



SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division

Hearing the
Voice of God

Vol. 91, No. 3

July–September, 2015

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

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Foreword

With so many voices in the world today, where can we turn to find truth? How can we know God's will and guard against Satan's deceptions? Does it really matter what we believe?

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them' (Isaiah 8:20). The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God's work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested.

"Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God's immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?"—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594.

"The voice of God is speaking to us through His Word, and there are many voices that we will hear; but Christ has said we should beware of them who will say, 'Here is Christ, or there is Christ.' Then how shall we know that they have not the truth unless we bring everything to the Scriptures?"—*Faith and Works*, p. 55.

"God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

Our heritage as Protestant Christians in general and Seventh Day Adventist Reformers in particular is founded on a firm belief that God's voice is to be respected above every other. It is our prayer that this series of lessons will be a means of helping our readers discern, understand, and follow the voice of God in every aspect of their life.

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a church renovation in Hungary

Hungary is a landlocked country in Central Europe with almost 10 million inhabitants, most of whom hold to the Catholic religion. The Reform message has existed in our little country since the very first beginnings of the Reform Movement in Europe. Since 1990 we have enjoyed much religious freedom.

However, recent government regulations have changed our status from a recognized church to a religious association. This has placed new burdens upon us.

Before 1990 our believers worshipped together in private homes. But after the political restrictions of the communist era were lifted, we made the decision to purchase or build houses for the worship of God. In 1992 we started to build a new church complex at Mogyoród, which is 20 km from Budapest, our capital city. The believers in Hungary were faithful in giving and diligent in work. By the grace of God, in 1995 we were able to hold an International Youth Convention in this facility. A second one was held there in 1997 and a third in 2001. Today, we have an increasing number of visitors to our outreach programs. The facility is also used for our weekly vegan-vegetarian cooking courses. These have been held regularly for more than 10 years and have proved really popular with the public. However, this building, which includes the chapel, after 17 years of use, requires renovation in order to become a more suitable place for reverent worship.

We also have a facility to house our elderly brothers and sisters who are in need. This facility also contains a place of worship, but this building is very old and needs renovating. However, while our brethren and sisters are truly generous in their giving, we do not have enough financial means to perform this work.

Therefore we ask our brethren, sisters, and friends all over the world to give generously as they are able on the first Sabbath of July, 2015. It is our prayer that God will bless you all in your giving for this project in order that we may continue to use our facilities to the glory and honor of God.

We thank you for your great generosity.

Your brothers and sisters from Hungary



May I Have Your Attention?

“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah 5:4).

“The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour’s life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings—all are enlisted in behalf of man’s redemption.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 21.

Suggested Reading: *The Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1889.

Sunday

June 28

1. CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

- a. Does God want to communicate with humans? Acts 17:27; Isaiah 65:1.

“What can the angels of heaven think of poor helpless human beings, who are subject to temptation, when God’s heart of infinite love yearns toward them, ready to give them more than they can ask or think, and yet they pray so little and have so little faith? The angels love to bow before God; they love to be near Him. They regard communion with God as their highest joy; and yet the children of earth, who need so much the help that God only can give, seem satisfied to walk without the light of His Spirit, the companionship of His presence.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 94.

- b. With how many of us does God want to communicate personally? Hebrews 8:11; Psalm 4:3 (last part).

“The Saviour regards with infinite tenderness the souls whom He has purchased with His own blood. They are the claim of His love. He looks upon them with unutterable longing.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 517.

2. GOD WANTS TO SPEAK TO CONSECRATED PEOPLE

- a. **How did God talk with Moses? Exodus 33:11 (first part). What kind of person was Moses when God talked face-to-face with him? Numbers 12:3; Hebrews 3:1, 2.**
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“‘Come up to Me into the mount,’ God bids us. To Moses, before he could be God’s instrument in delivering Israel, was appointed the forty years of communion with Him in the mountain solitudes. Before bearing God’s message to Pharaoh, he spoke with the angel in the burning bush. . . .

“We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should. Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 508, 509.

- b. **What kind of person was Samuel when God first talked with him? 1 Samuel 3:1 (first part). Why didn’t Samuel recognize God when He first called him? Verses 4, 5, 7.**
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“[Samuel] was kind, generous, obedient, and respectful. . . . [He] was helpful and affectionate.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 573.

- c. **What kind of person was Cornelius when God spoke to him in vision? Was he a church member at that time? Acts 10:1, 2. How did Cornelius respond to God’s message? Verses 7, 8.**
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“Cornelius was a Roman centurion. He was a man of wealth and noble birth, and his position was one of trust and honor. A heathen by birth, training, and education, through contact with the Jews he had gained a knowledge of God, and he worshiped Him with a true heart, showing the sincerity of his faith by compassion to the poor. He was known far and near for his beneficence, and his righteous life made him of good repute among both Jews and Gentiles. His influence was a blessing to all with whom he came in contact.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 132, 133.

3. GOD SPEAKS TO UNCONSECRATED PEOPLE

- a. **What kind of person was Cain when God talked with him? Genesis 4:3–5, 8.**
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“Notwithstanding Cain’s disregard of the divine command, God did not leave him to himself; but He condescended to reason with the man who had shown himself so unreasonable. And the Lord said unto Cain, ‘Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?’ Through an angel messenger the divine warning was conveyed: ‘If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door’ (Genesis 4:6, 7). The choice lay with Cain himself. If he would trust to the merits of the promised Saviour, and would obey God’s requirements, he would enjoy His favor. But should he persist in unbelief and transgression, he would have no ground for complaint because he was rejected by the Lord.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 74.

- b. **What kind of woman was Hagar at the time that God talked to her? Genesis 16:1–9.**
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- c. **What kind of person was the unnamed woman whom the Scribes and Pharisees brought to Christ? John 8:3, 4. What was she like after her conversation with Him? Verses 10, 11.**
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“The woman had stood before Jesus, cowering with fear. His words, ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone,’ had come to her as a death sentence. She dared not lift her eyes to the Saviour’s face but silently awaited her doom. In astonishment she saw her accusers depart speechless and confounded; then those words of hope fell upon her ear, ‘Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more’ (verse 11). Her heart was melted, and she cast herself at the feet of Jesus, sobbing out her grateful love, and with bitter tears confessing her sins.

“This was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to the service of God. . . . This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she repaid His forgiving mercy.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

4. WHEN GOD REFUSES TO SPEAK

- a. Why wouldn't Jesus talk to Caiaphas during part of His trial? Matthew 26:62, 63; Isaiah 53:7.
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"Caiaphas was a proud and cruel man, overbearing and intolerant."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 539.

"Caiaphas had regarded Jesus as his rival. The eagerness of the people to hear the Saviour, and their apparent readiness to accept His teachings, had aroused the bitter jealousy of the high priest. But as Caiaphas now looked upon the prisoner, he was struck with admiration for His noble and dignified bearing. A conviction came over him that this Man was akin to God. The next instant he scornfully banished the thought. Immediately his voice was heard in sneering, haughty tones demanding that Jesus work one of His mighty miracles before them. But his words fell upon the Saviour's ears as though He heard them not."—*Ibid.*, pp. 704, 705.

"The Lord reads the hearts of all and understands their motives and purposes."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 534.

- b. Would God talk to King Saul near the end of his life? 1 Samuel 28:5, 6. Why did God treat him this way? 1 Samuel 15:22, 23.
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"The Lord never turned away a soul that came to Him in sincerity and humility. Why did He turn Saul away unanswered? The king had by his own act forfeited the benefits of all the methods of inquiring of God. He had rejected the counsel of Samuel the prophet; he had exiled David, the chosen of God; he had slain the priests of the Lord. Could he expect to be answered by God when he had cut off the channels of communication that Heaven had ordained? He had sinned away the Spirit of grace, and could he be answered by dreams and revelations from the Lord? Saul did not turn to God with humility and repentance. It was not pardon for sin and reconciliation with God, that he sought, but deliverance from his foes. By his own stubbornness and rebellion he had cut himself off from God. There could be no return but by the way of penitence and contrition; but the proud monarch, in his anguish and despair, determined to seek help from another source."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 676.

5. GOD WANTS OUR ATTENTION

- a. How has God tried to get the attention of various people in the past?
 - Moses: Exodus 3:2, 3.
 - Elijah: 1 Kings 19:9–13.
 - Balaam: Numbers 22:27, 28.
- b. Under what conditions will God speak to us today? Psalm 46:10.

“All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Psalm 46:10). This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God. Amidst the hurrying throng, and the strain of life’s intense activities, he who is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. He will receive a new endowment of both physical and mental strength. His life will breathe out a fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men’s hearts.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 58.

“He who is made complete in Christ must first be emptied of pride, of self-sufficiency. Then there is silence in the soul, and God’s voice can be heard.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 9, 1902.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we know that God wants to talk with each of us personally?
2. How do we know that God talks to people who are devoted to Him?
3. How do we know if God talks to those who are not walking with Him?
4. To whom does God refuse to speak, and why?
5. How is God trying to get our attention today?

Practical Listening

“O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart” (Proverbs 8:5).

“The voice of duty is the voice of God—an inborn, heaven-sent guide. Whether it be pleasing or unpleasing, we are to do the duty that lies directly in our pathway.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 29, 1910.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 521–544.

Sunday

July 5

1. GOD’S VOICE IN DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

- a. **What is a common way that God reveals His will to us? Luke 17:10. Can we safely ignore this method of God’s communication?**
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“No one can believe with the heart unto righteousness, and obtain justification by faith, while continuing the practice of those things which the Word of God forbids, or while neglecting any known duty.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 396.

“While living in neglect of a known duty, [Moses] would not be secure; for he could not be shielded by the angels of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 256.

“Duty admits no rival, enters into no compromise with any opposing powers. The most precious friends and relatives must not step in between your duty and your God. The voice of duty is the voice of God in our souls.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 7, 1887.

- b. **Why was the master displeased with the servant to whom he had given one talent? Matthew 25:26, 27; Luke 16:10.**
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“By unfaithfulness in even the smallest duties, man robs his Maker of the service which is His due.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 356.

2. REFUSING TO HEAR

- a. **Why didn't the rich young ruler want to do what Jesus had asked him to do? Matthew 19:21, 22. What two tools does God use to teach us our duty?**
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"The man or woman that leaves the place that God has given him or her, in order to please inclination, and acts on his own devised plan meets with disappointment, because he has chosen his way instead of God's way."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 175.

"There are persons who would understand their duty clearly, if their duty was in harmony with their natural inclinations. Reason and circumstances may point out their duty clearly; but when the path of duty is not in line with their inclinations, these evidences are frequently set aside. Then these persons will presume to go to God to learn their duty. But God will not be trifled with. He will permit such persons to follow the desires of their own hearts."—*The Watchman*, September 1, 1908.

"Those who disregard the requirements of God in this life would not respect His authority were they in heaven."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 312.

- b. **Why does God sometimes choose to refrain from teaching us His will? Isaiah 59:1, 2; Psalm 81:11, 12; John 7:17.**
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"There is no help for man, woman, or child who will not hear and obey the voice of duty; for the voice of duty is the voice of God. The eyes, the ears, and the heart will become unimpressible if men and women refuse to give heed to the divine counsel and choose the way that is best pleasing to themselves."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 175.

