendered to Jesus and their lifelong habit of smoking and drinking quickly disappeared. But for most Christians, this is not true. Our character and habits do not quickly disappear. We have a day-by-day battle with sin, with self, and with our sinful nature. Our sinful nature may be under the power of God. But it is always trying to break away from Him. By ourselves, we cannot win against our sinful nature. All we can do is surrender our wills to Jesus, moment by

moment. Moment by moment we must claim His power over our sinful natures. This takes self-denial, struggle, and much prayer. But God promises us victory. If we do not surrender to God, defeat is sure.

How have you experienced surrendering to God? How have you experienced failure in surrendering to God? Why is knowledge of salvation and a relationship with Jesus so important to us during times of failure?

Friday

July 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Think about the stories below of different Bible Characters (people) who failed to surrender their desires to God's will. Study the results of their actions. Some of these persons repented⁴³ of their sin and trusted in God's grace for forgiveness and salvation. Others continued in their sin and will be eternally (forever) lost.

⁴³ repented—to have said you are sorry for your sins and to have turned away from sin.

Bible Character	Results
Cain (Genesis 4:1-15)	
Moses (Exodus 2:11-15)	
David (2 Samuel 1-17)	
Peter (Matthew 26:69-75)	
Judas (Matthew 27:1-5)	

“You may live in the Holy Spirit, walk in the Holy Spirit, and Reave the fruit of the Holy Spirit. You may be filled with all of the fullness of God. Then you will be channels (ways) of light. Your life will be hid with Jesus in God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 49.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a class, talk about what it means to die to self and life a new life in Jesus. Share your own experiences and how some person may have changed your life. Suppose there is someone who wants to be a Christian but admits that he or she never had such experiences with God? What advice would you give that person?

2. In our struggle to keep our desires under control, why is understanding Jesus' death as our Substitute⁴⁴ so important? Why is Jesus' death as our Substitute important when we make a mistake but then surrender to our sinful desires?

3. In your community, where do you see businesses taking advantage of our God-given desires and sinful natures? What could you do to help limit the damage these businesses are doing to your community?

⁴⁴ substitute—someone who takes another person's place. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

Lord of Our Speech

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 9; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:15, 29; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; James 3:3-13; James 4:11.

MEMORY VERSE: "Let the words you speak always be full of grace. Season⁴⁵ them with salt [wisdom]. Then you will know how to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:6, NirV).

⁴⁵ season—to sprinkle; to flavor.

Important Thought: God asks us to use our speech to glorify Him and to bless others.

THE GIFT OF SPEECH CAN BE A GREAT BLESSING or a terrible curse. When we enter into a new life in Jesus. He invites us to let Him be Lord of our speech. If we use our speech wisely, we glorify God and bless those around us. If we use our speech wrong, we can cause trouble. Harmful words cause God pain and damage the lives of people around us.

Ellen White reminds us that "the ability to use speech is an important gift. If our greatest goal is to know God, then the gift of speech may bring grace (kindness) to others. Speech provides a channel (way) for knowing God's will."-Adapted from *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 277.

In this week's study, we will explore some useful ways to use our speech to glorify God and bless others. The same advice that the apostle⁴⁶ Paul gave to young Timothy is given to each one of us today: "Set an example for the believers in what you say" (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV).

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 30

⁴⁶ apostle—a disciple of Jesus whom He chose to preach the gospel after He returned to heaven.

Sunday

July 24

WORDS OF PRAISE (Psalm 9).

The highest honor for people is to speak words of praise to God. The Psalms often encourage us to praise Him. In Psalms 9, David sings, "Lord, I will praise you with all my heart. I will tell about all the miracles you have done. I will be glad and full of joy because of you. Most High God, I will sing praise to you" (Psalm 9:1, 2, NIV).

Psalms 146-150 are psalms of praise to God. Read two or three of these psalms. What was it about God that caused the psalmist⁴⁷ to praise Him so much?

Often in the Bible, we find people who used their gift of speech to praise God. For example, when God showed Daniel the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel praised God (Daniel 2:20-23).

⁴⁷ psalmist—the person who wrote the psalm.

What advantages come to us by praising God?

Words influence people who hear or read words and people who speak or write words. When we praise God for His goodness, His mercy⁴⁸ and His acts, we develop more faith in Him. Thinking about God's goodness, mercy, and acts is important. But there is something about praising God's goodness, mercy, and acts through speaking or writing that increases their influence on us, so it is no surprise that the Bible has many verses praising God.

Write your own psalm of praise to God. Share it with a friend. How have your words of praise made you feel?

Monday

July 25

SPEAKING WITH GRACE (Kindness) (Colossians 4:6).

Study Paul's advice in Colossians 4:6. In Bible times, salt was used to keep food fresh. So what do you think it

⁴⁸ mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

means to "season" our speech with salt?

The Bible does not teach that grace begins in the hearts of people. Grace always starts in God's heart. Grace cannot be worked up. It must be prayed down from heaven. We can speak with grace only if our lives are filled with grace. How do we fill our lives with grace? We fill our lives with grace when we understand through Bible study and prayer how God pours His grace upon us. We must always remember that we receive grace from God through Jesus. We must remember also that we do not deserve His grace. When we remember these two things, we can begin to speak with grace to others.

How did Jesus' words show grace to the woman and the men who accused her of sin in John 8:1-11? How does His example show how we can speak with grace?

We often face situations where it would be natural for us to speak words that show anger, judgment, or revenge.⁴⁹ Often, we might need to speak firm words. But even then, it

⁴⁹ revenge—doing or saying something bad to someone who has hurt you.

is how we say these words that can show grace or our own selfish nature. Even when we have not been treated fairly, God desires that we answer with words of grace rather than words of revenge. Jesus gives us a perfect example of speaking words of grace, even to those who treat us unfairly.

Think about the last time your words did not show grace. All you can do is ask for forgiveness for those words. But what can you do now to prevent yourself from speaking that way again?

Tuesday

July 26

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE (Ephesians 4:15).

Sometimes, we might need to speak words of rebuke (scolding), advice, or warning.

Read the following verses: Matthew 16:23; Matthew 23:13-39; John 14:8, 9; John 18:19-23. How do you think Jesus must have spoken in these verses to show love and grace? Explain your answer.

"Jesus Himself did not hide one word of truth. But He spoke the truth always in love. He spoke politely and thoughtfully when He was with the people. He was never rude. He never spoke a rough word. He never gave needless pain to a sensitive person. He did not criticize human weakness. He fearlessly criticized hypocrisy,⁵⁰ unbelief, and iniquity (sin). Tears were in His voice as He gave His worst criticisms. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved. Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But Jerusalem rejected (refused) Him, the Saviour. Still, He looked upon Jerusalem with love pity, and sorrow so deep, it broke His heart. Every soul was very important in His eyes. Jesus always carried Himself with dignity (honor). But He bowed with tender love for every member of the family of God. In all people, Jesus saw fallen souls. He knew it was His mission to save everyone."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

Read Ephesians 4:15. How do you understand what it means to speak the "truth" in love? Is "truth" still "truth" if spoken in any other way but love?

⁵⁰ hypocrisy—when a person says he or she believes in God, but then does not act like it.

Sometimes, we fail to speak the truth in love. We seem to fall into one of two traps. Some people are quick to speak the truth, but fail to speak it in love. Other people replace love with emotions that prevents them from speaking the truth at all.

It is not what we say but how we say it that makes a big difference. Stand in front of a mirror. Then practice saying the same words in a loving way and in a harsh, unkind way. You will be shocked that the words themselves may be the same, but their meaning will seem different.

Wednesday

July 27

SPEAKING IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

When someone talks about speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit, we think of preaching. The Bible is clear that God wants all preaching to be given in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Study Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8 and what Paul says in

1 Corinthians 2:1-5. What is the secret of powerful preaching?

Powerful preaching is not the result of human wisdom. Powerful preaching is proof that a person has a close relationship with Jesus. The same Holy Spirit who approved Paul's preaching will also humble preachers today to speak with the Holy Spirit's power.

But speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit is not limited to preaching. God plans that we speak all of our words with the Holy Spirit's power. Each one of us who lives a new life in Jesus has the honor and responsibility of speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit. Speaking with the Holy Spirit's power does not always mean just speaking very well (Exodus 4:10; 1 Corinthians 2:1). If we are speaking in the Holy Spirit, our words, our voice, and our message will show the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). Our words show the kind of people we are. Our words will show if Jesus is our Lord.

Also, we must never confuse beautiful speech with speaking in the Holy Spirit. Many of history's worst dictators were men who were very powerful and outstanding

speakers. But they were not speaking in the Holy Spirit.

What principles⁵¹ do the following verse show that help us know who is speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit? 1 Corinthians 12:1-3; Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:9, 10; Ephesians 6:13-20. How can you use these principles in your own speech?

Thursday

July 28

AVOIDING "EVIL LANGUAGE" (Ephesians 4:29, NIrV).

Paul warned the believers in Ephesus to avoid "evil language." Unfortunately, many of us are in places where "evil language" is common. People often use God's name to swear with. They often use dirty language, and make rude or sexy comments. It is dangerous for Christians to hear such language all the time. Sooner or later such language will influence us to where we may use these words. We must always be on guard.

⁵¹ principles—basic rules of life.

How would you describe "evil language"? Why is "evil language" not limited only to swear words? Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 10:18; Ephesians 4:31; James 3:3-12; James 4:11.

"Evil language" tears down (is negative). The Greek word used in 1 Timothy 3:11, translated "slanderers [liars]" (KJV) or "malicious⁵² talkers" (NIV), is diabolos. Diabolos is one of the names used for Satan. When people use evil language, they are really doing Satan's work! What an example to the power connected with our words!

But Paul asks believers to use speech that is "good for necessary edification [encouragement]" (Ephesians 4:29, NKJV). Edification really means "building up." One translation puts it this way: "Don't [do not] let any evil talk come out of your mouths. Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say will help those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29, NIV).

Our words have a powerful influence for good or for evil. Our words will either build up others in faith or tear them down. We all have experienced the power of good and evil words. We all have experienced words that built us up

⁵² malicious—wanting to hurt others.

or tore us down. How important it is for us to watch not just our words, but how we say them. Even the right words said the wrong way can be "evil language."

How much "evil language" do you speak? We are not talking just about swear words. We are talking about untruths, lies about other people, and "tall" tales. What about being judgmental and negative? What things might you need to change in your speech?

Friday

July 29

ADDITIONAL STUDY: The wise man Solomon reminds us that there is a time to speak and also "a time to be silent [quiet]" (Ecclesiastes 3:7, NIV). Jesus is Lord of our speech. So we should speak for the glory of God and for the blessing of others. We should also know when it is time to keep silent.

How much are you letting Jesus be Lord of your speech? Spend time reading the Bible, giving more attention to God's words than to your own. Use a journal to write down your thoughts. When you close your time of silence, you might find that you better understand the gift of speech.

"I wish we could promise in our hearts that we would not say one word against a brother or a sister. . . . Do not gossip about them and make comments about their character. Instead, go to them in the love of Jesus and the love of the truth and try to help them."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 289.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus was known as a speaker of "gracious [kind] words" (Luke 4:22, NKJV). This may mean both His speech and the way He spoke. What stories in the Gospels⁵³ show the gracious speech of Jesus? What can we learn from these stories?
2. We like to think of speech as a personal thing. But how do we, as a church, use the power of speech? Why is it important for us as a church to use speech wisely?
3. What advice would you give to a person who works where evil language is common? Why should a person try to stay in such a place? Why should a person leave such a

⁵³ Gospels—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

place?

