

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

April-June 1984



Knowing That We Know God



This Could Be a Most Important

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and. Since Jesus' death on the cross, the Christian church is spiritual Israel. Jews are not saved as a nation, but as individual Christians.

QUESTION FOR THOUGHT: Is it important to know that Israel is the church today, and not a

For more than a thousand years Christ was Israel's King, Protector, and Guide. When Israel refused to accept Jesus, they became

"It Is Finished"

Part 1—Israel's End

"They cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar." John 19:15.

It is not important to know who was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ (See Matt. 26:24) for the sins of the whole world. Every Christian confesses that he or she brought Christ to Calvary. Christ was betrayed and denied by "Christian" apostles. The New Testament says that the Romans and Jews were responsible for Christ's death. But Jesus really died of a broken heart—broken by the sins of all people. Jesus came to earth to die.

When Pilate washed his hands and was innocent, what did he scream? Matt.

One of the things Jesus died for (1) Mark 15:38; (2) Matt. 27:46; and (3) Matt.

The cry, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15), and the death of Jesus brought the mission of Israel to an end. Since Jesus' death on the cross, the Christian church is spiritual Israel. Jews are not saved as a nation, but as individual Christians.

A QUESTION FOR THOUGHT: Why is it important to know that Israel is the church today, and not a nation?

FURTHER STUDY: Romans 9 and 10.

1 Sunday
January

unprotected
1 When Jesus said, "It is finished," a hidden hand ripped open the temple veil. "And so your Temple will be abandoned and empty" (Matt. 23:38, TEV).

2 When Christ was resurrected (returned to life), other people were resurrected (see Eph. 4:8). They called Jesus their King. The Jewish leaders were shocked and speechless. What if they were to meet the risen Christ? Never again could they sleep peacefully. — *The Desire of Ages*, p. 785, paraphrased.

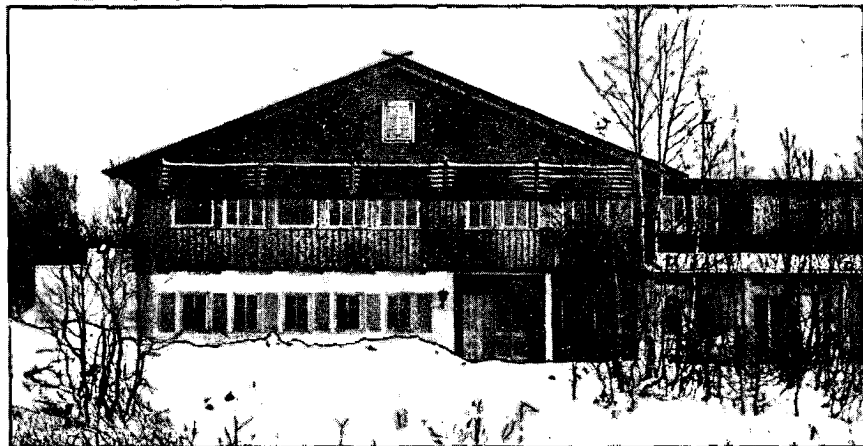
3 Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70.
What happened to Israel after the cross? Rom. 11:11-26.

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Northern European Division Thanks God for You. In 1981, when Sabbath Schools worldwide last focused attention on Northern Europe, we told you of our plans for an evangelistic center in Poland, a school above the Arctic Circle in Norway, and a new building for Toivonlinnan Junior College in Finland. Of the \$1,582,888.30 you gave that thirteenth Sabbath, 25 percent (\$395,722.07) was shared among the three projects. Because of difficulties in obtaining materials, the building in Poland was delayed, but construction has begun on the college building in Finland, and the school building in north Norway (pictured above) is already in use. These children express the appreciation we all feel.

The Special Projects portion of this quarter's offering on June 30 will be divided between library extension at Newbold College in England and the construction of an evangelistic center in Eindhoven in the southern Netherlands. Thank you again for your prayers and generosity on our behalf.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Walter R. L. Scragg'.

Walter R. L. Scragg, President, Northern European Division

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The Adult Sabbath School Lessons are prepared by the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the lessons is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Lesson Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors. The published lesson quarterly reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author.

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Art and Design: Pacific Press

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Adult Sabbath School Lessons (standard edition). Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, P.O. Box 7000, Mountain View, CA 94039, U.S.A. One year subscription, \$3.00; single copy, 75 cents. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$4.20; single copy, \$1.05. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage paid at Mountain View, CA 94039, U.S.A. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

Editions in Braille available. See page 97.

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Adult Sabbath School Lessons (USPS 702-480)/No. 356 / April-June 1984

Introduction

Knowing That We Know God

After Mark Twain, the American writer, had made his triumphant and celebrated tour through Europe in the 1890s, his young daughter said to him innocently, "Daddy, I guess pretty soon you will know everyone except God." In many ways this potentially if not precisely is our problem as contemporary Christians. We are caught in the middle of a knowledge explosion that has brought firmly within our grasp unbelievable progress in science, technology, medicine, manufacturing, education, and travel. Thus we run the risk of becoming distracted—even secularized—by modern attractions and instant conveniences that make it hard for us to be in the world but not of the world.