- c. **What is usually the reason for not listening to God? Deuteronomy 1:43; 1 Samuel 15:23.**
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3. NO MIDDLEMAN NEEDED

- a. **Do we need to wait for anyone else to teach us God's will? James 1:5, 6.**
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“We are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

- b. **What are we promised when we ask God for guidance? Proverbs 3:5–7.**
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“When perplexities arise, and difficulties confront you, look not for help to humanity. Trust all with God. The practice of telling our difficulties to others only makes us weak and brings no strength to them. It lays upon them the burden of our spiritual infirmities, which they cannot relieve. We seek the strength of erring, finite man, when we might have the strength of the unerring, infinite God. . . .

“We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him. He longs to give you understanding in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect. He can give tact and skill.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 146.

“Has not God said He would give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? and is not this spirit a real, true actual guide? Some men seem afraid to take God at His word as though it would be presumption in them. They pray for the Lord to teach us and yet are afraid to credit the pledged word of God and believe we have been taught of Him. So long as we come to our heavenly Father humbly and with a spirit to be taught, willing and anxious to learn, why should we doubt God's fulfillment of His own promise?”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, pp. 1155, 1156.

4. GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD US

- a. **What did Christ say to reveal God's willingness to teach us His ways, personally? Matthew 7:7-11.**
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"God wants His children to ask for those things that will enable Him to reveal His grace through them to the world. He wants them to seek His counsel, to acknowledge His power. Christ lays loving claims on all for whom He has given His life; they are to obey His will if they would share the joys that He has prepared for all who reflect His character here. It is well for us to feel our weakness, for then we shall seek the strength and wisdom that the Father delights to give to His children for their daily strife against the powers of evil."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 284.

- b. **How patient is God as He seeks to communicate with us? Romans 14:5 (second part); 2 Peter 3:9.**
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- c. **How patient should we be with others in their understanding of God's ways? Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 4:2; Luke 6:37.**
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"As God's free agents, all should ask wisdom of Him. When the learner depends wholly upon another's thoughts, and goes no further than to accept his plans, he sees only through that man's eyes and is, so far, only an echo of another. God deals with men as responsible beings. He will work by His Spirit through the mind He has put in man, if man will only give Him a chance to work and will recognize His dealings. He designs that each shall use his mind and conscience for himself. He does not intend that one man shall become the shadow of another, uttering only another's sentiments. . . .

"Men are individually accountable to God, and each must act as God moves upon him, not as he is moved by the mind of another."—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 724, 725.

"No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think and to follow his own convictions. . . . No one has a right to merge his own individuality in that of another."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

5. HOW GOD USES IMPRESSIONS

- a. In addition to guiding us through the voice of duty, what is another way that God speaks to us? Isaiah 30:21. How did God guide Mary through the impressions of the Holy Spirit?

“Mary knew not the full significance of her deed of love. She could not answer her accusers. She could not explain why she had chosen that occasion for anointing Jesus. The Holy Spirit had planned for her, and she had obeyed His promptings. Inspiration stoops to give no reason. An unseen presence, it speaks to mind and soul, and moves the heart to action. It is its own justification.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 560.

“Another way in which God’s voice is heard is through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions upon the heart, which will be wrought out in the character.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 512.

“Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved.”—*Ibid.*, p. 120.

“God speaks to us through His providential workings and through the influence of His Spirit upon the heart.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 87.

- b. Against what standard should we evaluate our impressions? Isaiah 8:20.

“The Bible . . . marks out the duty of man in every circumstance of life.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 312.

“If you are in doubt upon any subject you must first consult the Scriptures.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 512.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. If we neglect a known duty, what is our spiritual condition?
2. How are we to determine our duty?
3. What must we do in order to learn our duty?
4. What is the relationship between duty and individuality?
5. How does God use impressions? How can we abuse them?

God's Voice in Nature

“God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend” (Job 37:5).

“Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature. . . . The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator's love.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 9.

Suggested Readings: *Education*, pp. 113–120.
The Ministry of Healing, pp. 50–58.

Sunday

July 12

1. A UNIVERSAL VOICE

- a. Where in the world would the voice of God in nature be unheard?
Psalm 19:1–3.
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“Nature speaks to [our] senses, declaring that there is a living God, the Creator, the Supreme Ruler of all. . . . The beauty that clothes the earth is a token of God's love. We may behold it in the everlasting hills, in the lofty trees, in the opening buds and the delicate flowers. All speak to us of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

- b. What message does nature provide to people around the world?
Romans 1:20.
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“Those who have a true knowledge of God will not become so infatuated with the laws of matter or the operations of nature as to overlook, or refuse to acknowledge, the continual working of God in nature. Nature is not God, nor was it ever God. The voice of nature testifies of God, but nature is not God. As His created work, it simply bears a testimony to God's power.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 293.

2. LESSONS FROM THE BIRDS

- a. **What does God teach us through the behavior of the eagle? Isaiah 40:31.**
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“The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. Storm clouds shut in this mighty bird of the forest, their dark masses separating her from the sunny heights where she has made her home. Her efforts to escape seem fruitless. She dashes to and fro, beating the air with her strong wings and waking the mountain echoes with her cries. At length, with a note of triumph, she darts upward, and, piercing the clouds, is once more in the clear sunlight, with the darkness and tempest far beneath. So we may be surrounded with difficulties, discouragement, and darkness. Falsehood, calamity, injustice, shut us in. There are clouds that we cannot dispel. We battle with circumstances in vain. There is one, and but one, way of escape. The mists and fogs cling to the earth; beyond the clouds God’s light is shining. Into the sunlight of His presence we may rise on the wings of faith.”—*Education*, pp. 118, 119.

- b. **What is another lesson that we can learn by watching the birds? Matthew 6:25, 26.**
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“The natural world has, in itself, no power but that which God supplies.”— *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 293.

“The birds are teachers of the sweet lesson of trust. Our heavenly Father provides for them; but they must gather the food, they must build their nests and rear their young. Every moment they are exposed to enemies that seek to destroy them. Yet how cheerily they go about their work! how full of joy are their little songs!”—*Education*, pp. 117, 118.

“Let us not mourn and grieve because in this life we are not free from disappointments and afflictions. If in the providence of God we are called upon to endure trials, let us accept the cross and drink the bitter cup, remembering that it is a Father’s hand that holds it to our lips. Let us trust Him in the darkness as well as in the day.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 316.

3. FAITH THAT WORKS

- a. **What other lessons of trust does God want to teach us from nature? Matthew 6:27–30. Should we devote more interest, time, and effort to serving God or to meeting our daily temporal needs? Verses 30–33.**
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“He who has given you life knows your need of food to sustain it. He who created the body is not unmindful of your need of raiment. Will not He who has bestowed the greater gift bestow also what is needed to make it complete?”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 95.

“God’s law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love.”—*Ibid.*, p. 97.

- b. **What lessons can we learn from some of God’s other creatures? Proverbs 6:6–11; 30:25–28 (compare 2 Thessalonians 3:10).**
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“The ants teach lessons of patient industry, of perseverance in surmounting obstacles, of providence for the future.”—*Education*, p. 117.

“The habitations which the ants build for themselves show skill and perseverance. Only one little grain at a time can they handle, but by diligence and perseverance they accomplish wonders. Solomon presents to the world the industry of the ant as a reproach to those who waste their hours in sinful idleness, in practices which corrupt soul and body. The ant prepares for future seasons. This is a lesson which many gifted with reasoning powers disregard. They fail entirely to prepare for the future immortal life which God has in His providence secured for the fallen race.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, pp. 1157, 1158.

“Jesus does not release us from the necessity of effort, but He teaches that we are to make Him first and last and best in everything. We are to engage in no business, follow no pursuit, seek no pleasure, that would hinder the outworking of His righteousness in our character and life. Whatever we do is to be done heartily, as unto the Lord.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 99.

4. BE LIKE A TREE

- a. **Why is our study of nature so important? What can we learn about God? Psalm 111:4, 6–8; Isaiah 40:26.**
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“How much time is spent by intelligent human beings in horse racing, cricket matches, and ball playing! But will indulgence in these sports give men a desire to know truth and righteousness? Will it keep God in their thoughts? Will it lead them to inquire, How is it with my soul? . . .

“God calls upon His creatures to turn their attention from the confusion and perplexity around them and admire His handiwork. As we study His works, angels from heaven will be by our side to enlighten our minds and guard them from Satan’s deceptions. As you look at the wonderful things that God’s hand has made, let your proud, foolish heart feel its dependence and inferiority.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 456, 457.

- b. **To what is the Christian compared? Psalms 1:1–3; 92:12, 13.**
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“The palm tree well represents the life of a Christian. It stands upright amid the burning desert sand, and dies not; for it draws its sustenance from the springs of life beneath the surface.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1151.

- c. **What are some other practical lessons we can learn from nature?**
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“Many are the lessons that may thus be learned [from nature]. Self-reliance, from the tree that, growing alone on plain or mountainside, strikes down its roots deep into the earth, and in its rugged strength defies the tempest. The power of early influence, from the gnarled, shapeless trunk, bent as a sapling, to which no earthly power can afterward restore its lost symmetry. The secret of a holy life, from the water lily, that, on the bosom of some slimy pool, surrounded by weeds and rubbish, strikes down its channeled stem to the pure sands beneath, and, drawing thence its life, lifts up its fragrant blossoms to the light in spotless purity.”—*Education*, p. 119.

5. HOW TO UNDERSTAND NATURE’S MESSAGES

- a. Whose guidance is essential in order for us to understand nature? John 16:13; 14:26.

“Teach [the children] to notice the evidences everywhere manifest in nature of God’s thought for us, the wonderful adaptation of all things to our need and happiness.

“He alone who recognizes in nature his Father’s handiwork, who in the richness and beauty of the earth reads the Father’s handwriting—he alone learns from the things of nature their deepest lessons and receives their highest ministry. Only he can fully appreciate the significance of hill and vale, river and sea, who looks upon them as an expression of the thought of God, a revelation of the Creator.”—*Education*, pp. 119, 120.

- b. What event teaches us the messages of nature most clearly? John 1:4.

“Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature’s teaching be read aright. Through the story of Bethlehem and the cross let it be shown how good is to conquer evil, and how every blessing that comes to us is a gift of redemption.

“In brier and thorn, in thistle and tare, is represented the evil that blights and mars. In singing bird and opening blossom, in rain and sunshine, in summer breeze and gentle dew, in ten thousand objects in nature, from the oak of the forest to the violet that blossoms at its root, is seen the love that restores. And nature still speaks to us of God’s goodness.”—*Ibid.*, p. 101.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is God trying to tell you through nature today?
2. How can the birds teach us lessons of trust in God?
3. What can we learn from the ant, one of the smallest of creatures?
4. What are some object lessons that trees give us?
5. How does God explain nature’s messages to us today?

God's Ambassadors

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Proverbs 1:8).

“Parents . . . cannot displease [God] more than by neglecting to train their children aright. God has given them these children as a sacred trust, to educate for Him. In a sense they stand in the place of God to their children.”—*The Signs of the Times*, September 25, 1901.

Suggested Reading: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 187–194.

Sunday

July 19

1. AMBASSADORS FOR GOD

a. What is the message of the fifth commandment? Exodus 20:12.

“Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

b. How are parents to help young children? Proverbs 22:6.

“[Parents] are to work out the salvation of those who are too young to understand the difference between good and evil. They are in no case to think that good will naturally predominate in the hearts of their children. They are to guard carefully the words and actions of their little ones, lest the enemy shall gain an influence over them.”—*The Signs of the Times*, September 25, 1901.

2. AN AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY

- a. How should parents handle the most serious responsibility ever given to humanity? Ephesians 6:4.