Lord of Our Prayers

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6;
Ephesians 1:5; John 14:12-14; Isaiah 53:12; 1 Timothy 2:5;
Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 12:24; Romans 8:34.

MEMORY VERSE: "And I [Jesus] Will do anything you [Jesus' disciples] ask in my name. Then the Son will bring glory to the Father'" (John 14:13, NIrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: People who choose to live with Jesus as their Lord are called to follow Him in a life of Prayer.

THE LIFE OF OUR LORD. Jesus' life was a life of prayer. Jesus put prayer at the top of the list of important things to do. Mark writes that "it was very early in the morning and still dark. Jesus got up and left the house. He went to a place where he could be alone. There He prayed" (Mark 1:35, NIrV). Luke reports that Jesus "went out to the mountainside to pray. He spent the night praying to God" (Luke 6:12, NIrV).

"There was no one whose life was ever so crowded and busy with work and responsibility as Jesus' life. But how often He was found in prayer!"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 362.

We are to follow the life and teachings of Jesus. So we, too, should dedicate ourselves to prayer. We should learn from Jesus' example that prayer is the heart and soul of the Christian's life. We would be spiritually dead without prayer.

When we pray, we should address our prayers to our heavenly Father. We should also pray in Jesus' name. We should pray according to God's will. This week, promise to

join our Lord in the holy work of praying for other people.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 6.

Sunday

July 31

PRAYING TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

In His prayers, Jesus addressed God as "Father" (John 17:1), "Holy Father" (John 17:11), and "righteous [holy] Father" (John 17:25). Even Jesus' short prayer in Luke 10:21 is directed to "Father, Lord of heaven and earth." During His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, Mark writes that Jesus addressed the heavenly Father using the Aramaic⁵⁴ word *Abba* (Mark 14:36). *Abba* is an affectionate (loving) name suggesting the idea of "my father." The early Christians followed His example (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

How do the following Old Testament verses show the kind of relationship God wants with His people?

⁵⁴ Aramaic—the common language of Jesus' time.

Deuteronomy 1:31 _____

Deuteronomy 32:6 _____

Psalms 103: 13 _____

Isaiah 63:15, 16 _____

Malachi 2:10 _____

Proverbs 3:12 _____

A perfect father is someone loving, caring, and protecting. Even a child can love, trust, and obey a father like this.

The Bible also gives us an example of adoption. As followers of Christ, we have been "adopted" into the Father's household (read Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). In Roman times, when a son was adopted, he received full legal rights and honors that came with his new family. As Jesus' followers, we receive full salvation because we have been adopted into God's family. "How great is the love the Father has given us so freely! Now we can be called children of God. And that [that is] what we really are" (1 John 3:1, NIV).

By praying to the Father, we show we are accepting who He is and what He has done for us. We show how we are related to Him. And we show the salvation we have from what He gave us in Jesus. In this way, the name *Father* should give us comfort, hope, and joy.

Many earthly fathers have been abusive unloving, and uncaring. They are the opposite of what a father should be.

**What advice can you give someone who has an abusive father?
How can you help him or her understand and experience our
heavenly Father's love?**

Monday

August 1

PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME (1 Timothy 2:5).

In John 14:12-14, Jesus says we should ask for things in His name. What we ask from the Father, we should ask in the name of Jesus. So we begin our prayers by saying something like, "Dear Father in heaven." Then we close our prayers with Jesus' name, like this: "And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen." What does "in Jesus' name" mean?

**What are the following verses saying to help us better understand the idea of praying to the Father in Jesus' name?
Isaiah 53:12; Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6;
Hebrews 12:24.**

By praying in Jesus' name, we are making an announcement to ourselves, to other humans, and to the

universe (1 Corinthians 4:9). The announcement is that we accept Jesus' authority⁵⁵ and power in our lives. By praying in His name, we announce our personal acceptance of Him as our Savior who died for our sins. He is the One through whom we can reach the Father (Hebrews 8:1). By praying in Jesus' name, we can claim the promises of God that we have in and through Jesus. By praying in Jesus' name, we are openly announcing our faith in Him as the One who has closed the separation that sin caused between God and us. We are announcing that He is the One who has reunited us with our heavenly Father. "It is all from God. He brought us back to himself through Christ's death on the cross. And he has given us the task of bringing others back to him through Christ. God was bringing the world back to himself through Christ. He did not hold people's sins against them. God has trusted us with the message that people may be brought back to him" (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19, NIrV).

By praying in Jesus' name, we accept Him and what He has done for us. (Isaiah 53:12). At the same time, what responsibilities does praying in Jesus' name put on us?

⁵⁵ authority—the skill to make someone obey; influence that creates respect and trust.

Tuesday

August 2

PRAYING ACCORDING TO THE FATHERS WILL (Mark 14:36; 1 John 5:14, 15).

Jesus announced, "I have not come down from heaven to do what I want to do. I have come to do what the One who sent me wants me to do'" (John 6:38, NIrV). Even in His prayers, Jesus showed His determination to surrender His own will to the Father's will. When we pray, there are several things we know are God's will. For example, John 3:16 tells us it is God's will for us to be saved. So when we pray for God to save us, we are praying according to God's will.

List three other things you know are God's will, so that when you pray for these things, you will be praying according to His will. Also list support from the Bible for the things you chose.

Request	Support from the Bible
1.	
2.	
3.	

Sometimes it is difficult to know what the Father's will is. Have you ever prayed for someone who is sick? How do you know the Father's will for that person? We are told to pray for the sick and to trust God to bring healing. But we do not know how the person is to be healed. We do not know God's timing. Should we then keep from praying for people who are sick and weak? No! "Let your prayer include this thought: 'Lord you know every secret of the soul. You know these persons, because Jesus gave His life for them. He loves them more than we possibly can. If it is for your glory and the good of these suffering people to make them healthy, we ask you in the name of Jesus, that health may be given them at this time.'"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 375.

Read Jesus' Prayer again in Mark 14:36. Notice His pattern of thought: (1) The word *Abba* shows His close

relationship with His father. (2) Jesus admits God's power. (3) Jesus talks about His own desire. (4) Then He surrenders His desire to the Father. Is there any prayer you need to pray that shows this same pattern? Why not get on your knees now and pray this prayer in the will of God?

Wednesday

August 3

PRAYING FOR OTHERS (Romans 15:30, 31).

Jesus cannot be your Lord if you pray only for yourself. When Jesus is Lord of your prayers, you will join Him in praying for others. Jesus prayed for groups of people (John 17:9, 20). He also prayed for just one person at a time (Luke 22:31, 32). The New Testament uses several Greek verbs⁵⁶ to describe Jesus' prayers. One of these verbs means "to beg" This is the verb used in Luke 22:32 to describe the prayer of intercession⁵⁷ Jesus offered for Simon Peter. "Satan could do nothing against the all-powerful prayer of Jesus for others. And Jesus' prayer for Peter is also offered to all people who are humble and

⁵⁶ verbs—words that show action. Run, drive, walk are verbs, because they show action.

⁵⁷ intercession—prayer for other people

repentant."⁵⁸—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 91.

How do the following verses help us understand why we should pray for others?

Jeremiah 29:7 _____

James 5:16 _____

Philippians 1:9, 10 _____

Mark 9:28, 29 _____

⁵⁸ repentant—being sorry for sins and turning away from your sins.

People ask us to pray for them when they are facing difficulties and troubles. Churches read names of people who need our prayers. Sometimes we may be tempted to give up, because there are so many names on our prayer list. But there are too many examples in the Bible of God's faithful people praying for each other. We must pray for others, also. There is a power in prayer that only people who pray in spirit and in truth can experience.

Even science is beginning to understand more about the power of prayer. Studies show that praying for sick people does help them get better. This is a fact scientists and doctors do not understand, but many people have experienced getting better when people prayed for them.

What are some thoughts Satan puts into our mind to make us think we do not need to pray? What can you do to turn these thoughts aside and make a personal decision to pray for others?

Thursday

August 4

PRAYER EXAMPLES (Psalm 51) .

The Bible is full of examples of powerful prayers given by God's people. None of these people were perfect. None of them had any righteousness (holiness) worthy of God's love. All of them were (and all of us are) sinners in need of God's mercy.⁵⁹ They needed (and we need) Christ's righteousness in their prayers to make them acceptable to a holy God (Revelations 8:3). In their great need, they realized who they were and who God was. But they still prayed to their Creator, their Savior, and their heavenly Father.

Prayer shows we realize we cannot live without God. Prayer shows we know there are forces beyond our control. Prayer shows we know we are dependent upon something greater than ourselves. Prayer shows we know worldly things can never fill all of our needs.

Listed below are three great prayers in the Bible. Each

⁵⁹ mercy–kindness we do not deserve.

prayer is very long. So you might choose to read only one or two of them. Write down what makes the prayers so powerful. What can you learn from prayers that can improve your prayer life?

Daniel 9:4-19 _____

1 Kings 8:15-61 _____

Psalm 51 _____

Friday

August 5

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read the chapter "The Privilege of Prayer" in *Steps to Christ*. What new ideas about prayer can you learn from this chapter?

Different ways to pray have been helpful for

Christians. The best-known way to pray is the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. It is possible to say this prayer in fewer than 60 seconds. But if you use the main themes (ideas) of this prayer as an outline for your prayers, you can stretch your prayer time for half an hour, an hour, or even all night.

The services and sacrifices of the earthly sanctuary show us that our prayers can include praise, confession⁶⁰ and prayer for cleansing. The earthly sanctuary also shows us we can pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for power through the Bible, for others, and for a close relationship with the Lord in front of the ark of the covenant⁶¹ in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Paul encourages believers to "pray without ceasing [stopping]" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How can we pray "without ceasing"?
2. Share in class some personal experiences with prayer.

⁶⁰ confession—to tell God you have sinned.

⁶¹ ark of the covenant—a gold box carrying the Ten Commandments. The ark had a lid of solid gold. Two angels made of gold watched over the ark. The ark was in the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary.

You can talk about powerful answers to prayer or about what prayer does for you. You can explain your understanding of how prayer works. What can you share that can encourage others in their prayer life?

3. Is there anyone your class knows who needs prayer? Why not pray for this person in class? Then discuss the experiences of praying as a group and praying alone.
4. How can we help children have a meaningful prayer experience with their heavenly Father?

Lord of Our Relationships

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 20:14, 17; Psalm 127;
Psalm 128; Luke 6:27, 28; Acts 2:40-47; Ephesians 4:32;
5:25; Epheisans 6:1-4.

MEMORY VERSE: "Carry each other's heavy loads. If you do,
you will give the law of Christ its full meaning" (Galatians
6:2, NIrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: God created human beings to enjoy close

relationships with Him and with one another. Jesus is the Lord of our relationships. So we will experience the close relationships that was part of God's first plan.

CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIPS. God created Adam. Afterwards, He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18, NIV). Adam was not just a work of art made by the Creator. The Creator made Adam with a desire to have a relationship with God and with other created people. God brought Eve to Adam's side. Then Adam explained how he felt about this closeness: "Her bones have come from my bones. Her body has come from my body. She will be named woman, because she was taken out of a man" (Genesis 2:23, NIV). Genesis 3:25 gives a short description of the close relationship Adam and Eve enjoyed: "The man and his wife were both naked. They didn't [did not] feel any shame" (NIV).

So much has changed since Adam and Eve first met each other. Relationships have become damaged and broken by sin. But God still desires us to experience the close relationships that were part of His first plan.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 13.

Sunday

August 7

THE GOD OF RELATIONSHIPS (Romans 12:2-21).

We all must live in relationship with other humans. We cannot escape this fact. Nature itself shows we are supposed to live in relationships.

Each one of us is here only because of a relationship that led to our birth. Even after birth, babies cannot live more than a few hours on their own. They need relationships to live. They need at least one other person to take care of their physical needs. Their mental needs are almost as important as their physical needs. Babies desire love and attention. From their youngest days, babies react to human love, touching, words, and moods. Babies do not form relationships with trees or with beds. They form relationships with other people. Children who have loving, caring parents are so much better balanced emotionally than children who do not. That is because God made us to be in relationship with other people.

But something has gone wrong with our relationships. All around us we see examples of bad relationships. Most of the heartache we suffer as humans, we suffer because of bad

relationships.

God loves us for this reason. He clearly cares about our relationships, which are an important part of our life. God wants us to have positive relationships. That is why the Bible has so much to say about this important topic.

What do the following verses tell us about relationships? What can we learn from these verses about how we relate (socialize or connect) to others? Exodus 20:14, 17; Luke 6:27, 28; Ephesians 4:32; Ephesians 5:25; Philippians 2:2, 3; Romans 12:2-21; Galatians 6:2. Find other verses in the Bible that talk about relationships. (Be prepared to share what you find with your class.)

As we socialize with others, people will see the true measure of our walk with Jesus. So it is very important for Jesus to be Lord of our relationships.

How well do your relationships show the principles⁶² from the verses above? In what areas do you need to make

⁶² principles—basic rules of life.

changes?

Monday

August 8

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (Matthew 22:36-39).

We all want healthy relationships with each other. But healthy relationships are not always so easy to have. We are all sinners. We all have faults. We are all people with character weaknesses that do not always help us get along with others.

But our relationship with God is very important to our relationship with others. He created us. He alone can change us. When we have a close connection with God, we can have the kind of relationships with others we should have.

What does Jesus say in Matthew 22:36-40 about the connection between our relationship with God and our relationship with others? Why is our relationship with God so important in helping us have the right relationships with others? What does God do to us that helps us have the right kind of relationships with others? How do the following verses answer these questions?

Psalm 51:10 _____

Galatians 4:19 _____

2 Peter 1:4 _____

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 _____

Job said, "I know my Redeemer [Savior] lives. In the end he will stand on the earth" (Job 19:25, NIrV). He was saying something more than just a fact. This same Hebrew verb⁶³ for *know* is used in Genesis 4:1. In Genesis 4:1, Adam "knew" his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a

⁶³ verb—a word that shows action. *Run, drive, walk* are words that are verbs.

son. Job was talking about a very close, personal relationship. In her article, "Growth in Grace," Ellen White shared the following thought: "To be living Christians, we must have a vital (living) connection with Christ. The true believer can say, 'I know that my Redeemer (Savior) lives.' This close relationship with our Saviour will take away the desire for earthly satisfactions. All our powers of body, soul, and spirit should be devoted to God"-Adapted from *Review and Herald*, May 30, 1882.

How has your relationship with God influenced your relationship with people? Write down the useful ways knowing God has helped you relate to others. In what areas do you need to grow?

Tuesday

August 9

THE GIFT OF MARRIAGE (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Marriage and the Sabbath are the two things we have taken from Eden. But many marriages today have not been as perfect as the marriage in Eden. Maybe marriage is one of the best examples of the damage sin has caused to human

relationships. In Eden, the goal of marriage was to bring fulfillment, happiness, and joy to the husband and wife. But many of today's marriages fail to reach this goal.

Read Genesis 2:23, 24. Genesis 2:24 is a command repeated in Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31. Is this command talking only about a man and wife being together in sex? Or is there more involved? If so, what?

Jesus is Lord of our lives and Lord of our relationships. So our understanding of marriage will be what God wants marriage to be. "Men and women can reach God's goal for them if they will accept Jesus as their helper. What human wisdom cannot do, His grace will do for people who give themselves to Him in loving trust."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, pp. 112, 113.

Answer the following questions based on Ephesians 5:21-33.

1. How are wives to relate to their husbands?

2. How should husbands treat their wives?

3. How does what Christ did for the church show what a husband should do for his wife?

4. What principles of love and respect are seen in Ephesians 5:21-33? How would following these principles make any marriage stronger?

Wednesday

August 10

THE GIFT OF FAMILY (Psalm 127)

What wise thoughts can we learn from Psalm 127 and Psalm 128 about the gift of family?

God has blessed each one of us with the gift of family. We may be single or married, with or without children. But we are all part of a family. That family becomes a small but important part of God's great family—the church! In all our family relationships, we have been saved by Jesus' blood. So now He is our Lord. So we should show a Christlike spirit that is different from the spirit of unbelievers.

In the home, parents have a very important duty to live out the principles of their faith. Love, forgiveness, and kindness. Care, and discipline are some of these principles. So many of the child's early memories about God come from how the parents treat the child and each other. Our words, our body language, our voices, and our actions influence our children. And long after the actions and words are past, the influences continue in the hearts and minds of the children. The children are so easy to influence. They are so tender and sensitive. How important it is for parents to deal gently with them!

What advice does Paul give to Christian families about the relationships between parents and children? Ephesians 6:1-4.

When children are within our care and influence, Jesus wants us to avoid two things: (1) a harsh and cruel temper and (2) an uncaring attitude⁶⁴ Parents need to find a balance between these two things. They are to give punishment and guidance when needed. But at the same time,

⁶⁴ attitude—how you think and feel about something or someone.

they are to show children the mercy⁶⁵ and love God shows to all people. It is very important and serious responsibility. As in all relationships, parents need to learn from God at the foot of the Cross.

Thursday

August 11

THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY (Acts 2:40-47).

People who live under the lordship of Jesus experience a special sense of community.⁶⁶ The Greek noun used in the New Testament to describe this community is *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is often translated as "fellowship." Paul spoke of "Koinonia of the Holy Spirit" in 2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV). Some Bible experts suggest that it may also be translated the "Koinonia brought about by the Holy Spirit." This means we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives so we can have fellowship with others.

Read the description of the early Christian community

⁶⁵ mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

⁶⁶ community—a group of people living, working together, or worshiping together.

in Acts 2:40-47. Then answer the following questions.

1. What kind of unity did they show?
2. What kind of fellowship did they have?
3. In what useful ways did they relate to each other?
4. What did they show to the world because of their of their fellowship?

What a beautiful picture of the early church. What a powerful picture of the very principles about relationships Jesus Himself taught and showed in His life. Try to imagine what good your local church could do if it were to show such fellowship (read John 13:35).

What changes need to be made in your church so it can show better what we see in Acts 2:40-47? Why must those changes begin in the heart of each believer? What is the only way these changes can happen?

Friday

August 12

ADDITIONAL STUDY: When building relationships, listening is important. We listen to God through the Bible and through nature. We listen to others as they communicate with words or acts.

Study the following situations in Jesus' life. In each of these situations, He showed the importance of listening when building relationship: John 3:1-21; John 4:4-42.

"The first thing one owes to others in the fellowship is listening to them. Love to God begins with listening to what he says in the Bible. In the same way, love for Christian brothers and sisters begins from learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He gives us in the Bible and when He listens to us. So it is His work we do for our Christian brothers and sisters when we listen to Him. . . . But Christians have forgotten that Christ has given them the ministry (work) of listening. Christ is the great listener. We should share His work. We should listen with God's ears so we may speak God's words."—Adapted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), pp. 97-99.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In every part of our relationships with others, there is one important theme. Matthew 16:24 describes this theme best. Read Matthew 16:24 in class. What is the important principle there? Why is this principle so important for us to have the right relationship with others?
2. List the three most important relationships in your life. What are you doing to encourage these relationships?
3. What are some creative ways you can reach out to people who do not have meaningful relationships in their lives?
4. As a class, read together what Bonhoeffer wrote above. What useful things can you do in order to become better listeners?

The Lord of Our Resources (Gifts)

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Deuteronomy 8:7-18; Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 24:45-51; 1 Corinthians 9:11-14; Philippians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:5; James 1:16, 17.

MEMORY VERSE: "Every good and perfect gift is from God. It comes down from the Father. He created the heavenly lights. He does not change like shadows that move" (James 1:17, NIrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Every good and perfect gift comes from God. We are not owners but stewards (managers) of these gifts the Lord kindly gives us for our use.

THE GREATEST GIFT. The psalmist⁶⁷ reminds us that “the earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it. The world belongs to him. And so do all those who live in it” (Psalm 24:1, NIV). Every good and perfect gift we receive comes from God’s hand. The greatest gift of all was given when God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. “God poured out all heaven to man in that one great gift. And then He finished the work by giving man unlimited blessings, from gift to gift. In this way, He opened to our view all the treasures of the future world”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, “Missionary Work,” *Signs of the Times*, August 17, 1891.

We have been saved by Jesus’ blood. So He is Lord of all our resources. This is because all our resources come only from Him, not from ourselves. We are stewards (managers) of these gifts. We do not own the gifts. As stewards, we announce to the world that we belong to the Master. We announce that He gave us these gifts to manage.

⁶⁷ psalmist—person who wrote the psalm.

We must accept the responsibilities of a steward by acting in Jesus' place.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 20.

Sunday

August 14

GIVING THANKS FOR EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT (James 1:16, 17).

What truth does James give in James 1:16, 17? What are some of these gifts? What error is he trying to help his readers avoid?

Our culture tells us we get what we earn and we control what belongs to us. But the Bible reminds us we get what we do not deserve. The Bible also reminds us that the things we own really belong to God. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him. If it were not for our loving God, We would have no life, no meaning, and no future. Paul reminds us that "in him we live and move and exist [have life]" (Acts 17: 28, NIV).

Think for a moment about the blessings you enjoy every day. Has any of us really thought about how much we have to be thankful for? What do you own that did not first belong to God, our Creator? Wealth, power, and honor did not start with you. They started with God. God created all things. It is very important to always remember that truth.

How does the Sabbath remind us that our blessings start with God? Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

What danger did the children of Israel face as they prepared to take over the Promised land filled with many blessings? Deuteronomy 8:7-18. How do we face the same danger?

What gifts has God given you? Why are these gifts so important? What can you do to protect yourself against abusing them because we think we are "good."

Monday

August 15

RETURNING A FAITHFUL TITHE⁶⁸ (Malachi 3:8-10).

The Lord gave the following command to the children of Israel through His servant Moses: “‘a tenth of everything the land produces [grows] belongs to me [God]. That includes grain from the soil and fruit from the trees. It is holy. It is set apart for me’” (Leviticus 27:30, NIV). The words “holy to the Lord” (NKJV) make more sense when you understand that the word holy means “set apart for holy use.” So the tithe is to be set apart for God. The tithe is to be used for Him and His purposes only. The tithe is something special. It is different from the rest of the “seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree” (NKJV).