While we welcome that which seems to render life easier and happier, we also must keep unseen realities in focus lest we come to know everything except God. On the other hand we must never let it be thought that Christians and their heavenly Father are against progress in the secular world. We need a continued consciousness of this fact: "In a knowledge of God, all true knowledge and real development have their source. . . . Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all."—*Education*, p. 14.

The term *knowledge of God* as it is used in this quarterly includes that which we know about God and that which God knows about us. Of course, the more philosophical thinker will be asking the question, What is *knowledge* itself? That is, What does a person mean when saying that he or she *knows* something? By definition, knowledge may be considered as a person's grasp of actuality and of what the world and things around him or her really are. The task of telling the difference between what things are and what they appear to be is often more challenging and less easy than we may be willing to admit. Our challenge heightens when, in addition to getting to know the *seen* (or natural) phenomena of this world and universe, we attempt to gain a knowledge of God, the unseen (or supernatural). Must we use the same methods in learning of God as we use to learn of our world in which we live?

Particularly one fundamental fact must be understood in our study this quarter, and that is that when the Bible speaks of knowing God, the idea includes intellectual attainment but refers more specifically to a knowledge of His gracious character and to the spiritual experience and commitment that result.

Such an experience becomes all-pervasive to the Christian. Our reason for living revolves around our relationship to God. That is why God so earnestly invites, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth" (Ps. 46:10).



1

April 1-7
Adult Lesson

Knowing That God Exists

MEMORY TEXT: “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

Have you thought about God lately? A foolish question to ask, you may think. Of course you pray to Him daily, tell Him your problems, seek favors from Him. But do you take time to think seriously about Him, meditate on Him, contemplate Him for His own sake, without arranging any bargains, just letting the thought of God—the grandest thought of the universe—sink in?

A good place to begin such a contemplation of God is to reflect on His existence, the fact of His being. The author of Hebrews assures us that, “Anyone who comes to God, must believe that he exists” (Heb. 11:6, NEB).

Although the Bible makes no direct attempt to “prove” God’s existence, Bible prophets do affirm God. Under inspiration they declare in their own way and varied styles that God is. Their affirmation of belief together with other evidences in daily life points to a Supreme Being and provides foundations for our faith.

When confronted with the question How do you know there is a God? one minister replied with a story about a small boy whom he once saw flying a kite. The kite was so high that it disappeared in a low hanging cloud. “How do you know there is a kite up there at all?” asked the minister. The boy replied, “I know because I can feel the pull of the string.” His personal testimony could not be ignored. And yet, it is not our sense of feel (or sight, taste, hearing, or smell for that matter) that provides the foundation for our knowledge of God. It is our faith.

This week we shall prayerfully think of God by reviewing, all too briefly, testimony of His existence, trusting that our personal faith will continue to develop and mature as we do so.

Knowing That God Exists

Part 1 — God

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

The Scriptures open with the matter-of-fact assumption that there is a God and declare that we and our world are the results of His creative power. Indeed, this declaration of origin occurs over and over again throughout Scripture (Isa. 40:26; Mal. 2:10; Eph. 3:9; Rev. 10:6). Our duty lies not so much in *proving*, but rather in *believing* that “God is.” In fact, if by “proof” is meant demonstrating by removing all doubt or by making God appear to people’s senses, then we cannot prove God. But neither does not being able to provide demonstrations of this kind prove that God does not exist. We have two choices—to *believe* God as He provides us the faith and evidence, or to choose to disbelieve Him.

What element is essential in knowing God, and what does it involve? Heb. 12:2; Rom. 1:17.

If faith grasps the reality of God, then “happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God” (Ps. 146:5). Those who do not believe in a Supreme Being are cautioned to remember that “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Ps. 53:1). Faith, then, not proof or demonstration, comprises God’s chosen channel of our knowing that He is and that He rewards those who serve Him.

The Christian also knows these two things: (1) “Faith includes not only belief but trust” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 389); (2) “God has never removed the possibility of doubt. 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. When we desire to believe, there is ample evidence for believing.

E. Stanley Jones, one of America’s best-known missionaries to India, used to say that he mainly found God in eight ways:

1. Through the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as contained in the Scriptures.
2. Through the accumulated wisdom of the centuries.
3. Through disciplined group guidance.
4. Through individual counsel.
5. Through opening providences.
6. Through the discovery of natural law by scientific investigation.
7. Through heightened moral intelligence.
8. Through the Inner Voice.

Of course, this presumes his desire to find God and the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit.

FURTHER STUDY: Psalms 14 and 53.

Knowing That God Exists

Part 2 — Testimony From “Intuition”

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9).

Although some Bible scholars might reject the idea that this text teaches a divine consciousness in all human beings, as many or more Bible students understand just the opposite—that is, every person born into this life is indeed granted an awareness that there is a Reality in the universe greater than himself or herself. Throughout history human beings have been known to worship something or someone. Regardless of what it may be called—“insight,” “intuition,” “a sixth sense,” “an inner inclination,” “perception,” or whatever—we must acknowledge its existence. God loves us and wants us to know Him.

Some people say that even if the object of worship is wood, stone, fire, or whatever, human beings are incurably religious and must worship something, even if what they worship forms a poor substitute for the true God. We are born with sinful human natures and have no hope for deliverance within ourselves (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:23). Nevertheless, the God of heaven in His mercy gives us a chance to know Him by permitting “the true Light, which lighteth every man,” to shine on and within us. However, when humans respond by worshiping anything or anyone rather than the God of heaven, they are using their free will to make the wrong choice. They can be likened to a boy who is given the price of admission to a Christian concert but instead uses that money to pay his way into a rock festival. Even though he used the gift to attend a concert of his choice, he made the wrong choice.