“For some reason many parents dislike to give their children religious instruction, and they leave them to pick up in the Sabbath School the knowledge which it is their privilege and duty to impart. . . . God commands His people to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. What does this mean—the nurture and admonition of the Lord? It means to teach them to order the life by the requirements and lessons of the word; to help them to gain a clear understanding of the terms of entrance into the city of God. Not to all who would enter will the gates of that city be opened, but to those only who have studied to know God’s will and have yielded their lives to His control.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 109.

“Kindly, earnestly, tenderly, parents are to work for their children, cultivating every good trait and repressing every evil trait which develops in the character.”—*The Signs of the Times*, September 25, 1901.

“You should have no work so important that it will prevent you from giving to your children all the time that is necessary to make them understand what it means to obey and trust the Lord fully.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 183, 184.

- b. Who taught Timothy in his home, and how did their teaching affect his life as a child and as a youth? 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.

“Timothy’s father was a Greek and his mother a Jewess. From a child he had known the Scriptures. The piety that he saw in his home life was sound and sensible. The faith of his mother and his grandmother in the sacred oracles was to him a constant reminder of the blessing in doing God’s will. The word of God was the rule by which these two godly women had guided Timothy. The spiritual power of the lessons that he had received from them kept him pure in speech and unsullied by the evil influences with which he was surrounded. Thus his home instructors had cooperated with God in preparing him to bear burdens.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 203.

3. THE ROLE OF DISCIPLINE

- a. **What is the purpose of discipline?** Psalm 144:12; Proverbs 25:28; 16:32.

“The object of discipline is the training of the child for self-government. He should be taught self-reliance and self-control. . . . Help him to see that all things are under law, and that disobedience leads, in the end, to disaster and suffering. . . .

“The true object of reproof is gained only when the wrongdoer himself is led to see his fault and his will is enlisted for its correction. When this is accomplished, point him to the source of pardon and power.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 223.

“One child, properly disciplined in the principles of truth, who has the love and fear of God woven through the character, will possess a power for good in the world that cannot be estimated.”—*Ibid.*, p. 163.

- b. **How should we discipline the children under our care?** Proverbs 29:15; Colossians 3:21.

“First reason with your children, clearly point out their wrongs, and impress upon them that they have not only sinned against you, but against God. With your heart full of pity and sorrow for your erring children, pray with them before correcting them. Then they will see that you do not punish them because they have put you to inconvenience, or because you wish to vent your displeasure upon them, but from a sense of duty, for their good; and they will love and respect you.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 252, 253.

“Great care should be exercised by parents lest they treat their children in such a way as to provoke obstinacy, disobedience, and rebellion. Parents often stir up the worst passions of the human heart because of their lack of self-control. They correct them in a spirit of anger, and rather confirm them in their evil ways and defiant spirit, than influence them in the way of right.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 15, 1892.

“Parents, never act from impulse. Never correct your child when you are angry; for if you do this, you will mold him after your own image—impulsive, passionate, and unreasonable. You can be firm without violent threatenings or scoldings.”—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, September 6, 1909.

4. OVERCOMING PARENTAL MISTAKES

- a. **What command is given to all children about obeying their parents? Ephesians 6:1. What can parents learn from the advice given to teachers?**

“The parent’s will, when it is in harmony with the will of God, is to be law.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 18, 1900.

“Heavenly messengers are sent to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation; and these would converse with the teachers if they were not so satisfied with the well-trodden path of tradition, if they were not so fearful of getting away from the shadow of the world. Teachers should beware lest they close the gates so that the Lord can find no entrance into the hearts of the youth.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 161.

- b. **What should we do as we review those things which we have learned in our childhood? 1 Thessalonians 5:21.**

“In all who have been chosen to accomplish a work for God the human element is seen. Yet they have not been men of stereotyped habits and character, who were satisfied to remain in that condition. They earnestly desired to obtain wisdom from God and to learn to work for Him. . . . [James 1:5 quoted.] But God will not impart to men divine light while they are content to remain in darkness. In order to receive God’s help, man must realize his weakness and deficiency; he must apply his own mind to the great change to be wrought in himself; he must be aroused to earnest and persevering prayer and effort. Wrong habits and customs must be shaken off; and it is only by determined endeavor to correct these errors and to conform to right principles that the victory can be gained. Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 248.

- c. **How many generations of our ancestors will have influenced our habits? Exodus 20:5.**
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5. VICTORY POSSIBLE

- a. When Moses was a young man, what choice did he make? How was he able to overcome the effects of his life in Egypt? Hebrews 11:24–27.

“Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn. The influences that had surrounded him in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king’s grandson, the dissipation on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur of architecture and sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character. Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life to renounce error and accept truth, but God would be his helper when the conflict should be too severe for human strength.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 248.

- b. How can we encourage our children to overcome sin? 2 Peter 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:57, 58; Proverbs 24:16 (last part).

“Let the child and the youth be taught that every mistake, every fault, every difficulty, conquered, becomes a steppingstone to better and higher things. It is through such experiences that all who have ever made life worth the living have achieved success.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 255.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When are parents’ words to their children as the voice of God?
2. How can we bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?
3. What must be gained in order for discipline or reproof to be successful?
4. What great change must we go through to be used by God?
5. How can we overcome bad habits that we have formed in childhood?

First Sabbath Offering for missionary schools

In loving obedience to the Saviour's commission, "Go ye into all the world" and teach all nations, the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement is striving to prepare qualified workers to accomplish this task.

Missionary schools are one of the main means for this preparation. These schools, being established in different parts of the world, are to be focussed on instructing our young people in the "Present Truth" and how to spread it abroad.

"True education is missionary training. Every son and daughter of God is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men; and to fit us for this service should be the object of our education."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 395.

In carrying out this educational work, a double advantage is gained. Not only are the sincere, thirsting souls benefitted, but also the messengers who will themselves be strengthened and brought into a closer connection with God.

The Lord's messenger endorsed this kind of activity and encouraged believers to engage in it:

"He who strives to obtain knowledge in order that he may labor for the ignorant and perishing is acting his part in fulfilling God's great purpose for mankind. In unselfish service for the blessing of others he is meeting the high ideal of Christian education."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 545.

"The Lord calls for strong, devoted, self-sacrificing young men and women, who will press to the front, and who, after a short time spent in school, will go forth prepared to give the message to the world."—*Ibid.*, p. 549.

Therefore, we kindly appeal to all the believers around the world, to open their heart for this need and to contribute generously for the development of this rewarding branch of God's work on this Sabbath, when a special offering will be collected for this purpose.

We want to thank you in advance for your generosity and trust that God will richly bless the gifts and the givers.

Your brethren from the Education Department



God's Voice in the Church

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:1, 2).

“God had chosen Israel . . . to preserve among men the knowledge of His law, and of the symbols and prophecies that pointed to the Saviour. . . . They were to reveal God to men.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 27.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188–200.

Sunday

July 26

1. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS CHURCH

- a. What was the first direction that Jesus gave to Saul of Tarsus after his conversion? Acts 9:6.

“Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus. . . . respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 122.

- b. How important is it to hear God's voice speaking to us through His church and to cooperate with His people? Matthew 18:18–20.

“The Lord has an organized body through whom He will work.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 17.

“The Redeemer of the world does not sanction experience and exercise in religious matters independent of his organized and acknowledged church. . . . The Saviour placed [Saul] in connection with His church, and let them direct him what to do. . . .

“All is done in the name and by the authority of Christ; but the church is the channel of communication.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 31, 32.

2. HEARING GOD SPEAKING THROUGH THE CHURCH

- a. **Three years later, after Jesus had taught him personally, where did Saul (now called Paul) go? Galatians 1:1, 15–19.**

“Notwithstanding the fact that Paul was personally taught by God, he had no strained ideas of individual responsibility. While looking to God for direct guidance, he was ever ready to recognize the authority vested in the body of believers united in church fellowship.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 200.

“God never designed that one man’s mind and judgment should be a controlling power. He never designed that one man should rule and plan and devise without the careful and prayerful consideration of the whole body.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 16, 17.

“Even the best of men, if left to themselves, will err in judgment. . . .

“The greater the responsibilities placed upon the human agent, and the larger his opportunities to dictate and control, the more harm he is sure to do if he does not carefully follow the way of the Lord and labor in harmony with the decisions arrived at by the general body of believers in united council.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 198, 199.

- b. **What happened in Old Testament times when God’s chosen leadership was jealously criticized? Numbers 12:1, 2, 9, 10. What can we learn from this?**

“Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. It is Satan’s studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. For any worker in the Lord’s cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy and overthrown. . . . Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united.”—*Ibid.*, p. 164.

3. COOPERATION WITH CHURCH DECISIONS

- a. **What respect should be given to legitimate church decisions? 1 Peter 5:5; Hebrews 13:17; Proverbs 11:14.**
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“I have often been instructed by the Lord that no man’s judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any other one man. Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and to say what plans shall be followed. But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body.

“At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God’s work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected. God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority. The error that some are in danger of committing is in giving to the mind and judgment of one man, or of a small group of men, the full measure of authority and influence that God has vested in His church in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work. . . .

“Let us give to the highest organized authority in the church that which we are prone to give to one man or to a small group of men.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 260, 261.

“God has bestowed the highest power under heaven upon His church. It is the voice of God in His united people in church capacity which is to be respected.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 451.

- b. **What type of attitude does the Lord want the church leaders to have toward their fellow believers? Philippians 2:3–8.**
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4. THE CHURCH NEVER REPLACES GOD

- a. **Can any member or church officer determine or dictate the individual duty of another member? Matthew 20:25–28.**
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“Let all who accept human authority, the customs of the church, or the traditions of the fathers, take heed to the warning conveyed in the words of Christ, ‘In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men’ (Matthew 15:9).”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 398.

“Let your faith and trust be in God. Do not depend on any erring man to define your duty. . . .

“Every church member should understand that God is the one to whom to look for an understanding of individual duty. It is right that brethren counsel together; but when men arrange just what their brethren shall do, let them answer that they have chosen the Lord as their counselor. Those who will humbly seek Him will find His grace sufficient. But when one man allows another to step in between him and the duty that God has pointed out to him, giving to man his confidence and accepting him as guide, then he steps from the true platform to a false and dangerous one. Such a man, instead of growing and developing, will lose his spirituality.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 279, 280.

- b. **What advice given to church leaders should also guide any member tempted to control the behavior of another human being? Matthew 23:8, 10–12.**
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“Instead of considering it their duty to order and dictate and command, [all who occupy responsible positions] should realize that they are to be learners themselves. When a responsible worker fails to learn this lesson, the sooner he is released from his responsibilities the better it will be for him and for the work of God. Position never will give holiness and excellence of character. He who honors God and keeps His commandments is himself honored.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 282, 283.

“Men whom the Lord calls to important positions in His work are to cultivate a humble dependence upon Him. They are not to seek to embrace too much authority; for God has not called them to a work of ruling, but to plan and counsel with their fellow laborers.”—*Ibid.*, p. 270.

5. RESOLVING CONFLICTS

- a. What procedure was used in resolving a conflict in the early church? Acts 15:1–4. What can we learn from this?

“[Certain Jews] asserted with great assurance, that none could be saved without being circumcised and keeping the entire ceremonial law.

“This was an important question, and one which affected the church in a very great degree. . . . The matter resulted in much discussion and want of harmony in the church, until finally the church of Antioch, apprehending that a division among them would occur from any further discussion of the question, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, together with some responsible men of Antioch, to Jerusalem, to lay the matter before the apostles and elders. There they were to meet delegates from the different churches, and those who had come to attend the approaching annual festivals. Meanwhile all controversy was to cease until a final decision should be made by the responsible men of the church. This decision was then to be universally accepted by the various churches throughout the country.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 63.