Read Malachi 3:8-10. Why does God say that not paying tithe is robbery? What does that suggest about who owns it?

We see different parts of the tithing principle⁶⁹

⁶⁸ tithe—one-tenth of a person’s income. We are to pay back to God one-tenth of what we earn.

⁶⁹ principle—a basic rule of life.

throughout the Bible. Abraham gave tithe to the priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). This is a fact in Hebrews 7:2. Jacob understood the idea of tithing (Genesis 28:22). After the Jews left Egypt, God re-established the law of tithing (Leviticus 27:30-32; Number 18:24, 26, 28; Deuteronomy 12:6, 11, 17).

"Abraham is the father of all believers. For this reason, he is the example of tithe paying for Christians. Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God. So New Testament believers give tithe to Christ, our High Priest of the Melchizedek priesthood (Hebrews 5:9, 10; Hebrews 7:1-22)."-Adapted from *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 272.

How do Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:11-14 help us understand an important principle behind our duty to pay a faithful tithe to the church?

How is tithing an example of admitting that all things belong to God? Why is tithing such an important act of faith?

Tuesday

August 16

PUTTING UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN (Matthew 6:19-21).

Rewrite Matthew 6:19-21 in your own words. Describe the important message you believe Jesus is telling us in these verses.

Jesus' words are simple. But the idea behind them is deep. Jesus warns us that the things of this world last just a short time. Then why put all your treasure where one day it will be lost forever? Jesus is pointing us to eternal⁷⁰ things, to heavenly things, to things that will still be here after this world passes away.

How does 1 John 2:15-17 say the same thing Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21?

How do you understand Jesus' advice to "'lay [put] up . . . treasures in heaven'"? What does laying up treasures

⁷⁰ eternal—forever; without beginning or ending; lasting forever.

really involve? Also read Luke 12:16-21.

Laying up treasure in heaven deals with our whole lives, not just with what we do with our money. What are the most important things to you? What are your biggest concerns? How much of your life do you spend on earthly things? How much of your life do you spend on spiritual and heavenly things? For example, how much time do you spend in prayer, Bible study, or witnessing?⁷¹ How much time do you spend watching TV? Does your life show that you are preparing to meet Jesus and working to help others prepare to meet Him? People who are laying up treasure in heaven are daily making decisions for Jesus. They are choosing obedience over sin, love over hatred, and others over self. Laying up treasure in heaven is living the Christian life. It is a life shown by self-sacrificing love. It is a life that is not controlled by love of the world or things in the world.

Think about Jesus' words, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'" Where is your heart? What

⁷¹ witnessing—telling people about God through words and loving deeds.

does your answer tell you about yourself and where your treasure is? It is time to start putting your treasure into God's bank?

Wednesday

August 17

LIVING AS FAITHFUL STEWARDS (MANAGERS) (Matthew 24:45-51).

What message is Jesus giving us in Matthew 24:45-51?

Study the character traits of the faithful and wise servant. He is doing what his master expects him to do. It was not just that he believed correct doctrine.⁷² The important point is that the servant was obedient. The time of the master's return was not all that important. It made no difference when the master came back. This is because, at any time, He would find his servant working faithfully.

It is easy for us to criticize the unfaithful servant. But how many of us act much the same way? We use the resources (gifts) our Master (God) has given to us to serve

⁷² doctrine-church belief.

ourselves. We may be too busy with our own desires and schedules. We do what we want instead of what God has asked us to do as stewards of the gifts He has given us.

Read again Matthew 24:45-51. How did the unfaithful servant show his attitude⁷³ toward the Master? How might we show the same attitude while waiting for Christ's Second Coming?

The unfaithful steward did not believe the master was not coming back. He thought the master was just going to be away longer than first expected. What could better picture a danger that Adventist face? We have long been expecting Jesus to come. Often we talk about a "delay" in His coming. Have we changed how we live because we think Jesus' coming is delayed?

Suppose Jesus came back today. Would He find you a faithful or an unfaithful steward? If you answered an unfaithful steward, what would you have done differently to have become a faithful servant?

⁷³ attitude—how you think and feel about something or someone.

Thursday

August 18

LEARNING TO BE CONTENT (1 Timothy 6:6).

Read 1 Timothy 6:6. The word "contentment" in 1 Timothy 6:6 suggests self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency means "the condition of one who supports himself or herself without help from others." Supporting yourself without help from others was very popular among some of the philosophers in Paul's day. Paul also suggests contentment as something good. But he suggests that, for the follower of Jesus, contentment does not come from inside the person, but from knowing God.

Study Philippians 4:11-13 and Hebrews 13:5. How is a Christian able to experience contentment even in the most troublesome situations? How have you experienced some of the things Paul is talking about in these verses? What lessons did you learn in these experiences? Give examples of your situations and share them with your class.

Our contentment depends upon our confidence (faith) in

our Lord and Savior Jesus. He is the One who makes us strong. He is our Rock, when everything else is moving sand. He is our Safety, when everything else is uncertain. Without Jesus, there is no true contentment.

“In his letter to Timothy, Paul would advise him that it is necessary to teach and warn others that the rich easily deceive themselves into thinking they are much better off than the poor because they are rich. They think they are better in showing wisdom and judgment, just because of their ability to get rich. In short, the rich believe that gain is godliness. This is a false, fearful lie. How few listen to the advice Paul told Timothy to give to the rich! How many fool themselves into thinking that riches are godliness! Paul says, ‘Godliness with contentment is great gain.’ Rich persons may devote their whole lives to the one goal of getting riches. But as they brought nothing into the world, they can carry nothing out. They must die and leave what they had worked so hard to get. They gave their all, even their interest in heaven, to get their riches, and have lost both heaven and earth.”-Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 541.

Why is it not necessary for a person to be rich to think it is better to be rich than poor. Why is it not necessary to be rich to think that being rich is godliness? Why is an imbalanced effort to get worldly things dangerous? What useful steps can we take to make sure we do not devote our life to getting riches?

Friday

August 19

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Contrast⁷⁴ the story of the rich fool with the story of Nicodemus: Luke 12:13-21; John 3; John 19:38-40.

"By the parable of the foolish rich man, Jesus showed the foolishness of people who try to become rich. This man had received everything from God. . . . He did not understand that God had made him a steward (manager) of His things so he might help the poor. He had a blessed opportunity of being God's servant to the poor. But he thought only of his own comfort."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 256.

⁷⁴ contrast—show how things are different.

"Now the Jews were trying to destroy the early church. But Nicodemus came forward in defense of the church. He was no longer a doubter. He encouraged the faith of the disciples and used his wealth in helping to support the church at Jerusalem and in pushing the gospel work forward. People who had respected him in the past now laughed at him. And he became poor in this world's goods. But he did not weaken in the defense of his faith"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 105.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Suppose everyone felt free to pay their tithe wherever they wanted to, instead of to the church itself. Then it would be hard for the church do its work. What should this tell us about the importance of where we pay our tithe? Discuss this as a class.
2. How does the act of returning tithes and offerings keep us from being selfish?
3. Suppose someone were to come to your class and say, "Look, I just lost my job. I have just enough money to

pay the rent and feed my kids. I just cannot possibly pay tithe. I cannot get by on what I have now." What would you say to that person? What could you do for that person?

Lord of Our Body Temples

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-17; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:31.

MEMORY VERSE: "Don't [do] you [not] know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is in you. You have received him from God. You do not belong to yourselves. Christ has paid the price for you. So use your bodies in a way that honors God" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, NIrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: We cannot use and abuse our body, then throw it away when it wears out. We are example of God's grace. We are saved by Jesus' blood. For this reason, we should honor God with our body. The question is: How do we do that?

YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD. Paul talked about the word temple with the people of Corinth. At first, they did not think of their body as a temple. Instead, they thought of the temple of Aphrodite.⁷⁵ This temple was a place where worshipers were involved with temple prostitutes.⁷⁶ That is probably why in his letters to the Corinthians, Paul worked very hard to teach the new believers about the temple where God lives. This temple is in the hearts of people who accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Paul says, "You are the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16, NKJV). He also says, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19, NKJV). The best reason for taking care of body is not just so we live longer or enjoy better health.

⁷⁵ Aphrodite—a sex goddess of the Greeks.

⁷⁶ prostitute—men and women who earn money by having sex. In Aprodite's temple, the prostitutes were women.

The best reason for taking care of our body is to honor God.
Our body is His gift to us.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 27.

Sunday

August 21

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY JESUS (John 1:1-4).

The New Testament writers boldly preach that Jesus is both the Messiah and the Creator of the world. Thousands of years before the Son of God entered into the world as Jesus of Nazareth, He spoke the world into life.

John makes these claims about the Word who became a man. What are these claims?

John 1:1, 2	
John 1:3	
John 1:4	

Paul also points to the greatness of Jesus as the Creator of all things. We owe even our life to Him. Speaking of Jesus, Paul writes, "All things were created by him [Jesus]. He created everything in heaven and earth. He created everything that can be seen and everything that can't [cannot] be seen. He created kings, powers, rulers and authorities [powers]. Everything was created by him and for him. Before anything was created, he was already there. He holds everything together" (Colossians 1:16, 17, NIV).

Compare⁷⁷ John 1:1-4 with Colossians 1:15-17. What is the important message of both?

During His ministry (work) on earth, Jesus never claimed to be the Creator of all things. But as we study His life and teachings, we find many examples that point to His power as Creator. For example, when Jesus calmed down the storm on the sea of Galilee, the surprised disciples asked, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!" (Mark 4:41, NIV).

⁷⁷ compare—show how things are the same.

Now read Genesis 1:26, 27 and Genesis 2:7, the story of God making humanity.⁷⁸ Contrast⁷⁹ how humanity was created with how everything else was created? What does this contrast (difference) tell us about the basic meaning of our own personal life? About who we are? About why we are here? What very different opinions can we make about the meaning of our lives in contrast with people who believe we are alive because of evolution?⁸⁰

Monday

August 22

SAVED BY HIS BLOOD (Galatians 3:13).

In yesterday's study, we saw that the Bible clearly shows Jesus as the Creator. He is the One who created all things. He is the One who spoke the world into life. He is the One who breathed "the breath of life" into the first human. In this way we are not our own. We did not somehow create ourselves or put ourselves here out of our own will.

⁷⁸ humanity—people in general.

⁷⁹ contrast—show how things are different.

⁸⁰ evolution—the belief that we became humans by slowly changing from a lower form of life to a higher form of life.

Therefore, we have no claim over ourselves. As parts of His creation, we belong to God. *His* claim over us is greater than our claim over ourselves.

Read the last two sentences of the above paragraph. What do these sentences suggest to us? How should these sentences influence how we live and the decisions we make? When was the last time you made a decision based on the fact that you belong to God?

We belong to God because He is our Creator. But according to the Bible, that is not His only claim over us.

Why else do we belong to God? Acts 20:28; Galatians 3:13; Galatians 4:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12.