In spite of the “true Light” that operates in our behalf to enable us to know the true God, what antagonistic power operates against us? How does this power influence us not to believe? Eph. 2:2; Col. 1:13.

“As through Christ every human being has life, so also through Him every soul receives some ray of divine light. Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ.”—*Education*, p. 29.

THINK IT THROUGH: Am I appreciative of the God of the Bible, or do I take Him for granted?

FURTHER STUDY: 2 Cor. 4:6; Rom. 1:18-20; Acts 14:17.

Knowing That God Exists

Part 3 — Testimony From Scripture

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

Earlier in this lesson the observation was made that the Scriptures make no point of trying to prove God. Rather as they testify of Christ, they point to God. From Genesis to Revelation some 40 inspired prophets in 66 books over a period of nearly 1600 years “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). But their writings do not give eternal life—they point to Christ through whom we receive eternal life.

Compare the theme of the texts that follow in order to become more aware of the basic theme that is found throughout Scripture:

Gen. 3:15 _____

Gen. 49:10 _____

Matt. 1:21 _____

Heb. 9:28 _____

“The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 315.

What important attitude characterizes those desiring to advance in spiritual knowledge? John 7:17.

Bible study never has been nor will it ever be merely a matter of accumulating information, data, and material. We should not study the Bible with the same objectives that we have in mind when we study secular subjects such as geography, ecology, or economics. To advance in our knowledge of God through Bible reading, we must commit our lives to the God of the Bible. God is not simply an object to know about but a Person with whom to experience a saving relationship. “Eternal life is the reward that will be given to all who obey the two great principles of God’s law—love to God and love to man. . . . Obedience to these commands is the only evidence man can give that he possesses a genuine, saving knowledge of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, March 22, 1900.

FURTHER STUDY: 2 Tim. 3:14-17; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, “Things New and Old,” pp. 126-128.

Knowing That God Exists

Part 4 — Testimony From Reason

“Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath generated it?” (Job. 38:28, 29).

To reason is to draw conclusions from facts, propositions, or evidence we observe throughout life. That was precisely the challenge God put to Job when He asked His faithful but troubled servant the series of rhetorical questions recorded in Job, chapter 38. Taken on a grand tour from the created wonders of earth to the splendors of the heavens, Job came to the inevitable conclusion that there was a master mind, an intelligence, and a tremendous power behind the glories and spectacles called to his attention.

Believers in God over the centuries have sought to support their faith by using their God-given minds to develop certain “arguments of reason.” Although a philosophical debate rages around these “evidences,” it may profit us to take a brief look at four of them:

1. *Cause and Effect.* Just as all buildings have builders, dresses have dressmakers, and hats have hatters, even so our universe, our world, and ourselves must have a Maker who is a thinking Individual. Buildings, dresses, and hats are “effects” each produced by a maker or a “cause.” We, our world, and our universe are likewise “effects” brought about by a Cause—our supreme and intelligent God.

2. *Design, Order.* In addition to the fact that the world, the universe, and all within them exist, we further recognize in them a “plan” and “design.” Astronomers, mathematicians, scientists, and physicians discover dependable laws in nature that enable them in turn to design successful space travel and perform spectacular surgery. Such order and design in nature and within the human body argue persuasively in favor of a Designer, a Planner—God.

3. *Being.* We humans are able to conceive of an infinite and perfect Being, or truth, goodness, and holiness. The source of such concepts cannot be found in such imperfect beings as ourselves. Therefore, those who use this argument see it in the conclusion that a Supreme Being is the only possible source.

4. *Morality.* We humans have a moral nature, a sense of right and wrong, of “ought” and “ought not.” This includes persons who claim no belief in God. Such a sense implies a Being to whom all are responsible and accountable.

THINK IT THROUGH: E. Conklin, a Princeton University biologist, is reported to have remarked that the likelihood of life in this world having started from accident can be compared to the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a printshop. What conclusions would you draw?

FURTHER STUDY: Job 38:1-41; Isa. 40:12-26.

Knowing That God Exists

Part 5 — God's Nature and Character

“We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16).

Sometimes it is said that love equals the sum total of God's personal characteristics. God is gracious (Titus 2:11), yet grace is but God's love poured downward toward sinners. God is truth (1 John 5:20), yet truth is but God's love confirming actuality. God is just (Rev. 22:12), but justice is God's love being fair. God is righteousness (Ezra 9:15) and holiness (Ps. 99:9), but these are God's love revealing special sacredness and consecration.

Study 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and list below some of the attributes that distinguish God's love from human love:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Take note of the following special qualities of God's nature that set Him apart from other beings in the universe:

1. God is *eternal*, that is, without beginning and without end (Rev. 1:8).
2. God is *omnipotent*, that is, all-powerful and able to accomplish whatever He wills (Jer. 32:17).
3. God is *omniscient*, that is, all-knowing, “perfect in knowledge” (Job. 37:16).
4. God is *omnipresent*, that is, able to be present everywhere (Ps. 139:7-12).
5. God is *immutable*, that is, unchangeable in the sense that circumstances do not alter His will. He is not capricious or unpredictable (Mal. 3:6).
6. God is *immortal*, that is, cannot die or cease to exist (1 Tim. 6:16).