- b. Summarize Peter’s account of the point in question. Acts 11:2–17. Upon what did the apostle James base his argument? Acts 15:13–17. Who settled this dispute? Verse 28.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we know that God works and speaks through an organized body?
2. Why is one human not entrusted with the responsibility of ruling over and planning for God’s church?
3. How should we relate to decisions made by church representatives in session?
4. What does God want us to do regarding our personal duty instead of going to someone in the church for advice? Why?
5. How should we handle controversy in the church?

Listening to God's Word

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

“God speaks to us in His word.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 87.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 197–210.

Sunday

August 2

1. THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

- a. How much authority does the Word of God have over human teaching? Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 8:20.

“The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth.”—*Education*, p. 17.

“ ‘All human teaching should be subordinate to the oracles of God.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 204.

“The Lord has one path of safety for His people, and that is the path of obedience to His word. That word is given to us as our guide.”—*The Bible Echo*, August 19, 1895.

- b. How can we use our reasoning powers properly in understanding God's Word? Isaiah 1:16–18; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 25; 2:14–16.

“When we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 110.

“We are to beware of deifying reason, which is subject to the weakness and infirmity of humanity.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 703.

“With your Bibles open before you, consult sanctified reason and a good conscience. Your heart must be moved, your soul touched, your reason and intellect awakened by the Spirit of God; and then holy principles revealed in the word of God will give light to the soul.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 7, 1893.

2. LISTENING TO GOD THROUGH HIS WORD

- a. **What will be the result if we personally listen to God through His word? Deuteronomy 4:6; Psalm 119:94, 97–100.**

“The precious book of God contains rules of life for men of every class and every vocation.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 416.

“We shall advance in true spiritual knowledge only as we realize our own littleness and our entire dependence upon God; but all who come to the Bible with a teachable and prayerful spirit, to study its utterances as the word of God, will receive divine enlightenment.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 704.

“In searching the Scriptures for yourself, you will become established in the faith. It is of the greatest importance that you continually search the Scriptures, storing the mind with the truths of God.”—*The Bible Echo*, October 15, 1892.

“Conservative traditions received from educated men, and from the writings of great men of the past, are not safe guides for us in these last days. . . . Daily, hourly, we must be actuated by the principles of Bible truth—righteousness, mercy, and the love of God. He who would have moral and intellectual power must draw from the divine source. At every point of decision inquire, ‘Is this the way of the Lord?’”—*The Review and Herald*, February 7, 1893.

- b. **What assurance do we have that God will talk to us, individually, through the Bible? John 6:63; Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 34:8.**

“The word of the living God is not merely written but spoken. The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe would we open God’s word, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts! The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 393.

“When Satan presses his suggestions upon our minds, we may, if we cherish a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ be drawn into the secret pavilion of the Most High.”—*Ibid.*

“So many are full of busy plans, always active; and there is no time or place for the precious Jesus to be a close, dear companion. They do not refer every thought and action to Him, inquiring: ‘Is this the way of the Lord?’ If they did they would walk with God, as did Enoch.”—*Ibid.*

3. ESSENTIAL COMMUNICATION

a. Why were the scriptures written? John 20:31.

b. If we reject God's voice in His written Word, can we expect Him to communicate His will to us through other means? Luke 16:31; Proverbs 28:9. Why?

"The law and the prophets are God's appointed agencies for the salvation of men. . . . If they do not listen to the voice of God in His word, the testimony of a witness raised from the dead would not be heeded.

"Those who heed Moses and the prophets will require no greater light than God has given; but if men reject the light, and fail to appreciate the opportunities granted them, they would not hear if one from the dead should come to them with a message. They would not be convinced even by this evidence; for those who reject the law and the prophets so harden their hearts that they will reject all light."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 265.

c. Why can't we rely on anyone else to listen to God for us? Ezekiel 14:12–14; 33:14–16.

"We must study the truth for ourselves; no man should be relied upon to think for us, no matter who he may be or in what position he may be placed. We are not to look upon any man as a perfect guide for us. We are to counsel together and be subject one to another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us to learn what is truth. Each one of us must look to God for divine enlightenment, that we may individually develop a character that will stand the test of the great day. . . .

"Many are drifting into darkness and infidelity, picking flaws with the Bible, bringing up superstitious inventions, unscriptural theories, and speculations of vain philosophy; but it is the duty of everyone to seek a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. The importance and benefit of Bible study cannot be overestimated. In searching the Scriptures our minds are led to dwell upon the infinite sacrifice of Christ, on His mediation in our behalf. As we see His love, as we meditate upon His humiliation and sufferings, the same spirit of self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others will be kindled in our hearts."—*The Bible Echo*, October 15, 1892.

4. FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE WITH GOD

a. Why were the people of Berea commended? Acts 17:10–12.

“No man can safely trust his soul to the minister, or to men who are learned and talented. Jesus charged the priests and rulers, who were regarded as learned in the Scriptures, as being ignorant both of the Scriptures and the power of God. Those to whom God has intrusted talents are responsible for the use of their gifts, and should study the Bible as a book that may be understood. A single text has proved in the past, and will prove in the future, a savor of life unto life to many a soul. As men diligently search, the Bible will open out new treasures of truth that will be as bright jewels to the mind.”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 20, 1894.

“Unless the mind is used, it will cease to expand; unless the taste is cultivated to love the Bible, it will cease to relish the truths of God’s word. The student can see only to the depth of what he has explored, and he cannot appreciate that which lies beyond the compass of his own narrow boundaries. But his very ignorance will make him conceited, talkative, and boastful. What can I say to you, young men and young women, to arouse you to vigor in your efforts to overcome obstacles? Mental effort will become easier and more satisfactory as you put yourselves to the task of understanding the deep things of God. You should each decide that you will not be a second-class student, that you will not allow others to think for you.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 20, 1890.

b. What was Timothy told to do while he waited for Paul to return? 1 Timothy 4:13, 15, 16.

c. What does Jesus say of those who hear His words and obey them? Matthew 7:24, 25.

“Those who hear and obey the words of Christ are building upon the rock, and when the tempest comes, their house will not be overthrown. They will through faith in Christ Jesus gain eternal life.”—*This Day With God*, p. 215.

5. LOOKING DEEPER

- a. How deeply should we study the Bible? Colossians 3:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

“There is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. One may read the whole Bible through and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained. Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets you may read a passage and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 90.

“You are to offer to God nothing less than your best. You should do better and better work as you put in practice what you learn. You should seek to fathom every subject requiring your investigation, comparing not only the ideas and thoughts of men concerning the matter, but also comparing scripture with scripture, that you may know that you do know every point of the faith. The taxation of your mind will only strengthen your mental powers for greater effort.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 20, 1890.

“An understanding of Bible truth depends not so much on the power of intellect brought to the search as on the singleness of purpose, the earnest longing after righteousness.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 599.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the conditions to receiving enlightenment from God as we study the Bible?
2. What question should we ask when making any decision?
3. What effect will searching the Scriptures have upon us?
4. What do we become when we are ignorant of our Bible?
5. Instead of reading many Bible chapters without learning anything, how can we discover the deep, hidden truths of the Bible?

How to Study the Bible

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7).

“ ‘If any would not work, neither should he eat’ (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The same rule applies to our spiritual nourishment; if any would have the bread of eternal life, let him make efforts to obtain it.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 49.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593–602.

Sunday

August 9

1. THE REQUIRED EFFORT

a. What is required when studying the Bible? Proverbs 2:1–5.

“We cannot obtain wisdom without earnest attention and prayerful study. Some portions of Scripture are indeed too plain to be misunderstood, but there are others whose meaning does not lie on the surface to be seen at a glance. Scripture must be compared with scripture. There must be careful research and prayerful reflection. And such study will be richly repaid. As the miner discovers veins of precious metal concealed beneath the surface of the earth, so will he who perseveringly searches the word of God as for hid treasure find truths of the greatest value, which are concealed from the view of the careless seeker.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 90, 91.

b. Can we rest satisfied with what has already been discovered in the Scriptures by ourselves or by others? Matthew 13:52; Proverbs 4:18.

“We are to discover new aspects of truth in both the Old and the New Testament, to behold the exceeding breadth and compass of truths which we imagine we understand, but of which we have only a superficial knowledge. He who earnestly searches the Scriptures will see that harmony exists between the various parts of the Bible.”—*The Bible Echo*, October 15, 1892.

2. SINCERE SEARCHERS WILL BE REWARDED

- a. **What is more important than intelligence in order to rightly understand the Bible? Matthew 11:25; Psalm 25:9.**
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“It is sometimes the case that men of intellectual ability, improved by education and culture, fail to comprehend certain passages of Scripture, while others who are uneducated, whose understanding seems weak and whose minds are undisciplined, will grasp the meaning, finding strength and comfort in that which the former declare to be mysterious or pass by as unimportant. Why is this? It has been explained to me that the latter class do not rely upon their own understanding. They go to the Source of light, the One who has inspired the Scriptures, and with humility of heart ask God for wisdom, and they receive it. There are mines of truth yet to be discovered by the earnest seeker. Christ represented the truth as treasure hid in a field. It does not lie right upon the surface; we must dig for it. But our success in finding it does not depend so much on our intellectual ability as on our humility of heart and the faith which will lay hold upon divine aid.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 704.

- b. **Who will give us an understanding of essential Bible truths? Proverbs 2:6; Luke 10:21; 24:45. Why isn't it necessary to our salvation to be able to explain everything that is difficult to understand in the Bible?**
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“Many feel that a responsibility rests upon them to explain every seeming difficulty in the Bible in order to meet the cavils of skeptics and infidels. But in trying to explain that which they but imperfectly understand, they are in danger of confusing the minds of others in reference to points that are clear and easy to be understood. This is not our work. Nor should we lament that these difficulties exist, but accept them as permitted by the wisdom of God. It is our duty to receive His word, which is plain on every point essential to the salvation of the soul, and practice its principles in our life, teaching them to others both by precept and example. Thus it will be evident to the world that we have a connection with God and implicit confidence in His word. A life of godliness, a daily example of integrity, meekness, and unselfish love will be a living exemplification of the teaching of God's word, and it will be an argument in favor of the Bible which few will be able to resist.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 705, 706.

3. HAVING A PROPER ATTITUDE

- a. What attitude should we have when we study the Bible? Psalms 10:17; 46:10; Isaiah 57:15.
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“We should come with reverence to the study of the Bible, feeling that we are in the presence of God. All lightness and trifling should be laid aside. While some portions of the word are easily understood, the true meaning of other parts is not so readily discerned. There must be patient study and meditation and earnest prayer. Every student, as he opens the Scriptures, should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and the promise is sure that it will be given.

“The spirit in which you come to the investigation of the Scriptures will determine the character of the assistant at your side. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. But if the Bible is opened with irreverence, with a feeling of self-sufficiency, if the heart is filled with prejudice, Satan is beside you, and he will set the plain statements of God’s word in a perverted light.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 107, 108.

- b. How should we respond to other people’s conclusions about what the Bible says? 2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11.
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“Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength. We should never refuse to examine the Scriptures with those who, we have reason to believe, desire to know what is truth as much as we do. Suppose a brother holds a view that differs from yours, and he comes to you, proposing that you sit down with him and investigate that point in the light of the Scriptures; should you rise up filled with prejudice and condemn his ideas while refusing to give him a hearing? The only right way would be to sit down as Christians and investigate the position presented in the light of God’s Word, which will reveal truth and unmask error. To ridicule his ideas would not weaken his position, though it were false, or strengthen your position, though it were true. If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it; for it is foolish to become set in our ideas and think that no one should interfere with our opinions. Let everything be brought to the Bible; for it is the only rule of faith and doctrine.”—*The Bible Echo*, October 15, 1892.

4. UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

- a. How can we be sure that we understand any portion of the Bible correctly? Isaiah 28:10, 13; 2 Corinthians 13:1.
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“The Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts; . . . this Holy Book is, in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness. We are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of His only word, such as it is contained in the biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it. This word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, while all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 203.

“The Book of books has the highest claims to our reverent attention. Superficial study cannot meet the claims it has upon us, nor furnish us with the benefit that is promised. We should seek to learn the full meaning of the words of truth and to drink deep the spirit of the holy oracles.”—*The Bible Echo*, October 1, 1892.

“You must dig deep in the mine of truth if you would find its richest treasures. Comparing scripture with scripture, you may find the true meaning of the text; but if you do not make the sacred teachings of God’s Word the rule and guide of your life, the truth will be nothing to you.”—*My Life Today*, p. 22.

- b. How did Jesus use this method to overcome Satan’s temptations? Matthew 4:6, 7; Isaiah 59:19.
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“Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God’s promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons. But angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 600.

5. BEGIN WITH PRAYER

- a. Why do we need to pray before we open the Bible? 1 Corinthians 2:11–13; James 1:5; Psalm 10:17.
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“Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. . . .

“There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases is a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubt; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 704, 705.

- b. Whose help should we be asking for in prayer? Luke 11:9–13. What will that Helper do for us? John 16:13; 14:13, 16, 17, 26.
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“The Bible should never be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wresting truths difficult of comprehension. It is the office of heavenly angels to prepare the heart so to comprehend God’s word that we shall be charmed with its beauty, admonished by its warnings, or animated and strengthened by its promises. We should make the psalmist’s petition our own: ‘Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law’ (Psalm 119:18).”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 599, 600.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How much attention and focus should I give to studying the Bible?
2. What is more important than intelligence in the study of the Scriptures?
3. How can we guarantee the help of angels in understanding the Bible?
4. Why are we often overcome by temptation?
5. How should we prepare each time before we begin to study the Bible?

Discernment

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:20, 21).

“Let God’s people pray to Him for clear spiritual discernment, that they may distinguish the theories of men from the Word of the living God. Let them study the Scriptures.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, p. 151.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 668–672.

Sunday

August 16

1. DETERMINE TO LISTEN

- a. How can we be sure that we are hearing the voice of God? John 10:27; Matthew 7:16–20, 24–27; Galatians 5:22, 23.

“The good tree will produce good fruit. If the fruit is unpalatable and worthless, the tree is evil. So the fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character. Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith that acts by love and purifies the soul. And though the eternal reward is not bestowed because of our merit, yet it will be in proportion to the work that has been done through the grace of Christ.

“Thus Christ set forth the principles of His kingdom and showed them to be the great rule of life. To impress the lesson He adds an illustration. It is not enough, He says, for you to hear My words. By obedience you must make them the foundation of your character. Self is but shifting sand. If you build upon human theories and inventions, your house will fall.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 314.

- b. What demonstrated that Jesus heard His Father accurately? How should this description of Jesus apply to us also? John 5:19, 20, 36.

2. LOOKING AT HISTORY

a. What has been the varied experience of God's church through the ages with regard to listening to the Lord's voice? 2 Kings 22:13; 23:3; Zechariah 7:11–13; Jeremiah 29:17–19.

b. What personal testimony did Jeremiah and David declare of their listening to the voice of God? Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 119:57–60.

c. What can we learn from the experience of Jesus' disciples in listening to God's voice? Mark 7:5–8; Matthew 28:19, 20.

“It was most difficult for [Jesus' disciples] to keep His lessons distinct from the traditions and maxims of the scribes and Pharisees. They had been educated to accept the teaching of the rabbis as the voice of God, and it still held a power over their minds and molded their sentiments. Earthly ideas, temporal things, still had a large place in their thoughts. They did not understand the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, though He had so often explained it to them. Their minds had become confused. They did not comprehend the value of the scriptures Christ presented. Many of His lessons seemed almost lost upon them.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 670.

“In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, ‘to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you’ (Matthew 28:20). The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out. There is no place for tradition, for man's theories and conclusions, or for church legislation. No laws ordained by ecclesiastical authority are included in the commission. None of these are Christ's servants to teach. ‘The law and the prophets,’ with the record of His own words and deeds, are the treasure committed to the disciples to be given to the world. Christ's name is their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing that does not bear His superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom.”—*Ibid.*, p. 826.

3. LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

- a. From the apostle Paul's experience, how important is it to listen to the voice of our own conscience? Acts 24:16; 1 Timothy 1:19; 1 John 3:21.
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- b. What will eventually happen if we neglect to follow the voice of conscience? Matthew 6:22, 23; Titus 1:15; 1 Timothy 4:2.
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"When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 120.

"Singleness of purpose, wholehearted devotion to God, is the condition pointed out by the Saviour's words. Let the purpose be sincere and unwavering to discern the truth and to obey it at whatever cost, and you will receive divine enlightenment. Real piety begins when all compromise with sin is at an end. . . .

"But when the eye is blinded by the love of self, there is only darkness. 'If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness' (Matthew 6:23). It was this fearful darkness that wrapped the Jews in stubborn unbelief, making it impossible for them to appreciate the character and mission of Him who came to save them from their sins."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 91, 92.

- c. What should we do with each impression or idea that we may have about what God is telling us? John 5:39; Hebrews 4:12.
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"Impressions and feelings are no sure evidence that a person is led by the Lord. Satan will, if he is unsuspected, give feelings and impressions. These are not safe guides. All should thoroughly acquaint themselves with the evidences of our faith, and the great study should be how they can adorn their profession and bear fruit to the glory of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 413.

"If you are in doubt upon any subject you must first consult the Scriptures."—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 512.

4. HONESTY

- a. What is God's attitude toward any dishonesty? Proverbs 19:5; Acts 5:3–5.
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“God hates hypocrisy and falsehood. Ananias and Sapphira practiced fraud in their dealing with God; they lied to the Holy Spirit, and their sin was visited with swift and terrible judgment.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 72.

“From the stern punishment meted out to those perjurers, God would have us learn also how deep is His hatred and contempt for all hypocrisy and deception.”—*Ibid.*, p. 75.

“In much of the service professedly done for God, there is self-emulation and self-exultation. God hates pretense. When men and women receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they will confess their sins, and, pardon, which means justification, will be given them. But the wisdom of the human agents who are not penitent, not humbled, is not to be depended on, for they are blinded in regard to the meaning of righteousness and sanctification through the truth. When men are stripped of self-righteousness, they will see their spiritual poverty. Then they will approach that state of brotherly kindness that will show that they are in sympathy with Christ.”—*This Day With God*, p. 326.

- b. What can happen when we are not honest with ourselves in the study of Scripture? Ezekiel 14:3, 4. What can we do about this? Verse 6.
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“Take up the Bible without prejudice and in a humble, teachable spirit, and, with the understanding open to the impressions of the Spirit of God, let its convincing power mold the life and conscience.”—*The Bible Echo*, September 2, 1895.

“You should not search for the purpose of finding texts of Scripture that you can construe to prove your theories; for the word of God declares that this is wresting the Scriptures to your own destruction. You must empty yourselves of every prejudice and come in the spirit of prayer to the investigation of the word of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 308.

5. MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY

- a. What essential character quality must each one of us learn from Jesus? Matthew 11:29; Psalms 22:26; 25:9.

“Meekness and humility will characterize all who are obedient to the law of God.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897.

“If our will is not in accord with the divine requirements, we are to deny our inclinations, give up our darling desires, and step in Christ’s footsteps.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 23, 1900.

“Each must have an individual experience and put forth personal efforts to reach souls. God requires each to put all his powers into the work and, through continual effort, educate himself to do that work acceptably. . . . All the workers must use tact and bring their faculties under the controlling influence of the Spirit of God. They must make it a business to study His word and hear God’s voice addressing them from His living oracles in reproof, in instruction, or in encouragement, and His Spirit will strengthen them, that they may, as God’s workers, advance in religious experience. Thus they will be led on step by step to greater heights, and their joy will be full.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 576, 577.

“If you are willing to learn meekness and lowliness of heart in Christ’s school, He will surely give you rest and peace. It is a terribly hard struggle to give up your own will and your own way. But this lesson learned, you will find rest and peace. Pride, selfishness, and ambition must be overcome; your will must be swallowed up in the will of Christ.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1091.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What evidence demonstrates that we have heard God?
2. What prevented God’s people in the past from hearing Him?
3. How can we maintain a good conscience?
4. How do we know if we are being honest with God?
5. What should we do if we find that our will is not in harmony with God’s requirements?

Beware of Stubbornness!

“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 2:11, 12).

“When the appeals of the Holy Spirit come to the heart, our only safety lies in responding to them without delay. . . . It is unsafe to delay obedience. You may never hear the invitation again.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 281.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 617–622.

Sunday

August 23

1. THE KING WHO REFUSED TO LISTEN

a. How did God talk to the king of Egypt? Exodus 5:1; 6:10, 11.

“God spoke to the Egyptian king by the mouth of Moses, giving him the most striking evidences of divine power; but the monarch stubbornly refused the light which would have brought him to repentance. God did not send a supernatural power to harden the heart of the rebellious king, but as Pharaoh resisted the truth, the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, and he was left to the darkness and unbelief which he had chosen.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 20, 1882.

b. Did God expect Pharaoh to listen? Exodus 3:19.

“God speaks to men through His servants, giving cautions and warnings, and rebuking sin. He gives to each an opportunity to correct his errors before they become fixed in the character; but if one refuses to be corrected, divine power does not interpose to counteract the tendency of his own action. He finds it more easy to repeat the same course. He is hardening the heart against the influence of the Holy Spirit. A further rejection of light places him where a far stronger influence will be ineffectual to make an abiding impression.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 268.

2. THE PRICE OF REBELLION

a. What was Pharaoh's initial response to God? Exodus 5:2.

"The seeds of rebellion that [Pharaoh] sowed when he rejected the first miracle produced their harvest. As he continued to venture on in his own course, going from one degree of stubbornness to another, his heart became more and more hardened, until he was called to look upon the cold, dead faces of the firstborn."—Ibid., p. 268.

b. How persistent was God in talking to Pharaoh? Exodus 7:15–18; 8:1, 2, 20, 21; 9:1–3; 13; 10:3, 4. Who encouraged Pharaoh to listen to God? Exodus 8:19; 10:7.

"The Lord gave [Pharaoh] evidence of His power by working signs and miracles before him. The great I AM acquainted Pharaoh with His mighty works, showing him that He was the ruler of heaven and earth, but the king chose to defy the God of heaven. He would not consent to break his proud, stubborn heart even before the King of kings, that he might receive the light; for he was determined to have his own way and work out his rebellion. He chose to do his own will and set aside the command of God, and the very evidence given him that Jehovah was above all the gods of the nations, above all the wise men and magicians, only served to blind his mind and harden his heart."—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 89.

c. What would God have done if Pharaoh had repented? 2 Peter 3:9.

"Had Pharaoh accepted the evidence of God's power given in the first plague, he would have been spared all the judgments that followed. But his determined stubbornness called for still greater manifestations of the power of God, and plague followed plague, until at last he was called to look upon the dead face of his own firstborn, and those of his kindred; while the children of Israel, whom he had regarded as slaves, were unharmed by the plagues, untouched by the destroying angel. God made it evident upon whom rested His favor, who were His people."—Ibid.