Being redeemed⁸¹ is to be bought back, to be recovered, to be rescued, or to be set free. Jesus has done all these things for us. This means His claims over us are even

⁸¹ redeemed—saved. Jesus saved us by buying us back with the sacrifice of His death on the cross. Jesus did not just save us. He paid the full price for our sins.

greater than before. Now we are His, by both creation and redemption.⁸² And redemption might even be a greater claim. This is because being created does not need to mean something good. For example, some people might curse their own life, and wish they had never been born. But Jesus redeemed us by dying for us. His death for us promises us a new life in a world without sin. By His death He has done something wonderful for us that nothing can destroy (read Daniel 2:44).

Write a prayer thanking Jesus for what He has done for you as your Creator and Redeemer (Savior). What do you want to do because of what He has done for you? What responsibilities do you feel toward Him? What encourages you to accept those responsibilities?

Tuesday

August 23

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 Paul pointed out that it was

⁸² redemption—the process (method) of Jesus saving us by buying us back through His death on the Cross.

important to honor God with our bodies. The Corinthian believers were facing several serious challenges. They lived in a city where people were encouraged to have illegal sex. Satan was spoiling God's image in both unbelievers and believers. Illegal sex was like a sickness in the culture, and it was a problem in the church, too.

What two reasons does he give for honoring God with our bodies? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

Summarize what you believe Paul is telling us in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. How should these truths influence our life in a useful daily way?

As followers of Jesus, we must care about how we use our bodies. Too often, people say, "This is my life. I can do what I want." But the Bible challenges that self-centered thinking. When Christians are involved in harmful behavior, they hurt themselves personally and dishonor God publicly.

What are some harmful actions that are not good for people to do? Proverbs 20: 1, 25; Deuteronomy 21:20; 1 Corinthians 10:32.

Honoring God with our bodies involves more than keeping away from illegal sex. We recognize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. They are redeemed (made holy) by Jesus' blood. Knowing this will influence every part of our lives. We will try to avoid polluting our body temple with harmful drugs, food, or sex. We will try to care for our body temple and involve ourselves in activities that honor God.

A person may argue, "What is important for the Christian is only the spiritual, not the physical." How would you answer this argument from the Bible? How do you understand the strong connection between our physical side and our spiritual side?

Wednesday

August 24

DO ALL TO GOD'S GLORY (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Paul has asked the believers in Corinth to avoid polluting their body temples through illegal sex. Now he shares a principle⁸³ that can guide every part of life: "so eat and drink and do everything else for the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 10:31, NIrV). The Greek noun translated "glory" is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 6:19: "Honor God with your body." The connection between these two verses is clear. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, everything you do (including what you eat and drink) should be done to the honor of God.

How does one "honor God" with one's body? How does one eat and drink "to the glory of God"? How do 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 1 Corinthians 6:19 show that God does care about what we eat and drink? Why would He care?

We have a physical body. In the new heaven and the new earth, we will still have a physical body (Revelation 21:4, 14). The idea that we are temples shows even more so how holy and important, our bodies are. So it is no surprise

⁸³ principle—a basic rule of life.

that the Bible urges us to take care of our bodies. We need to use our bodies in ways that glorify the God who made it. Any sin or abuse of our body pollutes what God has created and given us.

If God loves and cares about us, it should be no surprise that He wants us to take care of our bodies. Our body can cause much joy or so much suffering. It often depends upon how we take care of our bodies.

What do the following verses say about God's attitude toward our health? Exodus 15:26; Jeremiah 30:17; Mark 5:25-34, 3 John 1, 2.

"The laws of nature are the laws of God. So it is our duty to give these laws careful study. We should study their requirements about our own body and follow these requirements"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 369. What is Ellen White telling us? How do these words show the principle Paul gave us in 1 Corinthians 10:31?

Thursday

August 25

SHALOM! (Psalm 119:165).

Many people have heard of the Hebrew word *shalom*. This word means "peace." It is sometimes used as a greeting from one Jew to another.

**What do you think of when you think of the word peace?
In what different ways do you use that word in your
language?**

The word *shalom* itself has a very rich and deep meaning in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the word shows up in one form or another hundreds of times. It carries the idea of completeness (fullness), plenty, wholeness, soundness, good health, and peace. The word itself includes every part of life, physical, mental, and spiritual.

For example, in one of the earliest uses of the word *shalom*, Jacob asks about the wellness (*shalom*) of Laban (Genesis 29:6). The word translated "well" both times in the verse is *shalom*. But, in Jeremiah 29:7, Jeremiah tells the Jewish prisoners in Babylon to pray for the *Shalom* (peace)

"of the city I have sent you to (NIRV)." This is because, the Lord says, in the shalom of the city will be the shalom of the Jewish prisoners.

Look up the following verses where the word *shalom* was used before the Bible was translated into other languages. How do these verses help us understand the meaning of *shalom* when it comes to our physical and spiritual wellness? Genesis 43:28; Proverbs 3:2; Jeremiah 33:6; Psalm 38:3; Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 48:22.

The Bible calls Jesus, *Sar-Shalom*, "the prince of peace." This makes sense because, through faith in Him and through obedience to His law, we can find "shalom"—wholeness, completeness, and wellness.

As Adventists, we have been greatly blessed with a health message. How seriously do you accept this light on health? What changes might you need to make to have more "shalom" in your life?

Friday

August 26

ADDITIONAL STUDY: the health message-honoring God with our bodies-has always been important for Seventh-day Adventist Christians. God gave much guidance on health through the ministry (work) of Ellen White. It is our honor and pleasure to share this message of honoring God with our bodies with the world.

It is not possible to work for the salvation of men and women without explaining to them the need of breaking away from unhealthful sins that destroy the health, soul, and mind. . . . Let the poor have the gospel of health preached to them so they may know how to care for the body properly. This is because the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit"-Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 137.

Read also *Education*, pp. 99, 100; *Health Reformer*, October, 1866; *Christ's [Jesus] Object Lessons*, pp. 347, 348; *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 17.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. We are saved by God's grace through faith and not by our own works. Then why is it really important for us

to care for our body temples?

2. Describe the connection between holiness and healthful living? Is this connection found anywhere in the Bible? If so, where?
3. As a class, talk about what you might be able to do to help your own church members be more aware of taking good care of their bodies.
4. What dangers do we face in focusing on how important health is to faith and growth in Jesus? How do we do so without making people who are sick feel as if they were somehow facing God's judgment?
5. What part do dress and jewelry have in the matter of our body temple? Give proof for your answer from the Bible.

Lord of Our Labor (Work)

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:15; Genesis 3:17-19; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; Ephesians 4:28; Matthew 25:14-30.

MEMORY VERSE: ``If you have extra clothes, you should share with those who have none. And if you have extra food, you should do the same'' (Luke 3:11, NIrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: People who live with Jesus as their Lord

will do honest and hard work that produces results. The work of their minds and hands will bring honor to God and blessings to people around them.

THE HONOR OF LABOR. God asks us, as followers of Jesus, to set our minds on heavenly things, not on earthly things. At the same time, God calls us to be useful in our daily work. When Ellen White talks about Jesus' parable⁸⁴ of the talents, she says, "God has called us to serve Him in this world. Faithful work is as much a part of true religion as is devotion. . . . Every man and woman who is truly converted will be an honest and hard worker."—Adapted from *Christ's [Jesus'] Object Lessons*, p. 343.

This week, we will study the gift of work for people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord. We will discover that doing hard and honest work that produces results is an important way to teach other people about the kingdom of heaven.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 3.

⁸⁴ parable—a simple story that teaches a moral or religious lesson.

Sunday

August 28

THE GIFT OF LABOR (WORK) IN EDEN (Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:15).

Many people have the idea that labor is negative. But labor is really something good in a sinful world. Meaningful labor for the human family was part of God's original (fruit) plan.

What kind of work did God give to Adam and Eve? Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:15. Why should there be work in a sinless place? Why is work in a sinless place important to the idea of work in general?

The Garden of Eden was a perfect place. All creation was happy in peace and unity. In this ideal situation, God gave Adam and Eve meaningful work. Their work was good for the garden itself and for the world in general. Adam and Eve were to enjoy the created world and become involved in it. They were to rule over the created world. In a sense, they were gardeners-rulers. Created out of that world, Adam and Eve became part of it and worked in it as laborers.

We understand that we have the ability to grow, to learn, and to be changed. Then, why do you think God wanted Adam and Eve to have work and responsibilities?

How does your work give you opportunities to grow, to learn and to be changed? What could you do in your work to help you grow, learn, and change?

Monday

August 29

THE CHALLENGES OF LABOR AFTER THE FALL (Genesis 3:17-19).

Sin led to many negative results. The most terrible result was death. Adam and Eve experienced death themselves. Before that, they saw the terrible result of their sin when Cain killed Abel. Sin spoiled the human family and changed the world.

How did sin change the world and our work in it?

Genesis 3:17-19. Were these changes a punishment for sin? Or were these changes the natural results of sin?

It is not clear how much time passed before sin spoiled God's perfect creation. But Adam and Eve must have enjoyed the honor of working in Eden. When sin entered, the world became rough and unfriendly. Adam and Eve were then forced to work until they sweat hard. Decay and death in the natural world would remind them that they would die. This was a sharp difference from the Eden they had once enjoyed.

A quick reading of Genesis 3:17-19 seems to show that God was being very rough on Adam and Eve. But, if you read more deeply, what else can you see in these verses? How did God use these changes to help Adam and Eve?

"It was God's purpose to use work to reduce the evil done to the world by man's disobedience. Work lessened Satan's temptations. Work also helped to stop the spread of evil. Worry, tiredness, and pain often come with work. But labor still means happiness, growth and a safeguard against temptation. The discipline that work gives stops people from being lazy and selfish. Work also helps people to do and make good things and to be strong in purpose. So work is a part of God's plan to help us recover from the fall"-Adapted

from Ellen G. White, *Message to Young People*, p. 213.

What examples have you seen of how work can help us spiritually?

Tuesday

August 30

DOING WELL IN OUR WORK (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12).

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12. Then answer the following questions:

1. Whom should the people avoid? _____

2. Whose example should the people follow? _____

3. What reason did Paul give for working to earn his bread? _____

4. What was Paul's attitude⁸⁵ toward people who refused to work? _____

5. How would you sum up Paul's message? What are the principles⁸⁶ in Paul's message that we should use in our own lives? How should we relate to work and to people who do not work? _____

6. How might people who are not working be excused from work? What is your responsibility toward such people? _____

When we do our work well, we are blessed in many ways.

⁸⁵ attitude—how you think and feel about something or someone.

⁸⁶ principles—basic rules for daily life.

We are able to care for the needs of our families and loved ones. Our work also brings honor to the Lord we serve. We may be plowing a field. We may be caring for the sick. We may be working in the home or operating a small business. Whatever we do, we can use our labor for the honor of our Lord and the blessing of people around us. This is how a person who is living under Christ as Lord should feel.

"If any would not work, then he should not eat." How do you connect this warning with the idea of grace and forgiveness? If we follow this idea, how can we treat people better than they deserve, just as Christ has treated us better than we deserve?

Wednesday

August 31

WORKING FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS (Ephesians 4:28).

What principle about work did Paul share with the believers in Ephesus? Ephesians 4:28.

Paul practiced what he preached. He spoke to the

Ephesian elders before leaving Miletus. He said, “‘I haven’t [have not] longed [worked] for anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that I have used my own hands to meet my needs. I have also met the needs of my companions [friends]’” (Acts 20:33, 34, NIV). Paul’s teaching in words and life reminds us of the advice of another servant of our Lord. John the Baptist challenged his hearers to let the results of their work bless the people around them. “‘If you have extra clothes, you should share with those who have none. And if you have extra food, you should do the same’” (Luke 3:11, NIV).