THINK IT THROUGH: Is it not reassuring to know and be known by such an all-sufficient God?

Part 6 — One God in Three

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4).

When we focus on the existence of God, we include the Three Members of the Godhead. The biblical expression “God is one Lord” points to the unity that identifies the operating nature of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). The three distinct personalities of the Godhead (or Trinity) comprise one divine and redemptive unit—a monotheism (one God) as opposed to a polytheism (many gods). Exactly how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit personally and individually can be distinct and yet “one” has not been revealed to us. But we have been given the insight that the members of the Godhead are One “in nature, in will, and in purpose.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 208. Matters such as this are beyond human comprehension and must not be the subject of speculation. But we are told that “there are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.”—*Evangelism*, p. 615.

Is it not wonderful that the Three Members of the Godhead are interested vitally in all that pertains to our happiness and salvation? It is not enough to know what little the Bible reveals about the Godhead. Ours must be a practical knowledge—an experiential, saving knowledge that comes from allowing the members of the Godhead to do that which They are more than willing to do in us and through us.

“It is sin that darkens our minds and dims our perceptions. As sin is purged from our hearts, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, illuminating His word and reflected from the face of nature, more and more fully will declare Him ‘merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.’ Exodus 34:6.

“In His light shall we see light, until mind and heart and soul are transformed into the image of His holiness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 321, 322.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:*

1. Write down the three things that are the most important ideas that you know about God.
2. After each of them, list the sources of how you learned these qualities. List as many sources as you can think of.
3. Now list three areas concerning God that you most earnestly want to know better. Jot down these three concerns in some conspicuous place in your Sabbath School quarterly. Review these each week as you study so that the lessons for the next three months may build on your felt need.

* Most of the personal applications this quarter are provided by Lester Bennett.



2

April 8-14
Adult Lesson

Knowing How to Know God

MEMORY TEXT: “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (John 14:4, 5).

Do you know God? Are you sure? How sure are you? Your answer to questions like these will depend, at least in part, on what you understand by “know.” Observe that you are not being asked here, Do you *believe* God? Belief requires merely having something or someone in which to believe—no more, no less. In fact, you may believe anything you desire to believe—even if it is false.

However, in one sense, *knowledge* goes a step or two beyond belief and demands not only something to know but also something that has evidence to support it. *Belief* may be defined as trust, mental acceptance, or confidence which you choose to place in something. On the other hand, *knowledge*, in the sense it is being used here, is coming to understand something through experience, association, and evidence. In other words, while *belief* depends a great deal on your personal choice and decision and what is largely subjective, *knowledge* leans more strongly on information and reality derived from outside of yourself and therefore is more objective. Of course, informed belief is based on the kind of knowledge being discussed here.

How does the relation of belief and knowledge apply to our coming to know God? This week’s study introduces fundamental ingredients in the recipe for knowing the God of the Bible—indeed, the God of our universe.

Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, had demonstrated a firm belief in the Saviour, even to the point of being brave and loyal. When Jesus decided to return where His life had been threatened before, Thomas urged his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16). Most know him as “doubting Thomas” (a phrase not used in the Bible) because he insisted after the resurrection that except he see the nail prints in Christ’s hands and put his hand in Christ’s side he would not believe (John 20:25). But he also could be labeled “inquiring Thomas” or one seeking “a reason of the hope” within himself (1 Peter 3:15).

What does God require of us in our search to acquaint ourselves with Deity? Should we not ask for or try to find evidence upon which to base our faith?

Knowing How to Know God

Part 1 — Search, Research, or Revelation

“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (Job 11:7).

Knowing God begins with God Himself and not with human knowledge or investigation. Zophar’s question in Job 11:7 reminds us that without divine aid we can no more discover readily the things of God than we can solve the problems of life. We know about God only what He has revealed to us. “Man cannot by searching find out God. . . . No mortal mind can penetrate the secrecy in which the Mighty One dwells and works. Only that which He sees fit to reveal can we comprehend of Him.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 285, 286.

Consider what it is about humans and our relation to God that renders us unable to know God through reason alone.

1. All are sinners (Rom. 3:10, 23).
2. Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-3).
3. “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24).
4. The Bible refers to humans as flesh (1 Peter 1:24).
5. Flesh, or the carnal mind, tends to reject or react against spiritual things (Rom. 8:7; Gal. 5:17).
6. God is beyond the natural reasoning and understanding of human beings (Ps. 139:6).

With our minds we think, reason, and sort things out in our limited sphere of time and space. Ordinarily, most things within our world are available to our understanding and knowledge if we devote enough of our attention to study, research, and experimentation. However, knowing God does not initially depend on how much we make of our minds in research and experiments, for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

As an infinite, supreme, and perfect Being, God is beyond our five senses, our finite reach, and our understanding except that He offers us supernatural assistance. Knowing God depends on whether or not He makes Himself known to us. Some refer to this self-disclosing act of God on our behalf as God’s “breaking through into history.” It means that in order to know God we begin by relying not on our *reasoning* but on His *revelation*, for “reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself. Heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 286.