3. A WARNING FOR US

- a. **What warning should we take from Pharaoh's refusal to listen to God? Hebrews 3:12, 13.**
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"He who has once yielded to temptation will yield more readily the second time. Every repetition of the sin lessens his power of resistance, blinds his eyes, and stifles conviction. Every seed of indulgence sown will bear fruit. God works no miracle to prevent the harvest. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Galatians 6:7). He who manifests an infidel hardihood, a stolid indifference to divine truth, is but reaping the harvest of that which he has himself sown. It is thus that multitudes come to listen with stoical indifference to the truths that once stirred their very souls. They sowed neglect and resistance to the truth, and such is the harvest which they reap.

"Those who are quieting a guilty conscience with the thought that they can change a course of evil when they choose, that they can trifle with the invitations of mercy, and yet be again and again impressed, take this course at their peril. They think that after casting all their influence on the side of the great rebel, in a moment of utmost extremity, when danger compasses them about, they will change leaders. But this is not so easily done. The experience the education, the discipline of a life of sinful indulgence, has so thoroughly molded the character that they cannot then receive the image of Jesus. . . . Mercy might interpose and give them an opportunity to accept her overtures; but after light has been long rejected and despised, it will be finally withdrawn."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 268, 269.

"One cherished sin will, little by little, debase the character, bringing all its nobler powers into subjection to the evil desire. The removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, one neglect of the high claims of duty, breaks down the defenses of the soul and opens the way for Satan to come in and lead us astray."—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 114.

- b. **If we realize we have the spirit of Pharaoh, what must we do? Isaiah 27:5.**
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"Every provision has been made for our infirmities, every encouragement offered us to come to Christ."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 156.

4. THE RESULTS OF REFUSING TO LISTEN

a. In the end, why did Pharaoh do what God had asked? Exodus 12:30–32.

b. Whom did God intend to benefit by His messages to Pharaoh? Exodus 3:19, 20.

“ ‘For this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power’ (Exodus 9:16). Not that God had given [Pharaoh] an existence for this purpose, but His providence had overruled events to place him upon the throne at the very time appointed for Israel’s deliverance. Though this haughty tyrant had by his crimes forfeited the mercy of God, yet his life had been preserved that through his stubbornness the Lord might manifest His wonders in the land of Egypt. The disposing of events is of God’s providence. He could have placed upon the throne a more merciful king, who would not have dared to withstand the mighty manifestations of divine power. But in that case the Lord’s purposes would not have been accomplished. His people were permitted to experience the grinding cruelty of the Egyptians, that they might not be deceived concerning the debasing influence of idolatry. In His dealing with Pharaoh, the Lord manifested His hatred of idolatry and His determination to punish cruelty and oppression.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 267, 268.

c. If we are unwilling to listen to God, what can we learn from Pharaoh’s example? Proverbs 1:24–28; Zechariah 7:11, 12; Hebrews 12:25.

“God sent [Pharaoh] a message of warning and mercy, but he refused to acknowledge the God of heaven and would not render obedience to His commands. He asked, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?’ (Exodus 5:2). . . .

“Every additional evidence of the power of God that the Egyptian monarch resisted, carried him on to a stronger and more persistent defiance of God. . . . This case is a clear illustration of the sin against the Holy Ghost. . . . Gradually the Lord withdrew His Spirit. Removing His restraining power, He gave the king into the hands of the worst of all tyrants—self.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 89.

5. THE PROPHET WHO WOULD NOT LISTEN

- a. How many times did God try to get Balaam's attention? Numbers 22:22–27.

- b. What prevented Balaam from recognizing God's message sooner? 2 Peter 2:20, 21. When we are frustrated and believe things aren't going our way, is God, perhaps, trying to get our attention?

“Balaam was blinded to the heavenly interposition and knew not that God was obstructing his path.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 441, 442.

“A single cherished sin poisoned the entire character [of Balaam] and caused [his] destruction.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 114.

“When one clearly sees a duty, let him not presume to go to God with the prayer that he may be excused from performing it. He should rather, with a humble, submissive spirit, ask for divine strength and wisdom to meet its claims.”—*Ibid.*, p. 113.

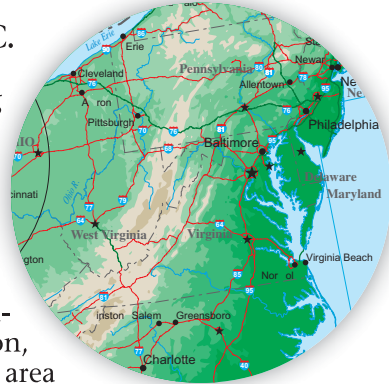
“We are apt to look upon men of experience as safe from the allurements of sinful pleasure. But still we often see those whose early life has been exemplary being led away by the fascinations of sin, and sacrificing their God-given manhood for self-gratification. For a time they vacillate between the promptings of principle and their inclination to pursue a forbidden course; but the current of evil finally proves too strong for their good resolutions, as in the case of the once wise and righteous king, Solomon.”—*The Health Reformer*, June 1, 1878.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many people does God talk to who are unlikely to listen to Him?
2. In what ways do we defy God like Pharaoh did?
3. What must we do if we have ignored God?
4. How do we harden our heart today against God?
5. What are the similarities and differences between Pharaoh and Balaam?

First Sabbath Offering for a chapel in Washington, D.C.

As a people who are preparing for the second coming of Jesus, we owe a debt of gratitude to our Protestant forefathers who, under the providence of God, founded a country that protects freedom of religion for all individuals—the United States of America. The capital city of this nation is Washington, District of Columbia, whose general area



is home to about 650,000 residents, including the national government officials, foreign diplomats and their families, and a weekly population of more than one million commuters from the Maryland and Virginia suburbs. This makes it the 23rd most populous city within the United States, and the seventh largest metropolitan area. This large center of population with its economic, political, and cultural commerce is a fertile ground for the spreading of the gospel.

The work of reformation began in Washington, D.C. area in the late 1970s with only a handful of members. As time progressed, in 1980 a small house was purchased in Temple Hills, Maryland (a suburb of the District) and repurposed as a church building. As time passed, this small chapel has served as a beacon of light in this large area. Many brethren have come through Temple Hills and helped build the ministry in this area. The chapel, which has been used for many years, accommodates approximately 30 people. However, this has become too small for us to worship. With a growing membership and regularly attending visitors, we are in need of a larger building. After much prayer and fasting, a decision was made to purchase a larger facility, strategically located in this metropolis, permitting us to better fulfill the commission of our Lord to “Go ye therefore, and teach ALL nations.” The proclamation of the gospel must spread to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people that all may have an opportunity to hear and accept the gift of salvation.

We appeal to all Sabbath School students to help us with this project, in raising a new beacon of light in the capital of the United States. May God reward you richly as you donate liberally to His cause. We thank you in advance for your generous contribution to this worthy plan.

Your brethren and sisters from Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Listening Without Doubting

“Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart” (Psalm 119:2).

“It would be the ruin of many a soul always to have unclouded assurance in joyful feelings that they are accepted to God. Without feeling we must learn to lean upon His word. . . . The doubts and fears against which we have been called to struggle are the precious trials of our faith, God’s workmen that work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 18, 1895.

Suggested Reading: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 105–113.

Sunday

August 30

1. WHAT TO DO WITH DOUBT

- a. **When doubt confronts us, what can we do to address it? Psalm 37:3–7.**

“Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 105.

- b. **Why will we not be able to answer every question or resolve every uncertainty? Isaiah 55:8, 9.**

“If it were possible for created beings to attain to a full understanding of God and His works, then, having reached this point, there would be for them no further discovery of truth, no growth in knowledge, no further development of mind or heart. God would no longer be supreme; and man, having reached the limit of knowledge and attainment, would cease to advance. Let us thank God that it is not so.”—*Ibid.*, p. 109.

2. SOLUTIONS TO DOUBT

- a. How important is it to ask questions and develop our mind intellectually as far as possible? Proverbs 4:7. What example did Jesus provide? Luke 2:52.
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“Under the controlling influence of Christ, the human intellect can achieve wonderful things. The youth should be encouraged to reach the highest standard of intellectual acquirement. If the fear and knowledge of God are made first, there is no danger that the student will soar too high. The knowledge of God, the understanding of His will in His word, as far as human minds may grasp it, incorporated into the thoughts and woven into the character, will make efficient men and women. The study of the word of God will enable us to do His work intelligently and acceptably. The mind will be enriched, enlarged, and broadened. Those who thus constantly study the Word will go upward and forward toward the highest standard, because they are partakers of the divine nature.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, August 31, 1899.

- b. What is necessary in finding answers to our questions? James 1:5–8.
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“Many look to their ministers to bring the light from God to them, seeming to think this a cheaper way than to be to the trouble of going to God for it themselves. Such lose much. If they would daily follow Christ and make Him their guide and counselor, they might obtain a clear knowledge of His will, and thus be gaining a valuable experience. For want of this very experience, brethren professing the truth walk in the sparks of others’ kindling; they are unacquainted with the Spirit of God and have not a knowledge of His will, and are therefore easily moved from their faith. They are unstable, because they trusted in others to obtain an experience for them. Ample provisions have been made for every son and daughter of Adam to obtain individually a knowledge of the divine will, to perfect Christian character, and to be purified through the truth. God is dishonored by that class who profess to be followers of Christ and yet have no experimental knowledge of the divine will or of the mystery of godliness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 644.

3. REJECTING UNBIBLICAL TRADITIONS

- a. What must be separated from our personal understanding of God's message? Mark 7:6–9.
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“The Bible is the rule of life, teaching us of the character we must form for the future, immortal life. Our faith, our practice, may make us living epistles, known and read of all men. Men need not the dim light of tradition and custom to make the Scriptures comprehensible. It is just as sensible to suppose that the sun, shining in the heavens at noon-day, needs the glimmerings of the torchlight of earth to increase its glory. The fables or the utterances of priests or of ministers are not needed to save the student from error. Consult the divine Oracle, and you have light. In the Bible every duty is made plain, every lesson is comprehensible, able to fit men with a preparation for eternal life. The gift of Christ and the illumination of the Holy Spirit reveal to us the Father and the Son. The word is exactly adapted to make men and women and youth wise unto salvation. In the word is the science of salvation plainly revealed. . . . ‘Search the Scriptures,’ for therein is the counsel of God, the voice of God speaking to the soul.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 390, 391.

“Man’s authority bears the signature of man. We are not to permit the rank and file of our people to come under the generalship of the weak, confused sentiments of man. God’s authority is to stand supreme. And I must call upon His people to recognize His authority, which bears the evidence of its divine origin.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 69.

- b. When we place tradition above the Word of God, what will we be led to do? Matthew 23:23.
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“When fastings and prayers are practiced in a self-justifying spirit, they are abominable to God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposed sacrifice—all proclaim to the world the testimony that the doer of these things considers himself righteous. These things call attention to the observer of rigorous duties, saying, This man is entitled to heaven. But it is all a deception. Works will not buy for us an entrance into heaven. The one great Offering that has been made is ample for all who will believe.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 388.

4. PERSONAL CONVICTION: A PROTECTION AGAINST DOUBT

- a. How can we know the way to heaven? John 14:6; 6:63; 8:31, 32. On the other hand, how will many of us lose heaven?