What important message does James 2:14-20 have for people who claim to be saved by faith alone? How does this advice help us understand what saving faith is?

What is interesting about James’s words is the kind of works he connects with faith. We often like to think of works as not stealing, not killing, not breaking the Sabbath, et cetera. These are all part of what it means to follow Christ. But, James talks about something different. He talks about taking care of people who are in need. It is

not enough to just say nice things to these people or to offer a prayer for them. James is giving us an example of the kind of works that show true faith. We need to be careful that we do not get caught in paying an exact tithe, while not doing "the more important things of the law," like being fair, showing mercy⁸⁷ (Matthew 23:23, NIV). The Pharisees⁸⁸ were good about tithing everything exactly. But they forgot to be fair and show mercy.

Helping the poor requires time and money. How much of your time and money are you willing to spend helping poor people around you? What does your answer say about the kind of faith you have?

Thursday

September 1

WORKING AS WE WAIT FOR OUR LORD'S RETURN (Matthew 25:14-30).

Jesus told a parable that showed the importance of making the most of every thing we have while we wait for His

⁸⁷ mercy-kindness we do not deserve.

⁸⁸ Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus' day who believed a person must keep God's law to be saved.

return.

**What lessons can we learn from Jesus' parable in
Matthew 25:14-30 for our lives today?**

"There is not one person who does not have any talent at all. Not one person lacks a work to do for the Lord. Not one person is to be excused. Not one person is to remain lazy. But every man is required to do his best. God entrusts men with the talents that are to be used in holy service for Him."-Adapted from Ellen G. White, "Redeem the Time Because the Days Are Evil," Review and Herald, April 21, 1896.

This parable comes right after the parable of the foolish virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The parable of the foolish virgins focuses more on the life of faith, devotion, and prayer. This life leads to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The parable of the talents is about the active Christian life. It is not about just praying and believing and studying, but about outward work for God.

We should try to do all of our work faithfully as the faithful servants did.

How do we understand Matthew 25:14-30 on the basis of salvation by faith alone? (Romans 3:28; Romans 4:1-13, Galatians 2:16).

Our faith will be shown in our works. Our works also will show what we do with the gifts God has given us. We cannot separate our Christianity from how we live. How we live cannot be separated from how we do our work. Faithful and honest labor can be a powerful example of our faith. Faithful, honest work also can be a powerful witness to the God we serve.

Suppose someone knew that your faith was reflected from how you did your work. What ideas would they receive about your faith?

Friday

September 2

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Christ's [Jesus'] Object Lessons, pp. 359, 360.

God calls some people into full-time service for Him. These people have the honor and responsibility to devote all

their work time to God's business. Ellen White spoke of this call in a letter written in the early 1900s. "Many young men and women are now involved in work to earn money. But they will feel inspired to give themselves to the service of God and to become channels of light. . . . Let these young men and women be given an opportunity to get an education for the work of God. And let all God's workers help, cheer, and encourage one another with prayers and helpful words." Let them remind one another of the honor and responsibility of the work they are doing."—Adapted from Letter 66, 1901, *Manuscript Releases*, p. 44.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the Sabbath fit in with work? What message does the Sabbath tell us about our work?
2. Compare⁸⁹ what you have learned this week about work with Galatians 6:2?
3. In every time period, God raises up women and men who honor him in their work. Think of a person you know who

⁸⁹ compare—show how things are the same.

has brought glory to God and blessing to others in his or her work?

4. Is there anyone in your own church family who is not working? What can you do as a church family to (1) care for his or her family's greatest needs and (2) find work for the person?

5. "Everyone should provide [care] for his own relatives. Most of all, everyone should take care of his own family. If he doesn't [does not], he has left the faith. He is worse than someone who doesn't believe" (1 Timothy 5:8, NIV). As a class, discuss what this verse says about how we should treat someone who refuses to care for his or her family.

Lord of Our Worship

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 99:9; Psalm 47; Psalm 63:1-4; Psalm 150; Revelation 5:8-14; Revelation 14:6, 7; John 2:13-16; Acts 4:24-31; Colossians 3:16.

MEMORY VERSE: "Come, let us bow down and worship him. Let us fall on our knees in front of the Lord our Maker. He is our God. We are the sheep belonging to his flock" (Psalm 95:6, 7, NIV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: People who live under Jesus as Lord will find their greatest joy in worshiping God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in spirit and in truth.

GOD IS LOOKING FOR TRUE WORSHIPERS. Every human will worship someone or something we do not make a choice to worship or not to worship. Instead, we choose what or whom we will worship. During His earthly ministry (work), Jesus showed the importance of worship in His actions and teachings. In the temple, in a synagogue (Jewish church), or on a mountainside, Jesus took time to worship His heavenly Father. At one time, Jesus met with a woman at Jacob's well. He shared with her the good news that God is looking for true worshipers. Jesus said that true worshipers were people who worship God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, NIV).

This week, we will study worship as it relates to people who live under Jesus as Lord.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 10.

Sunday

September 4

THE FOCUS OF OUR WORSHIP (Psalm 99:9) .

Satan tried to force Jesus to bow down and worship him. But Jesus answered: “Get away from me, Satan! It is written, “Worship the Lord your God. He is the only one you should serve”” (Matthew 4:10, NIV).

Why should we worship God?

Psalm 95:6, 7 _____

Psalm 99:9 _____

Revelation 4:8-11 _____

Revelation 5:8-14 _____

The Bible clearly shows that God alone should be the focus of our worship. But there are times when people try to worship some thing else or some one else. For example, when John saw an angel, he fell down in worship. He received the following scolding from the angel: "don't [do not] do that!. . . Worship God!" (Revelation 19:10, NIrV).

What did the people of Lystra do after Paul and Barnabas healed a crippled man in Jesus' name? Acts 14:8-18. Why can we understand what they did? How might we today be tempted to do the same thing?

The people of Lystra brought sacrificial animals and wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas. They said, "'The gods have come down to us in human form'" (Acts 14:11, NIrV). Ellen White notes that "Paul tried to direct the people's minds to the true God as the only object worthy of worship. But to turn them from their purpose was still very difficult."-Adapted from *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p.

58.

Suppose someone asked you, Why do you worship the kind of God you do? What answer would you give? How can you be so sure about worshiping a God you have never seen? Is God just something you have to take on faith? Write a paragraph or two that gives your reasons. Read your paragraphs in class on Sabbath.

Monday

September 5

SABBATH AND WORSHIP (Genesis 2:1-3).

It is our honor to worship God every minute. Every time we lift our hearts and voices to God in worship, we join the angels in front of His throne. These angels worship Him day and night. Through silent prayers of thanksgiving and praise, we can worship God anytime, anywhere (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In many ways, our personal, and private devotion and worship are more important than what we might do as part of a church.

But there are special times for worship. These times

are separate from what we might do during our daily routine. The Hebrew feasts were special times set apart for worship and thanksgiving (Leviticus 23:4-44).

But more universal⁹⁰ than the Jewish feasts is the seventh-day Sabbath. Our Creator set apart the Sabbath as a time for all His people, Jews or Gentiles.⁹¹

What do you see in Genesis 2:1-3 that shows the seventh-day Sabbath is for everyone?

Read Revelation 14:6, 7. Then answer the following questions:

1. For whom is the message of the "everlasting⁹² gospel"? How does this answer fit in with Genesis 2:1-3?

⁹⁰ universal—for everyone.

⁹¹ Gentiles—people who are not Jews.

⁹² everlasting—lasting forever; without beginning or end.

2. Whom are we to worship? _____

3. How do your answers to questions 1 and 2 help you understand the part the Sabbath plays in the first angel's message of Revelation 14:6, 7? _____

Why does the Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) give us a special opportunity for worship we might not have any other time? How well do you use that opportunity? What changes might you need to make to receive the best the Sabbath has to offer?

Tuesday

September 6

A HEART FOR WORSHIP (John 4:23, 24).

Read David's song of thanksgiving in 1 Chronicles 16:8-

36. What does it mean to "worship the Lord because of his beauty and holiness" (1 Chronicles 16:29, NIrV). John 4:23, 24 will help you with your answer.

Holiness in the Bible gives the idea of something "set apart for holy use." So worship is setting aside time and ourselves for special fellowship with God. Worship is our way of saying, "How great you are God! How unworthy I am." Worship is our way of admitting we totally depend on Jesus' righteousness (holiness) as our only way of salvation. Worship is a time to stop work, play, and everything else we do so we can praise and honor Jesus. Jesus' death has opened the door to heaven for all who will enter.

But true worship is so much more than the order of a worship service. True worship is a way we humans can thank God for who He is and for the great things He has done for us through Jesus. John said, "Here is what it means to love God. It means that we obey his commands" (1 John 5:3, NIrV). We also show our love for God by worshiping Him. It is a different way of showing our love than keeping His commandments. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said we would worship the Lord in "spirit and in truth."

Based on what true worship is, why do you think Jesus cleared out the Temple? John 2:13-16?

When we worship again and again, it can become boring to us. Once we stop worshiping God in spirit and in truth, our worship can become unhealthy. This happened during Jesus' time. The Temple services had become cold and businesslike. The same can happen now. Our churches can become social clubs where the Lord could look upon us and say: "These people worship me only with their words. They honor me by what they say. But their hearts are far away from me. Their worship does not mean anything to me. They teach nothing but human rules'" (Isaiah 29:13, NIV).

Think of a worship experience where you left uplifted and encouraged in your faith. Then think of another worship service where you left discouraged and cold. What caused the difference between the two services?

Wednesday

September 7

THE EXPRESSIONS OF OUR WORSHIP (Psalm 149:3).

As we study the Bible, we discover that throughout history, worshipers have shown their devotion to God in different ways.

What examples of worship do you find in the following verses? As you read these verses, ask yourself: What kind of situation do they seem to speak about? Is the situation serious, or joyful and positive? Is something automatically holy if it is serious? Or is something automatically disrespectful if it is joyful?

Psalm 47 _____

Psalm 63:1-4 _____

Psalm 150 _____

Psalm 149:3 _____

Music always has played an important part in worship. Heaven is filled with songs of praise (Revelation 5:9, 10; Revelation 15:3, 4). When we express our worship to God through music, we have the honor of praising Him with other people. "Music is an important part of God's worship in heaven. We should try to sing songs of praise in harmony with the heavenly singers In religious services, singing is as much an act of worship as prayer is. The heart must feel the spirit of the song, to sing in the right mood and spirit."-Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 594.

How do you understand Paul's advice that we should "sing with thanks in our hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16, NIrV).

There are musical shows that may please people. But these shows have no signs of God's grace. Only music that comes from a heart touched by the grace of Jesus is worship that is in spirit and in truth.

What is your favorite worship song? Sing it now as an offering of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

Thursday

September 8

THE RESULTS OF OUR WORSHIP (Acts 2:46, 47).

When we worship God in spirit and truth, we will experience personal change in our lives. It is impossible to stand in the presence of God and remain unchanged.

Think about the experience of the early Christians as they met together for worship. Read Acts 2:46, 47. What was the result of their worship?