THINK IT THROUGH: How can I use my reason to cooperate rather than conflict with God’s revelation?

FURTHER STUDY: Eccl. 7:29; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 230.

Part 2 — General Revelation

“The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. 1:20).

As the earth and all living things came forth from the Creator’s hands, they revealed in a general way what God is like. “In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. . . . And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He [Christ] wrote the message of the Father’s love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 20.

Because sin has marred but not destroyed the creation, invisible or unseen things about God may still be known, though imperfectly, from His created works.

Notice how the psalmist beautifully and poetically describes nature speaking to us of God. Ps. 19:1-6.

To bring us to a saving knowledge of Himself, God leaves no stone unturned. In the same way that He pursued straying Adam and Eve to bring them back to a covenant relationship to Himself (Gen. 3:9), God seeks us today. He speaks not only in the stars and galaxies, the flowers, trees, and sunsets, but also in such ways as in the hearing of sounds, the bearing of babies, the sprouting of seed, the rising of dew, the structure of the cell, the bonding of atoms, the movement of nations, the caring of human beings, and the unselfish ministry of His church.

SEARCH AND LEARN

Use the chart that follows to understand better what is revealed about God in Isaiah 40:12-31.

Isaiah 40	Question	Areas Involved	Response
12-17	Who can do what God can do?	in creation in knowledge and wisdom	Not even the most powerful nations
18-31	To whom can God be likened or compared?	to idols? to the oldest and wisest people?	Don’t you see? He never becomes weary in His care for us or in His control of the universe.

Part 3 — Special Revelation

“He said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream” (Num. 12:6).

God generally speaks by way of His created works, but He desires to communicate His will even more directly to human beings. His original plan of face-to-face communion instituted in the Garden of Eden is now impossible. Not because God is angry with us. No! It is just that sin and sinners cannot exist in the immediate presence of a holy God. “Thou canst not see my face,” said the Lord to Moses, “for there shall no man see me, and live” (Ex. 33:20).

However, mercy always finds a way. And one way that God has chosen for more direct communication with us is special revelation through prophets. The prophet does not choose the prophetic gift himself or herself but is chosen by God to be spokesman or spokeswoman for God and to be inspired for a special mission. In the Bible prophets are referred to as divinely selected persons who discern God’s will. They “see” for God (1 Sam. 9:9; Isa. 30:10) and they “speak” for God (Ex. 7:1, 2).

To make God known, the prophet’s work might take the form of instruction, reproof, prediction, leadership, or whatever peculiar needs face the church in a given situation.

A teacher in a mission school asked her class, “What is a prophet?” There was a long silence. Then a small lad said timidly, “It’s a person who gets to know what God is thinking.”

What examples of “special” revelation other than the prophetic gift can be found in the Bible?

1. The plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7:19 to 12:30)
2. The burning bush (Ex. 3:2-6)
3. The Ten Commandments from Sinai (Ex. 20:1-17)
4. Urim and Thummim (Num. 27:21)
5. A talking animal (Num. 22:28-30)
6. Jesus’ virgin birth or incarnation (Matt. 1:20, 21)
7. Miracles, such as Jesus’ raising the dead (John 11:43, 44)
8. The gift of tongues or languages at Pentecost (Acts 2:4)

Add others, if you can, giving references for each:

What a blessing it is to worship a God who spares no effort to provide us with a knowledge of His will and way!

Part 4 — A Place for Reasoning — 1

“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and 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).

In explaining this text the *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* says that “intelligent men should be able to give reasons for what they believe and practice.”—Volume 7, p. 572. We must employ reason to be able to give reasons. To reason means to try to make sense of a matter by exercising our minds and drawing conclusions from facts or propositions. God never has been against using reasoning to make sense of what we claim to believe. On the contrary, His revealed will for us invariably turns out to be the most sensible and reasonable course when we trust Him, exercise patience, or live long enough to witness the end results. However, we do not fret if we cannot always explain the mystery of His ways.

God’s gracious invitation for us to “reason,” to think through, to dialogue with Him (see Isa. 1:18) demonstrates His desire for men and women to understand their faith and understand the advantage of Heaven’s way of life.

Why did God create us with minds and reasoning powers? John 17:3; 1 Peter 1:12, 13.

Our minds were given to us for the purpose of thinking God’s thoughts after Him. “Man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is ‘the express image’ (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. . . . His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

“Every faculty of the mind, every bone in the body, every muscle of the limbs, shows that God designed these faculties to be used, not to remain inactive. . . .

“ . . . Men of God must be diligent in study, earnest in the acquirement of knowledge, never wasting an hour. . . .

“ . . . They should store the mind with useful knowledge.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 411, 412.

THINK IT THROUGH: In my daily life how can I show my thanks for God’s giving me a mind capable of reasoning and of understanding divine thoughts?

FURTHER STUDY: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 250.

Part 5 — A Place for Reasoning — 2

“God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29).

“God, when he made man, made him straightforward, but man invents endless subtleties of his own” (Eccl. 7:29, NEB).