“My heart is sad when I think how many will miss the way to heaven because they did not study the guide God has given them. There is no possible arrangement whereby these souls can be saved who, having the voice of God speaking to them in His Word, have not interest sufficient to search and become acquainted with the directions God has given them, pointing out the only path that leads heavenward. Well may the apostle ask, ‘How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?’ (Hebrews 2:3). Our youth should be presented with a pledge to sign that they will not touch idle tales, but that they will make diligent search of the Scriptures, that they will give their minds the most nourishing, wholesome food, in order to become strong in contemplating the works of Christ who became surety for the fallen race.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, August 31, 1887.

- b. What should we ask of God to protect us from doubting? Psalm 139:23, 24.

“Let us look closely and critically to ourselves. Are not the vows we entered into at our baptism violated? Are we dead to the world and alive unto Christ? Are we seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God? Is the cable cut which anchored us to the eternal Rock? Are we drifting with the current to perdition? Shall we make no effort to press and urge our passage up stream? Let us not hesitate longer but vigorously apply the oars; and let us do our first works ere we make hopeless shipwreck.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 7, 1887.

“Submit your heart to be refined and purified; then you will become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then you will ‘be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear’ (1 Peter 3:15). The peace of Christ will be yours.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 333.

5. THE CHANGE WE NEED

- a. **What will our experience be like when we overcome doubting? Matthew 21:21, 22.**

“Through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellency developed.

“ ‘Ye are complete in him’ (Colossians 2:10).

“Prayer and faith are closely allied, and they need to be studied together. In the prayer of faith there is a divine science; it is a science that everyone who would make his lifework a success must understand. Christ says, ‘What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them’ (Mark 11:24). He makes it plain that our asking must be according to God’s will; we must ask for the things that He has promised, and whatever we receive must be used in doing His will. The conditions met, the promise is unequivocal.”—*Education*, pp. 257, 258.

- b. **What will our attitude be towards our fellow believers? John 17:20, 21.**

“Those who are fighting the battles for the Prince of life must point their weapons of warfare outward, and not form a hollow square and aim their missiles of destruction at those who are serving under the banner of the Prince Emmanuel. We have no time for wounding and tearing down one another.”—*Christ Triumphant*, p. 235.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why does God allow the possibility of doubt?
2. What is our own responsibility in removing doubt?
3. What is a common source of doubt?
4. How can we overcome all doubt?
5. What will be the result of being free from doubt?

A History of Listening to God

“Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not” (Proverbs 8:33).

“A portion of [Adam and Eve’s] time was to be occupied . . . in receiving the visits of angels, listening to their instruction, and in happy meditation.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 25.

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 13–19.

Sunday

September 6

1. ADAM AND EVE

a. **How did Adam and Eve hear God? Genesis 3:8 (first part).**

“Each day’s labor brought [Adam and Eve] health and gladness, and the happy pair greeted with joy the visits of their Creator, as in the cool of the day He walked and talked with them. Daily God taught them His lessons.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 261.

“Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker was [Adam’s] high privilege. Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his forever.”—*Education*, p. 15.

b. **How did Adam and Eve receive divine guidance after sin came into the world? Genesis 3:16–19.**

“Angels informed Adam that, as his transgression had brought death and wretchedness, life and immortality would be brought to light through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

“To Adam were revealed future, important events, from his expulsion from Eden to the Flood, and onward to the first advent of Christ upon the earth.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 51.

2. NOAH AND ABRAHAM HEARD GOD DIRECTLY

- a. **How did Noah receive divine guidance? Genesis 6:13–21. How did Noah respond to God’s directions? Verse 22.**
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“All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ. It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man’s Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels face to face. . . .

“It was Christ that spoke to His people through the prophets. . . . It is the voice of Christ that speaks to us through the Old Testament.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 366, 367.

- b. **How did God communicate with Abraham, and what was Abraham’s response? Genesis 22:1, 2, 11, 12.**
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“God conferred great honor upon Abraham. Angels of heaven walked and talked with him as friend with friend.”—*Ibid.*, p. 138.

“Heavenly beings still visit the earth as in the days when they walked and talked with Abraham and with Moses. Amid the busy activity of our great cities, amid the multitudes that crowd the thoroughfares and fill the marts of trade where from morning till evening the people act as if business and sport and pleasure were all there is to life, where there are so few to contemplate unseen realities—even here heaven has still its watchers and its holy ones. There are invisible agencies observing every word and deed of human beings. In every assembly for business or pleasure, in every gathering for worship, there are more listeners than can be seen with the natural sight. Sometimes the heavenly intelligences draw aside the curtain which hides the unseen world that our thoughts may be withdrawn from the hurry and rush of life to consider that there are unseen witnesses to all we do or say.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 176.

3. MOSES AND AARON

- a. How did God guide Moses at the time when Israel should leave Egypt? Exodus 3:4, 10.
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“Moses held converse with Jesus face to face as one who speaketh with a friend.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 2, 1886.

“It will baffle the keenest intellect to interpret the divine manifestation of the burning bush. It was not a dream; it was not a vision; it was a living reality—something that Moses saw with his eyes. He heard the voice of God calling to him out of the bush, and he covered his face, realizing that he stood in the immediate presence of God. God was conversing with humanity. Never could Moses describe the impression made upon his mind by the sight he then saw, and by the sound of the voice that spoke to him; but this impression was never effaced. Heaven came very near to him as, with reverent awe, he listened to the words, ‘I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ (Exodus 3:6). What wondrous condescension for God to leave the heavenly courts, and manifest Himself to Moses, talking with him face to face, ‘as a man speaketh unto his friend’ (Exodus 33:11).”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1099.

- b. How did Moses later converse with God? Exodus 33:18, 19.
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“Encouraged by the assurance of God’s presence, Moses drew still nearer and ventured to ask for still further blessings. ‘I beseech thee,’ he said, ‘shew me thy glory’ (Exodus 33:18). Think you that God reproveth Moses for his presumption? No, indeed. Moses did not make this request from idle curiosity. He had an object in view. He saw that in his own strength he could not do the work of God acceptably. He knew that if he could obtain a clear view of the glory of God, he would be able to go forward in his important mission, not in his own strength, but in the strength of the Lord God Almighty.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 11, 1897.

- c. What are the different ways God used to communicate with Aaron? Exodus 6:13; 8:5; Leviticus 10:8.
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4. THE ISRAELITES RECOGNIZED GOD'S VOICE

- a. How did God talk to the Israelites near Mount Sinai? Deuteronomy 5:4, 22.
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“God accompanied the proclamation of His law with exhibitions of His power and glory, that His people might never forget the scene, and that they might be impressed with profound veneration for the Author of the law, the Creator of heaven and earth. He would also show to all men the sacredness, the importance, and the permanence of His law.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 309.

- b. What did they prefer instead of talking directly with God? Why? Deuteronomy 5:23–27.
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“The people of Israel were overwhelmed with terror. The awful power of God’s utterances seemed more than their trembling hearts could bear. For as God’s great rule of right was presented before them, they realized as never before the offensive character of sin, and their own guilt in the sight of a holy God. They shrank away from the mountain in fear and awe. The multitude cried out to Moses, ‘Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’ The leader answered, ‘Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.’ The people, however, remained at a distance, gazing in terror upon the scene, while Moses ‘drew near unto the thick darkness where God was’ (Exodus 20:19–21).”—*Ibid.*, pp. 309, 310.

- c. How did God talk to the Israelites through the centuries? Luke 1:70.
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“Through nature, through types and symbols, through patriarchs and prophets, God had spoken to the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 34.

“Oh that thou, a nation favored above every other, hadst known the time of thy visitation, and the things that belong unto thy peace! . . . It is not merely servants, delegates, and prophets, whom thou hast refused and rejected, but the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 22.

5. HEARING GOD IN OUR EXPERIENCE

a. How does God want to talk to us now? Hebrews 1:2; John 5:39.

“Adam and Eve received knowledge through direct communion with God; and they learned of Him through His works. . . . But by transgression man was cut off from learning of God through direct communion and, to a great degree, through His works. . . . Nature still speaks of her Creator. Yet these revelations are partial and imperfect. And in our fallen state, with weakened powers and restricted vision, we are incapable of interpreting aright. We need the fuller revelation of Himself that God has given in His written word.”—*Education*, pp. 16, 17.

b. What kind of personal experience does God want us to have with His Word? Psalm 34:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 29:13.

“There is an evidence that is open to all—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His word. . . . Instead of depending upon the word of another, we are to taste for ourselves.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 111.

“The Christian knows in whom he has believed. He does not only read the Bible; he experiences the power of its teaching. . . .

“He can testify, ‘I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. . . . Do you ask why I believe in Jesus?—Because He is to me a divine Saviour. Why do I believe the Bible?—Because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul.’”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 16.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did sin change communication between God and Adam and Eve?
2. How did God communicate with the early patriarchs?
3. What did Moses realize at the burning bush, and how did he act?
4. How did God talk to Israel during Old Testament times?
5. How can we hear God today?

Jesus Hears His Father

“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isaiah 50:4, 5).

“[Jesus] gained knowledge as we may do.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 68–74.

Sunday

September 13

1. JESUS' METHOD OF LEARNING

a. How did Jesus learn the truth? Hebrews 2:10, 16–18; Matthew 7:7.

b. Who was His teacher? John 5:20.

“The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother’s knee. As He advanced from childhood to youth, He did not seek the schools of the rabbis. He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for God was His instructor. . . .

“Since He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God’s word. And spread out before Him was the great library of God’s created works. He who had made all things studied the lessons which His own hand had written in earth and sea and sky. . . . He studied the life of plants and animals, and the life of man.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

2. WHY JESUS DIDN'T ATTEND SCHOOL

- a. **Why did Jesus refuse to learn from the rabbis? Romans 10:3; John 7:16.**
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“In the days of Christ, the educators of the youth were formalists. During His ministry, Jesus declared to the rabbis, ‘Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.’ And He charged them with ‘teaching for doctrines the commandments of men’ (Matthew 22:29; 15:9). Tradition was dwelt upon, amplified, and revered far above the Scriptures. The sayings of men, and an endless round of ceremonies, occupied so large a share of the student’s life, that the education which imparts a knowledge of God was neglected. The great teachers were continually enlarging upon little things, specifying every detail to be observed in the ceremonies of religion, and making its observance a matter of highest obligation. They paid ‘tithe of mint and anise and cummin,’ while they ‘omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith’ (Matthew 23:23). Thus there was brought in a mass of rubbish that hid from the view of the youth the great essentials of the service of God.

“In the educational system there was no place for that personal experience in which the soul learns for itself the power of a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and gains that reliance upon the divine word which alone can bring peace and power with God. Busied with the round of forms, the students in these schools found no quiet hours in which to commune with God and hear His voice speaking to their hearts. That which the rabbis regarded as superior education was in reality the greatest hindrance to true education. It was opposed to all real development. Under their training, the powers of the youth were repressed, and their minds were cramped and narrowed.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 438, 439.

“Human nature is ever struggling for expression. He who is made complete in Christ must first be emptied of pride, of self-sufficiency. Then there is silence in the soul, and God’s voice can be heard.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 9, 1902.

- b. **What did Jesus reject from their teaching? Matthew 15:3, 9; Colossians 2:8.**
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3. RESPECTFULLY DISAGREEING

- a. **How did Jesus respectfully listen and talk to the leaders of His own church when they replaced the gospel with tradition, misleading thousands? Luke 2:46, 47.**
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“If Jesus had appeared to be trying to teach [the rabbis], they would have disdained to listen. But they flattered themselves that they were teaching Him, or at least testing His knowledge of the Scriptures. The youthful modesty and grace of Jesus disarmed their prejudices.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 80.