True worship influences us personally. David wrote, "I was very glad when they said to me, 'Let us go up to the house of the LORD'" (Psalm 122:1, NIV). David had

discovered that God's presence "fill(s) me with joy" (Psalm 16:11, NIV). We experience joy when we worship God in spirit and in truth. There is always the danger of getting carried away emotionally in some kinds of church services. But there is also the danger of our worship being cold, dead, and lifeless.

Worship is nothing if it is not a personal show of faith. But the Bible talks about coming together and worshipping as a group. How were the lives of the early Christians influenced by prayerful worship when Peter and John were freed from prison? Acts 4:24-31. What can we learn from this story about what group worship should do for us?

The worship of the early Christians filled them with joy. Their worship made them ready to boldly share God. They strengthened and encouraged each other with words of faith and love for God. This should be our experience, too. We should receive faith, hope, and encouragement from others as we worship with them. In the same way, others should receive faith, hope, and encouragement from us. Group worship should bring us closer to God and to one another. It should fill us

with a desire to preach the great news of the crucified Christ. If this is not your experience, you have not worshiped. You have just gone through a religious service without having a truly spiritual experience.

Write down your understanding of what true group worship should be. Do you have some ideas or beliefs that need to be changed? Compare⁹³ notes in class.

Friday

September 9

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Find some New Testament verses about Jesus' death for us. Think deeply about what His death means. Write your understanding of His death and the forgiveness it offers you. Pray over what you wrote. Ask god to help you understand that Jesus' sacrifice was complete.⁹⁴

Afterward, you will be filled with a desire to worship Him. Of all the reasons we have to worship God, no reason is better than the Cross.

"It will be the honor of saved people to worship God

⁹³ compare—show how things are the same.

⁹⁴ complete—all that was needed for your salvation.

throughout eternity.⁹⁵ We will come from every family nation, languages, and people. Our cultural history will be different. But our worship will join together in a beautiful song of praise. 'Heaven and earth will unite [join together] in praise, as from one Sabbath to another' (Isaiah 66:23) The nations of the saved shall bow in joyful worship to God and the lamb [Jesus]."-Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 770.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. As a class, have different people give their understanding of what an ideal worship service should be like. What differences are there among your views? Are there basic differences or simply differences in taste and style? Most important, what does the Bible teach us about proper worship?
2. How can our worship show more clearly the worship of God in heaven? (Revelation 4, 5, and Revelation 19:1-7.)

⁹⁵ eternity—life without end.

3. What changes have you noticed in the way people worship? How much are those changes cultural rather than from the Bible? How much should culture affect how we worship? Is there any one "right" way to worship?

4. Worship services can be cold, boring, and formal. Or they can be too entertaining. In which direction does your local church go? What changes might you need to make to improve the services? How can you make these changes?

Lord of Our Service

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 13:1-17; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28-13:3; Luke 10:38-42.

MEMORY VERSE: " ` You know about those [people] who are rulers of the nations. They hold power over their people. Their high officials order them around. Don't [do not] be like that. Instead, anyone who wants to be important among you must be your servant' " (Mark 10:42, 43, NIrV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Jesus gives the perfect example of service. He reminds us that, “‘Even the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served. Instead, he came to serve others. He came to give his life as the price for setting many people free’” (Mark 10:45, NIrV). God calls us to serve in Jesus’ name.

THE CALL TO BE A SERVANT. When we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord, He invites us to follow in His steps. This is not a call to become famous. Rather, it is a call to service. It is a call to have the mind of Jesus. He humbled Himself and took upon Himself the work of a servant. Like the disciples, we often find ourselves fighting for the place of honor or power. But Jesus lovingly reminds us, both with His words and His life, that “This, however, is not the way it shall be among you” (20:26, TEV).

Jesus calls us first to serve Him as our Lord and then to serve others in His name. We will serve out of love for Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us. This is the only service He truly accepts. This is the service born out of a heart of love for God and others.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 17.

Sunday

September 11

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS (John 13:1-17).

Only John wrote about the story of Jesus washing the disciple's feet. Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not. Neither did Peter nor Paul. But when you read this story, it reminds you so much of Jesus' true character.

How did Jesus' actions in the upper room show His willingness to serve rather than to be served? John 13:1-17.

The foot-washing service is an opportunity for Christians to admit their need for spiritual cleansing through faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Jesus made this point clear. He said, "A person who has had a bath needs to wash only his feet. The rest of his body is clean" (John 13:10, NIV). He also said, "If I do not wash your feet, you will no longer be my disciple" (John 13:8, TEV).

The foot-washing service is an opportunity to say Yes again to Jesus as your Savior and Lord. The foot-washing service is also an act of service. Jesus gave the disciples, and each one of us, a perfect example of service when He washed the disciple's feet. Jesus had every right to let someone else wash their feet. But He humble Himself. He chose to act as a servant.

Study other times in Jesus' earthly ministry (work) that show His willingness to serve. What can we learn from these stories about the call to service?

Mark 1:32-34 _____

Luke 9:12-17 _____

John 2:1-10 _____

Jesus showed, both in word and action, that He came to serve rather than to be served. He calls you to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. He calls you to a life of service.

When was the last time you sacrificed your time, money, or both in service for someone who had no chance of paying you back? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

Monday

September 12

OUR GREATEST SERVICE (Luke 19:2-7).

There are many good things we can do for others. But the greatest thing you can do is to lead people to Jesus. Jesus is the One who paid for the sins of every person by dying on the cross. We believe every Christian is commanded to share this good news with the world. The question is not *whether* we should witness⁹⁶ to others, but *how*. Here again,

⁹⁶ witness—to teach other people about God through words and loving deeds.

we can learn from Jesus' example. "Jesus' method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mixed with people because He wanted to do good things for them. Jesus showed His sympathy for them. He worked to meet their needs, and won their confidence (loyalty). Then He told them, 'Follow Me.'"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry [work] of Healing*, p. 143.

Go through the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to find examples of when Jesus won people's confidence by meeting their needs, and then told them to follow Him. For example, read Luke 19:2-7; Mark 2:15-17; Matthew 12:9-14. How can you lead people to Jesus by meeting their needs?

Jesus method of reaching souls took something that many of us do not want to give. That something is ourselves. Often we might be tempted to think that giving a mission offering or passing out a few flyers for an evangelistic series is enough. Doing these things is good. But they are not the same as mixing with people. We must spend time with people and meet their needs. To do this, we need to give of ourselves in unselfish service. That is not always easy. It

requires a painful death to self. It also requires a willingness to serve Jesus by serving others. When we take up our cross daily, we will be doing what we can for Jesus through working with others. This is the focus of Christian service. Bible studies, prophecy charts, and reasoning can help help people accept Jesus. But meeting people's needs is one of the best ways of helping them accept Jesus.

Think of persons around you who need to hear about Jesus. How can you use His method to reach them? Are you willing to make the sacrifices needed in order to reach them?

Tuesday

September 13

DIFFERENT KINDS OF SERVICE (1 Corinthians 12:28).

We are all called to share the good news about Jesus with others. This is our greatest service. Our work will have results when we follow Jesus' method for reaching people. It is important to understand that the way we serve others will not always be the same. It depends on our

personality⁹⁷ and spiritual gifts. We are not all called to do the same thing. We need to die to self for Christian service if we are to accept just what our gifts and callings are and are not.

Write down the different kinds of service listed in Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28-13:3. In what ways do you think God is calling you to serve others in His name? Give reasons for your answer.

Every follower of Jesus must ask how God is calling him or her to serve. Here is a way to help you answer that question:

Step 1: Explore other kinds of service found in many of the Bible stories (Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28-13:3 are not a complete list of kinds of service.)

Step 2: Experiment with different kinds of service. As you serve others in different ways, notice your thoughts and feelings. When you serve in a way the

⁹⁷ personality—the qualities of a person; what makes one person different from another person.

Lord has given you as a gift, you will experience freedom and joy.

Step 3: Pay attention to the advice of brother and sisters in Christ. Christ often uses people to tell you whether or not you are doing well in serving people. Or they can suggest other kinds of service that might work out better for you. Often, their advice and comments are based upon the gifts they see in your life.

How were you able to recognize the gifts the Lord has given you? How are you using those gifts to serve others? Do you need to change how you work?

Wednesday

September 14

EXAMPLES OF SERVICE (Acts 9:36-39).

The New Testament is filled with examples of men and women, boys and girls, who served others in Jesus' name. Some well-known examples include Andrew. He brought his brother Simon to Jesus (see John 1:40-42). Another is Dorcas, who sewed clothes for those in need (see Acts 9:36-

39).

You may find it interesting to read any book of the Bible to find examples of service.

Quickly read through the book of Acts, which holds many examples of service in Jesus' name. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize examples of service you might do in your own life.

When we serve others in Jesus' name, we are following His example. We also are giving proof that He is helping us to become more like Him. We are not self-centered and self-serving anymore. Rather, we find joy in serving others. There is a power in unselfish service for others that nothing can remove. For sinful people who are naturally self-centered and selfish, service does not come easy. Daily surrender to the Lord is very important.

Another important thing is to always keep the Cross in mind. The Cross is the greatest example of unselfish service for others. As we daily think about Jesus' great sacrifice for all of us, our hearts will be broken. In front of the Cross, nothing Jesus asks of us will be too much. Our

service to others will be the least we can do for Him. He has said to us, “‘Anything you did for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:40, NIrV).

Thinking about Jesus’ sacrifice. This is the greatest example of unselfish service. How does thinking about the Cross influence you to serve others?

Thursday

September 15

THE WRONG KIND OF SERVICE (Luke 10:38-42).

We must be careful not to let our service in Jesus’ name hinder⁹⁸ our relationship with Jesus. We need to keep our relationship with Jesus at the center of our life. Our relationship with Him is the basis of our desire to serve others. If we neglect our relationship with Jesus, we can become proud and think that our service for others can add to our salvation and make ourselves more acceptable to God.

We can become so busy serving others that we have no

⁹⁸ hinder—to take the place of something.

time to spend with Jesus. A very good example of this is when Jesus visited the home of Martha. In many ways, Martha is a model of faithfulness. She believed Jesus was the Savior, the Son of God (John 11:27). She was willing to keep trusting Him, even when she did not have hope (John 11:21, 22). But one time, when Jesus visited Martha's home in Bethany, she let her service take the place of her relationship with Jesus.

How did Martha's service influence her personally and her relationship with the Master? Luke 10:38-42.

Martha is worried. The verb used here in the Greek (Translated as "careful" in the KJV) is a strong one. We find this same verb in Philippians 4:6 where Paul warns the believers to "be anxious [worried] for nothing" (NKJV). We find the word as a noun in 1 Peter 5:7. In this verse, Peter asks believers to put all their worries upon the Lord. But Martha is holding on to all her worries. She is anxious. Her mind is not focused on Jesus.

Martha is also troubled. The Greek verb (translated "troubled" in the KJV) suggests she is acting in an angry

way. Her service for Jesus is the wrong kind of service. As a result, her relationship with Jesus suffers. Martha misses the opportunity of sitting at His feet and experiencing close fellowship with Him. Instead, she challenges Him with these words: “‘Lord, my sister has left me to do the work by myself. Don’t [do] you [not] care? Tell her to help me!’” (Luke 10:40, 41, NIrV).