Sometimes our thinking and reasoning go astray, working at cross purposes with that which God’s revealed will in nature, the Bible, and human experience would have us believe and know. The root Hebrew verb for “subtleties” or “inventions” means *to think* and *to devise*. We come up with all sorts of devices that lead us in directions contrary to the will of God. The fact that we are born with sinful natures (Ps. 51:5) and have not been delivered yet from our physical world and the environment of sin (1 John 3:2) renders us subject to mistakes in our thinking and judgment. We also are adept at contriving things which, although not necessarily evil in themselves, are employed in such a way as to lead human beings into sin. The conversion experience places us on the road toward thinking and drawing conclusions more in harmony with the divine mind.

While explaining to the Christians at Rome what comprises “reasonable” (logical or intelligent) service to God, the apostle Paul says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

What practical solution for godless reasoning can you find in Paul’s statement in 2 Corinthians 10:5?

Many of our theories and speculative ideas tend to defy the God of heaven and bear the mark of the forces of evil and rebellion (Isa. 14:13-15; 2 Thess. 2:4). The word *imaginings* used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5 refers to the kind of “reasonings” and “thoughts” prevalent in Corinth when he wrote about that which “exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.” Note how dramatically these words of Paul and the solution he presents are translated in the New English Bible: “We demolish sophistries and all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God; we compel every human thought to *surrender in obedience to Christ*.” (Emphasis supplied.) Surrendering our lives in obedience to Christ sanctifies our reasoning, orders our beliefs, and enables us to receive and grow in a saving knowledge.

THINK IT THROUGH: How can my mind and reasoning function in daily activities that are not necessarily religious and still glorify God?

FURTHER STUDY: 2 Tim. 3:7; *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 498; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 127.

Part 6 — Belief and Knowledge

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

If there is such a thing as an honest doubter, then Thomas certainly qualifies. There are other types of doubters who do not deserve to be classed with Thomas: (1) those who are superficial and are not interested in the evidence; (2) those who are proud of being skeptics and do not want to see any evidence that will force them to change their minds; and (3) those who are disbelievers, who flatly reject all evidence. (Adapted from William S. Lasor, *Men Who Knew Christ* [Glendale, Calif.: G/L Publications, 1971], p. 148.) In contrast to these worst kinds of doubters, Thomas, as an honest doubter, was in a position to develop what faith he had inasmuch as he was sincerely seeking truth.

Note several positive and commendable characteristics possessed by Thomas:

1. Brave and loyal at times (John 11:16)
2. Faithful and earnest (*Education*, p. 86)
3. Truehearted (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 296)

Note several weaknesses found in Thomas:

1. His failure to understand Christ's true mission as the Messiah (John 14:5)
2. His lack of confidence in his fellow disciples (John 20:25)
3. His timidity and fearfulness at times (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 296)

Thomas had been given specific indication by the Lord. He also had heard his fellow disciples' testimony and should have believed and known that Christ had risen from the grave (John 20:18-25). Could he have conceived of their contriving a resurrection hoax? In both instances, Jesus personally and mercifully granted Thomas additional evidence with a gentle rebuke to improve his faith (John 14:6, 7; 20:27-29). God would have His people live by faith based on the revealed evidence of His character and love as derived from nature, the Bible, the life of Jesus Christ, His providences, human experience, or whatever means He chooses to employ.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:

Imagine that you have been invited by a neighbor, one you know well, who is a member of a Society for the Advancement of Atheism, to speak to his group. You have been offered five minutes to state why you believe in God. You feel that perhaps this neighbor, and maybe another member, have more than just an academic interest in your coming. You want to do your best. What will you say at the meeting?



3

April 15-21
Adult Lesson

Knowing God Through His Names

MEMORY TEXTS: “It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32).

“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

One of the first essentials in becoming acquainted with someone is to learn his or her name. In a sense this is true in our acquaintance with God. While names today often mean little more than an attempt at a beautiful rhythmic sound or a mere necessity for identification, Bible names are more significant. Prompted by God, parents mentioned in the Bible often chose children’s names that described circumstances of their birth, depicted their characters and experiences, or forecast their futures. (See Gen. 25:24-26; 1 Sam. 1:20; Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:13.)

Although the names by which we know God are mere symbols that admit glimpses of His glory, they do tell and teach us something about Him—His person, His character, and His purposes for and relationship to His people. Thus David could pray, “For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Ps. 25:11). Also Jesus our Saviour could pledge, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13, 14).

The Old Testament Hebrew word for *name* originally signified “sign” or “token,” hence, a sign or token or description of the person bearing it.

Names are essential means by which we recognize things, places, and persons. As we study briefly a few outstanding names by which God is known in Scripture this week, we, like the Bible characters of old, should experience such understanding and appreciation for God that we shall be encouraged to live by His name (Gen. 26:25). Then we will not forget His name (Jer. 23:27) or take His name in vain (Ex. 20:7), but finally, at the appropriate time, will have God’s name written in our foreheads (Rev. 14:1; 22:4).

Knowing God Through His Names

Part 1 — 'Elohim

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

First found in the early chapters of Genesis, the name “God,” (Hebrew, 'Elohim) occurs approximately 2500 times throughout the Old Testament. It refers to that side of God's nature that is concerned with His power, His strength, and His creatorship as the Fount and Source of all life. “Hath not one God created us?” cried the prophet Malachi (Mal. 2:10). “The work of creation is an amazing exhibition of God's power and majesty, of divine omnipotence in action.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 170.