- b. **Who did Jesus consider His family on earth? Matthew 12:50. How did He respond when His own family followed human traditions?**
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“The brothers and sisters of Jesus were taught the multitudinous traditions and ceremonies of the rabbis, but Christ himself could not be induced to interest Himself in these matters. While hearing on every hand the reiterated ‘Thou shalt,’ and ‘Thou shalt not,’ He moved independently of these restrictions. The requirements of society and the requirements of God were ever in collision; and while in His youth He made no direct attack upon the customs or precepts of the learned teachers, He did not become a student in their schools.

“Jesus would not follow any custom that would require Him to depart from the will of God, nor would He place Himself under the instruction of those who exalted the words of men above the word of God. He shut out of His mind all the sentiments and formalities that had not God for their foundation. He would give no place for these things to influence Him. Thus He taught that it is better to prevent evil than to attempt to correct it after it has gained a foothold in the mind. And Jesus would not by His example lead others to place themselves where they would be corrupted. Nor would He needlessly place Himself in a position where He would be brought into conflict with the rabbis, which might in after years result in weakening His influence with the people. For the same reasons He could not be induced to observe the meaningless forms or rehearse the maxims that afterward in His ministry He so decidedly condemned.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 439.

4. LEARNING FROM THE MASTER

- a. Who was responsible for Jesus' education? Luke 2:49; John 8:28.
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“Though Jesus was subject to His parents, He began at a very early age to act for Himself in the formation of His character. While His mother was His first human teacher, He was constantly receiving an education from His Father in heaven. Instead of poring over the learned lore handed down by the rabbis from century to century, Jesus, under the Divine Teacher, studied the words of God, pure and uncorrupted, and studied also the great lesson-book of nature. . . . He brought a purer atmosphere into the home life. Though He did not place Himself under the instruction of the rabbis by becoming a student in their schools, yet He was often brought in contact with them, and the questions He asked, as if He were a learner, puzzled the wise men; for their practices did not harmonize with the Scriptures, and they had not the wisdom that comes from God. Even to those who were displeased at His noncompliance with popular customs, His education seemed of a higher type than their own.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 439, 440.

- b. What should we be learning? Colossians 3:1, 2; Matthew 11:29.
How should we be educated?
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“Every child may gain knowledge as Jesus did. As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word, angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour. And as we behold the beautiful and grand in nature, our affections go out after God. While the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 70, 71.

“It is the work of true education . . . to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation.”—*Education*, p. 17.

5. WE TOO CAN HAVE SUCCESS

- a. How did Jesus prepare Himself for His life work? Isaiah 50:4, 5.
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“Communion with God, a complete surrender of the soul to Him, in fulfilling His word irrespective of false education or the customs or traditions of His time, marked the life of Jesus.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 440.

- b. How should we study to succeed? Isaiah 55:6, 7.
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“To be ever in a bustle of activity, seeking by some outward performance to show their superior piety, was, in the estimation of the rabbis, the sum of religion; while at the same time, by their constant disobedience to God’s word, they were perverting the way of the Lord. But the education that has God back of it, will lead men to seek after God. . . . The infinite is not, and never will be, bound about by human organizations or human plans. Every soul must have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will and ways of God. In all who are under the training of God is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, its practice, or its experiences. Through study of the Scriptures, through earnest prayer, they may hear His message to them, ‘Be still and know that I am God’ (Psalm 46:10). When every other voice is hushed, when every earthly interest is turned aside, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. Here rest is found in Him.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 440, 441.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did Jesus learn?
2. What was wrong with the educational system of His time?
3. How did Jesus show His disagreement with many of the then prevailing customs?
4. How can we improve our mental faculties?
5. How can we be successful like Jesus was?

“Speak, Lord”

“Hear, O my people, and I will speak; . . . I am God, even thy God” (Psalm 50: 7).

“Be always ready, saying, ‘Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth’ (1 Samuel 3:9).”—*The Review and Herald*, July 26, 1898.

Suggested Reading: *Faith and Works*, pp. 121, 122.

Sunday

September 20

1. MARY, THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

- a. What was the attitude of Mary when God sent her a message? Luke 1:38.

“[Notice] the sweet, childlike faith of Mary, the maiden of Nazareth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 98.

- b. Who also prophesied of Christ to strengthen Mary’s faith? Luke 1:41–43, 67–69; 2:25–32, 36–38. Who tried to destroy her faith in Jesus?

“Mary often remonstrated with Jesus and urged Him to conform to the usages of the rabbis. But He could not be persuaded to change His habits of contemplating the works of God and seeking to alleviate the suffering of men or even of dumb animals. When the priests and teachers required Mary’s aid in controlling Jesus, she was greatly troubled; but peace came to her heart as He presented the statements of Scripture upholding His practices.

“At times she wavered between Jesus and His brothers, who did not believe that He was the Sent of God; but evidence was abundant that His was a divine character. She saw Him sacrificing Himself for the good of others. His presence brought a purer atmosphere into the home, and His life was as leaven working amid the elements of society.”—*Ibid.*, p. 90.

2. SAMUEL, A SERVANT OF GOD

a. What experience should be our model every day? 1 Samuel 3:7–10.

“When you place yourselves where you should be in order to hear the voice of God, you will come before Him every day, saying, ‘Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.’ ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ (1 Samuel 3:9; Acts 9:6).”—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 20, 1891.

“We need now to humble our hearts before God. We need now not to wait in a careless attitude, but in an attentive, reverent attitude.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 28.

b. How should we regard every talent, opportunity, and resource that we have? 1 Chronicles 29:12–14. What can destroy this attitude and ruin our spiritual experience?

“However large, however small, your talents, remember that what you have is yours only in trust. Thus God is testing you, giving you opportunity to prove yourself true. To Him you are indebted for all your capabilities. To Him belong your powers of body, mind, and soul, and for Him these powers are to be used. Your time, your influence, your capabilities, your skill—all must be accounted for to Him who gives all. He uses his gifts best who seeks by earnest endeavor to carry out the Lord’s great plan for the uplifting of humanity.

“Persevere in the work that you have begun, until you gain victory after victory. Educate yourselves for a purpose. Keep in view the highest standard that you may accomplish greater and still greater good, thus reflecting the glory of God.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, January 25, 1910.

“Self has far more to do with our religious experience than we imagine. When self is crucified, when the stubborn will is subdued, then the language of the heart will be, ‘Not my will, but Thine, be done, O God, whose I am and whom I serve.’ ‘Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.’ None will be as fixed stars, cold and immovable. This selfish, worldly dignity will no longer be maintained. There will be a beautiful blending of purity, elevation and nobility, which is wisdom from above and the meekness and lowliness of Jesus Christ. An innocent lamb was chosen as a representation of Christ.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 191.

3. BE LIKE SAMUEL

- a. **What is the source of success for every Christian? 1 Corinthians 15:10.**
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“The success of every work depends upon the blessing of God. If the Lord works with you, you will be able to do what He has appointed you to do. With God, one can chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. But just as long as you maintain this spirit of Pharisaism, God’s spirit will not, cannot, work with you, because you do not feel your utter dependence upon Him. When you become learners in the school of Christ, you will have the simplicity and meekness of little children, and will be willing to counsel with your brethren and sisters, and will pray earnestly for help from God. Your ears will then be opened, and you will be enabled to say from the heart, ‘Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.’”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 410.

- b. **What is the source of failure for any Christian? Proverbs 12:15; Isaiah 5:20.**
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“God wants to put His spirit upon you; but He cannot do this while you are so full of self. When self dies, you will feel the quickening influence of the spirit of God. God’s people are enjoined to seek for unity. . . . This is no time for alienation and discord, for the indulgence of a selfish, perverse spirit. Will you take yourselves in hand, or will you be ready to regard your stubborn, unyielding disposition as an evidence of faithful integrity? God forbid that you should be blinded, as were the Pharisees, and place good for evil, and evil for good. You will never have any greater evidence than you have had as to where the spirit of God is working. The Lord never proposes to remove all occasion for men to doubt. He will give sufficient evidence to bring the candid mind to a right decision; but if you are determined to have your own way, if you are like Saul, unwilling to change your course because of pride and stubbornness of heart, because of ignorance of your own condition of spiritual destitution, you will not recognize the light. You will say with Saul, ‘I have done the commandment of the Lord’ (1 Samuel 15:13).”—*Ibid.*, pp. 410, 411.

4. AN ADMONITION

- a. **What will happen to those who rely on human reasoning instead of following the counsel from God? Proverbs 1:24–26.**
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“As we ponder the solemn words of warning addressed to Israel, we are in imagination brought before the great white throne, where in the presence of the assembled universe, every man will be judged according to the deeds done in the body. . . .

“None then to pity the folly of those who have despised and forsaken God. None to relieve their distress. They have forsaken their true and loving Friend, to follow the path of convenience and worldly pleasure. They intended at some time to return to God. But the world, with its follies and deceptions, absorbs the attention. Frivolous amusements, pride of dress, indulgence of appetite, harden the heart and benumb the conscience, so that the voice of truth is not heard. Duty is a despised word. Things of infinite value are lightly esteemed, until the heart loses all desire to sacrifice for Him who has given so much for man. But in the reaping time they must gather the crop sown. . . .

“ ‘Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices’ (Proverbs 1:28–31).”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 18, 1881.

- b. **What is the promise to those who listen to God? Proverbs 1:33.**
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“Can we ever find a surer guide than the Lord Jesus? True religion is embodied in the Word of God and consists in being under the guidance of the Holy One in thought, word, and deed. He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life takes the humble, earnest, wholehearted seeker, and says, Follow Me. He leads him in the narrow way to holiness and heaven. Christ has opened this path for us at great cost to Himself. We are not left to stumble our way along in darkness. Jesus is at our right hand, proclaiming, ‘I am the Way.’ And all who decide to follow the Lord fully will be led in the royal path, yea more, in the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 29, 1906.

5. AN APPEAL

a. What can we learn from David’s prayer? Psalm 119:33–38.

“The sinner who refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power, listening to another voice, whose suggestions are of an entirely different character. Passion controls him, his judgment is blinded, reason is dethroned, and impetuous desires sway him, now here, now there. The truth will have but little influence over him, for there is in human nature, when separated from the Source of truth, a continual opposition to God’s will and ways. The physical, mental, and moral being are all under the control of rash impulses. The affections are depraved, and every faculty entrusted to man for wise improvement is demoralized. The man is dead in trespasses and sins. Inclination moves, passion holds the control, and his appetites are under the sway of a power of which he is not aware. He talks of liberty, of freedom of action, while he is in most abject slavery.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 17, 1891.

b. Explain how we can avoid being overcome by the enemy. James 4:7–10; Philippians 4:13.

“Those who claim to be Christians are in continual need of a power outside of, and beyond, themselves. They need to watch unto prayer, and to place themselves under the guardianship of God, else they will be overcome by the enemy. The Christian must look to God, as a servant to his master, as a handmaid to her mistress, saying, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ (Acts 9:6).”—*Ibid*.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What can we learn from Mary?
2. What can we learn from Samuel’s experience as a young child?
3. How do we show that we are learners in the school of Christ?
4. How can we walk in the royal pathway?
5. How can we hear God and have His power in our life?

First Sabbath Offerings



JULY 4

for a church renovation
in Hungary

(See p. 4.)

AUGUST 1

for missionary schools

(See p. 25.)



SEPTEMBER 5

for a chapel in
Washington, D.C.

(See p. 51.)