How can we avoid being too “busy” serving in Jesus’ name so we do not have a good relationship with Him? Why must we not let anything take the place of our relationship with Jesus?

Friday

September 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Sometimes, Christians serve others in Jesus’ name as if they were in a contest. We can easily fall into the trap of comparing ourselves with others or contrasting⁹⁹ our service with others. Study the following Bible verses that discuss the problem of trying to outdo others in our service for people: Luke 9:49, 50; 1 Corinthians 1:11-13. What lessons can we learn from the

⁹⁹ contrasting—showing how things are different.

teachings of Jesus and Paul?

The teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46 shows that our service for others is an important test of our Christian experience. The story about the dividing of the sheep and the goats tells us about people who are not involved in acts of service to others. They are the ones who will be punished. Why do these verses not contradict¹⁰⁰ righteousness by faith.¹⁰¹ Are acts of service necessary for salvation? Is it correct to say we must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick if we expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Explain your answers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A friend tells you she would like to serve others in Jesus' name. But she feels she is too busy. What advice would you give her?
2. What can you do as a class to show others the caring and serving spirit that is a sign of people who truly

¹⁰⁰ contradict—to disagree.

¹⁰¹ righteousness by faith—the truth that we are saved through faith in Jesus.

follow Jesus?

3. How can we avoid believing that our service for others gives us a better chance of going to heaven?
4. What modern example of serving others has been most inspiring to you? Why?

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11;
Matthew 24:23-51; Matthew 7:21-29; Philippians 2:9-11;
Revelation 20:7-9.

MEMORY VERSE: "Then I saw heaven open, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True; it is with justice that he judges and fights his battles. . . .On his robe and on his thigh was written the name: King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:11, 16, TEV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Our Lord and Savior Jesus will come again in glory to gather His people throughout history into His eternal¹⁰² kingdom. All those who have received Him as Savior and Lord will welcome Him with joy when He returns to this earth.

JESUS, OUR SAVIOR AND LORD, HAS GIVEN US MANY PROMISES. The greatest promise is that He will return and take us from this sin-sick world. We have this hope in the coming of the Lord. As our savior, He brought us back to God and opened the way for the great and glorious day of His return. Then sin will be destroyed forever and we will live with Him throughout eternity.¹⁰³

This is the great hope of all people who have shown in their lives that they have accepted Jesus as their Lord. But, for people who have refused to accept Jesus as their Lord, the Second Coming will be a sad and fearful event.¹⁰⁴

Right now, why not completely surrender to the One who surrendered all for us on the Cross?

¹⁰² eternal—forever; without beginning or ending; lasting forever.

¹⁰³ eternity—life without end.

¹⁰⁴ event—thing that happens.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 24.

Sunday

September 18

CHRIST IS SURE TO COME! (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11).

If we have received Jesus as Savior and lord, we are a people of hope. We are joyfully "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing (coming) of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13, NKJV). Our hope for the return of Jesus is not just a wish. We know He is returning, because He is faithful in honoring His promises.

What promise did Jesus give to His followers about His return to this earth? (John 14:1-3).

We trust in this promise of Jesus: "'I will come again.'" This sentence might be translated "I am coming again." The verb¹⁰⁵ to come is in the present tense. We call this a "futuristic present (a present that shows the

¹⁰⁵ verb—a word that shows actions. *Run, drive, walk* are words that are verbs.

future).” This means that what is being described is sure to happen. In this promise, Jesus shows His return is a certain (sure) as if it were already happening!

What did two angels say about Jesus’ promise to return?

Acts 1:9-11.

Seventh-day Adventist Christians have long held dear the blessed hope of Jesus’ return. Our name, *Adventist*, reminds us that Jesus will come again as King of kings and Lord of lords. The people who started our church expected His return long before now. But the promise is still sure. “The Lord is not slow to keep his promise. He is not slow in the way some people understand it. He is patient with you. He doesn’t [does not] want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, he wants all people to turn away from their sins (2 Peter 3:9, 10, NIV). Paul writes: “The Lord himself will come down from heaven” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, NIV). Jesus’ second coming is not a wish. It is our certain hope.

Are you discouraged, worried, fearful? Read again John 14:1-3. Put your name in the right places. (For example, “I

am going to prepare a place for [repeat your name].) Picture in your mind that Jesus is talking just to you. What hope do you receive from Jesus' promise to return for you?

Monday

September 19

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S RETURN (Matthew 24:23-31).

Jesus wants us to be certain (sure) of His return. He also wants us to understand how He will return. We already have learned from yesterday's lesson that His coming will be real. Jesus said, "I will come again." We must refuse to accept any interpretation that explains away Christ's second coming as His coming into our hearts. It is true that Christ lives in our hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17). But the fact the He lives in our hearts does not replace His real return.

What can we learn from the following verses about the nature of Jesus' return?

Matthew 24:23-26 _____

Matthew 24:27 _____

Matthew 24:31 _____

Jesus' second coming will not be a secret. It will be very see-able and loud. Matthew 24:31. Also suggest that people who died believing in Jesus will be brought back to life when He returns. Read another promise of Jesus: "'My Father wants all who look to the Son and believe in him to have eternal life. I will raise them up on the last day'" (John 6:40, NIrV).

Read Paul's descriptions of Christ's second coming in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. Why would such a description be hard

for a false christ to fake. The Bible is clear about how Jesus will return. So why have many people been fooled by false christs in the past?

Paul supports Jesus' teaching about how He will return. Jesus' second coming is personal: Jesus *Himself* will come down from heaven. His second coming is powerful: Jesus will shout and the trumpet will sound. There will be a resurrection:¹⁰⁶ People who died believing in Jesus will rise first. Finally, all saved people will be gathered up to meet Jesus in the air.

Based on today's lesson, write a paragraph in your own words describing what it will be like when Jesus returns. Bring your paragraph to class to share with others. How are the paragraphs the same? How are they different?

Tuesday

September 20

THE TIMING OF JESUS' RETURN (Matthew 24:45-51).

¹⁰⁶ resurrection—the raising of the dead back to life.

In Jesus' last words written in the book of Revelation, He announced, "'Surely I am coming quickly'" (Revelation 22:20, NKJV). Christians have wrestled with that announcement ever since. From our human viewpoint, it does not seem that He is coming quickly. But we understand that He is not locked in time as we are. Peter reminds us that "with the Lord a day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8, NIV).

What mistake should Peter's words keep us from making?

When we think of eternity, Jesus is coming quickly. But many times we find ourselves crying out, "'How long, Lord and King, holy and true? How long will you wait to judge those who live on the earth?'" (Revelation 6:10, NIV).

Read Jesus' parable¹⁰⁷ in Matthew 24:45-51. What do you believe is the basic message He is giving us in this parable? Why is this parable so important to Adventists?

For a long time, people in the church have debated the

¹⁰⁷ parable—a simple story that teaches a moral or religious lesson.

question of a delay¹⁰⁸ in Jesus' return. Is there a delay? If so, why? If there is not a delay, then why has Jesus not returned? We may not have all these questions answered before Jesus comes. But the important thing is to always be ready for His return.

If someone were to ask you, What does it mean to be ready for Jesus' return, how would you answer? If Jesus returned today, would you be ready? Why or why not?

Wednesday

September 21

THE EFFECTS OF JESUS' RETURN (Matthew 7:21-23).

Jesus' return will affect people living on the earth in one of two ways. For people who have refused to receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord, His return will be a time of terror. Even for many people who claim to be followers of Jesus but who never let Him be Lord of their lives, His return will be a time of fear.

¹⁰⁸ delay—to put off until a later time.

What does Matthew 27:21-23 say about claiming Jesus as your Lord but then not really letting Him be your Lord?

Jesus is very clear: We cannot separate faith *in* Him from obedience *to* Him. In Matthew 27:21-26, Jesus connects obedience with a saving relationship with Him. He says He "never knew" People who claimed Him as Lord and did good works in His name, because they were not obedient to God's will. In other words, calling yourself a Christian while not living like a Christian is useless. Living like a Christian requires that we do God's will. If not, our faith is made out of nothing but sand.

How does Matthew 7:24-29 fit in with what Jesus said in verses 21-23?

Thursday

September 22

THE COSMIC¹⁰⁹ CONFESSION¹¹⁰ (Philippians 2:9-11).

¹⁰⁹ cosmic—the entire universe.

¹¹⁰ confession—to say Jesus is Lord.

Christians who claim Jesus as Lord obey God's will. This is not an obedience that saves. Instead, it is an obedience that shows a true faith in the God who has saved them by His own blood.

What do the following verses tell us about how we are saved? Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12.

But Christians who claim Jesus as Lord and obey God's will are not the only people who will say Jesus is Lord. Paul says that the day is coming when every one will say Jesus is Lord.

What is Paul talking about in Philippians 2:9-11?

"People denied and refused to accept Jesus at His first coming. They dragged Him as a criminal to Pilate's court. There they blamed Him for blasphemy.¹¹¹ Jesus was whipped and crucified. Nails were driven through His hands and His feet.... At His second coming, the scene will be changed. Everyone will know and say He is the King of glory. At the

¹¹¹ blasphemy—to say you are equal with God.

name of Jesus, every knee shall bow. And every tongue shall confess (say) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The angels will bow with great respect to Him. His enemies will see the mistake they have made. And every person will know and say that He is God.”-Adapted from Ellen G. White, “With Power and Great Glory,” *Signs of the Times*, April 19, 1905.

For wicked people, confessing that Jesus is Lord when He returns will not save them. They are just recognizing the fact that Jesus is Lord. They will have no change of heart. They will not repent¹¹² of their sins. Revelation 20:7-9 shows that they continue their rebellion against the Lord.

But when Jesus returns, there will be sinners who have committed (given) their lives to Jesus by surrendering their will to Him. These people will preach Jesus as their Lord. Their lives will reflect what they preach. They will praise their Lord in heaven the same as they praised Him on earth. Their service on earth to Jesus as Lord will continue in heaven. But it will be without the burden of sin, disease, ignorance, and Satan’s temptations. That is the victory Jesus won for them. By trusting and living by faith with

¹¹² repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and to turn away from sin.

Jesus as Lord, they can enjoy the results of that victory, even now.

Friday

September 23

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Revelation 19-22. Take time to think about this beautiful scene of the new earth: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life. It was as clear as crystal. It flowed from the throne of God and of the Lamb [Jesus]. It flowed down the middle of the city's main street. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing [giving off] 12 crops of fruit. Its fruit was ripe every month. The leaves of the tree bring healing to the nations. There will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will serve him. They will see his face. His name will be on their foreheads. They will see his face. His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of the lamp or the light of the sun. The Lord God will give them light. They will rule for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:1-5, NIrV).

What a blessed hope is ours! Soon our Lord and Savior

Jesus will return as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will create a new heaven and a new earth. And we will rule with Him for ever and ever. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Suppose you discuss Jesus' Second coming with someone. The person probably will say, "Look, ever since I was a kid, I was told Jesus was coming soon. So please, don't bother me with this talk of His 'soon' return." How will you answer this person?
2. Read again Revelation 22:1-5. Talk as a class about what you think life will be like in the new earth. What will the big difference be between life eternity and life on earth now?
3. As a class, talk about the difference between just believing in Jesus as Lord and living under Him as Lord?