Because 'Elohim is the plural form—that is, it is spelled as if more than one God might be intended—some Bible scholars couple the name with Genesis 1:26 to suggest the Trinity. While the pronouns “us” and “our” in that verse most certainly suggest more than one Person in the Godhead, a wider study of the word 'Elohim indicates that its plural form should be understood more as pointing to the all-sufficient manifold power and many-sided provisions resident in our God. The idolater makes many idols because no idol can cover all that he needs his gods to be. But God is one and yet enough for all needs here and hereafter. “Who is a God ['Elohim] like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18).

“The simple, and presumably earlier, form 'El is used more than 200 times in reference to the one true God. Moses, David, and Isaiah are particularly fond of this appellation. Sometimes it is used with 'the,' as 'the God of Bethel' (Gen. 31:13; cf. 35:1, 3), and 'the God of thy father' (Gen. 46:3). Here again emphasis is upon the One who is the All-powerful, the Omnipotent One, the only true God. Other elementary forms, such as 'Elah and 'Eloah, are found in a number of texts, each variation of the main root expressing the same idea of power and might.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 171.

What is meaningful about the way this God of creative power and strength invites all people to be saved? Isa. 45:22.

“Repent of your sins, make confession to God, forsake all iniquity, and you may appropriate to yourself all His promises. 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved,' is His gracious invitation.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 634.

THINK IT THROUGH: What does my personal life reveal about my response to God's power, strength, and creatorship?

FURTHER STUDY: Neh. 9:32; *Education*, p. 243.

Knowing God Through His Names

Part 2 — *Yahweh*

“God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them” (Ex. 6:2, 3).

This name for God, (*YHWH*), is used more than any other in Scripture. Often it appears in English Bibles in the form “Jehovah,” which reflects earlier translators’ misunderstanding of the Jewish custom of reading *Adonai* (Lord) wherever they encountered the name *Yahweh* in the Bible. When the Masoretic scribes added vowels to the Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible in the seventh or eighth century A.D. they added the vowels for *Adonai* to the consonants YHWH, as is still done in Hebrew Bibles. This, then, was transliterated “Jehovah” instead of *Yahweh*.

God was about to reveal Himself to His people in a way that they had not experienced before. The stage was being set for Moses to go unto Pharaoh and in the name of *Yahweh* demand release of the captives. Not that the literal name *Yahweh* itself had not been heard of or used before by God’s people, for Adam and Eve had heard it earlier (Gen. 4:1) and so had Abraham (Gen. 15:7; 22:14). Jacob also heard this name (Gen. 28:13). Nevertheless, God now was ready to bring a new meaning and experience to this particular name by freeing Israel from Egyptian bondage. He, the living God, demonstrated His superiority and faithfulness to His people by overcoming easily the false gods of Egypt and delivering them.

The Hebrew word that Moses received from God to describe the aspect of His character that He was about to exhibit so powerfully is *Yahweh*. This name emphasizes the eternal, ever-present, self-existent nature of God. Used more than 6000 times in Scripture, it was considered the most precious of God’s names and today is translated either “LORD” or “JEHOVAH.” In several English versions of the Bible, “LORD” or “JEHOVAH” is spelled out in capital letters unless the name is connected to another name like “Jehovah-shalom” (Judges 6:24).

Perhaps the most interesting occurrence of a form of *Yahweh* in Scripture is Exodus 3:14. When God appeared unto Moses through the burning bush He told him to announce to the children of Israel “I AM hath sent me unto you.” This represented the Hebrew phrase “I am that I am.” It also can be translated, “I will be what I will be.” God’s ever-present help takes care of our past, our present, and our future.

THINK IT THROUGH: What word do you think best exemplifies Moses’ attitude before God revealed His name to him? What word best describes Moses’ attitude immediately following the revelation? (Circle your answer for the first question and underline your answer to the second question.)

Unhappy	Confident
Complaining	Intimidated
Perplexed	Proud

Knowing God Through His Names

Part 3 — 'Adonai

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isa. 6:1).

The basic difference between usage in the English text of the divine name “Lord” (*'Adonai*), found, among many other references, in Isaiah 6:1 above, and the name “LORD” (*Yahweh*) that we considered in part 2 is as follows:

1. *Lord* is spelled with only the first letter capitalized while *LORD* is spelled out in capital letters and small caps. (Notice this in many English versions of the Bible.)

2. *Lord* is translated from the Hebrew word *'Adonai* while *LORD* is translated from the Hebrew *Yahweh*. However, *Yahweh* is not always rendered “LORD,” for when *'Adonai* and *Yahweh* appear together *'Adonai* is translated “Lord” and *Yahweh* is translated “God.”

3. *Lord* (*'Adonai*) reveals God as “master” and “ruler” while *LORD* (*Yahweh*) reveals God as ever-present, eternal, self-existent, and supreme.

“The Hebrew word *'adon* is found some 300 times in the Old Testament. It is usually translated ‘lord,’ or ‘master.’ It is used of a proprietor of property, the master of a household, a governor of a province. It is also translated ‘sir’ (Gen. 43:20), and ‘owner’ (1 Kings 16:24), but more frequently by the words ‘lord’ and ‘master.’ It is a title of rank, honor, and authority (see Gen. 18:12; 24:12, 42; Ex. 21:4; Num. 11:28; 1 Sam. 1:15; etc.). But when it is applied to God the word takes the form *'Adonai*. The first instances are Gen. 15:2, 8; 18:3. It sets forth His lordship, His right to obedience.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 173.

“In the NT the common term for ‘Lord’ is *Kurios*. This term is used of both earthly lords (Mt 27:63; Jn 12:21; ‘Sir’; etc.) and as a designation of God and of Christ. Often when *Kurios* was used in an address to Christ it was used as a title of respect, without reference to His deity (Mt 8:2, 6, 8; etc.). However, at times the use of the term clearly implied a recognition of His deity (Jn 20:28; Acts 10:36; Rom 6:23; 8:39; 1 Cor 15:31; etc.). *Kurios* was the term used in the LXX for both *'Adon*, or *'Adonay*, and YHWH, hence had a natural connotation of deity to those familiar with the LXX.”—*S.D.A. Bible Dictionary*, p. 679.

What practical effect will be seen in our lives when we recognize God’s mastership and lordship? Matt. 22:37-40.

“Would that all who profess Christianity knew what it means to love God practically. . . . They would have some realization of the infinite holiness of God, knowing that He is high and lifted up, and the train of His glory fills the temple. They would have a powerful influence upon the life and character of those around them.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 51.

Knowing God Through His Names

Part 4 — 'El-Roi

“She [Hagar] called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?” (Gen. 16:13).

The New English Bible translates this text:

“She called the LORD who was speaking to her by the name El-Roi, for she said ‘Have I indeed seen God and still live after that vision?’ ”

'*El-Roi*, a name for God spelled out in the New English Bible but merely translated in the King James Version, means literally a “God of seeing” or “God of vision.” Banished to a hurting loneliness by the unkindness of Sarah her mistress, Hagar was fleeing to her native Egypt when “the angel of the LORD” (Gen. 16:7-11) brought hope, comfort, and guidance to her. In thankful response, Hagar was inspired to address God as “‘*El-Roi*” or “Thou God seest me” (verse 13). With God, to see is to act. His is not the cold eye of distance and unconcern. Later on in Israel’s history God appeared to Moses from the burning bush with the assurance, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, . . . I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them” (Ex. 3:7, 8). Even when we cannot discern God’s presence we must learn to trust in Him who constantly observes all that is happening to us.

When Abraham Lincoln was about to leave Springfield, Illinois, in 1860, for Washington, he spoke to his fellow townsmen with these words: “I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon George Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail.” What trust in God’s providence!

Notice the background details of how God became known to Hagar as '*El-Roi* through a difficult and sensitive family situation. Gen. 16:7-14.

“Thinking it impossible that a child should be given her in her old age, Sarah suggested, as a plan by which the divine purpose might be fulfilled, that one of her handmaidens should be taken by Abraham as a secondary wife. . . . But it was no less a violation of the law of God, and was fatal to the sacredness and peace of the family relation. . . .

“ . . . Hagar became proud and boastful, and treated her mistress [Sarah] with contempt. . . . ‘When Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.’

“She [Hagar] made her way to the desert, and as she rested beside a fountain, lonely and friendless, an angel of the Lord . . . appeared to her.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 145.

FURTHER STUDY: Ps. 32:8; 33:18; 1 Peter 3:12.

Knowing God Through His Names

Part 5 — 'El-Shaddai

“When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1).

Here as elsewhere in the Old Testament, “God Almighty” or “Almighty God” is translated from the Hebrew name 'El-Shaddai ('El, shortened form of 'Elohim, coupled with Shaddai).

“This title suggests the abundant graciousness of God, the temporal and spiritual bounties with which God enriches His people. Others hold that *Shaddai* is from a root meaning ‘to be violent,’ ‘to despoil,’ ‘to devastate.’ Applied to God, it would mean ‘to display power.’ This is expressed by the translation ‘Almighty’ (KJV, RSV, Moffatt, Smith-Goodspeed). This name thus sets forth God as either the Mighty One or the Bountiful One.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 171.

As Abraham reached the end of the long test of his faith in a promised son, God appeared unto him and, for the first time in the Bible record, introduced Himself by the name of 'El-Shaddai as a signal of timely and gracious fulfillment of His promise to supply appropriately all His servant's needs.

“This name is found again in Gen. 28:3 where Isaac says that 'El-Shaddai will bless Jacob, make him fruitful and multiply him. A similar promise of 'El-Shaddai is found in Gen. 35:11, and 43:14; 49:25. Such passages suggest the meaning of bountifulness exercised by God: 'El, the God of power and authority and *Shaddai*, the God of inexhaustible riches, which He is able to bestow.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 171.

SEARCH AND LEARN:

What blessings do the psalmists view as resulting from God's bountiful dealings with His people?

1. Ps. 13:5, 6 _____
2. Ps. 116:7 _____
3. Ps. 119:17 _____
4. Ps. 142:6, 7 _____

It is reported that one of Martin Luther's enemies said to him, “Tell me. When the whole world turns against you—church, state, princes, people—where will you be then?” “Why, then as now,” responded Luther, “in the hands of Almighty God.” How much greater is God than our greatest need!

FURTHER STUDY: Gen. 49:22-26; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 313; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 315.

Knowing God Through His Names

Part 6 — Father

“When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matt. 6:7-9).

It was left for the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ to unveil God as “Father.” There are, to be sure, anticipations in the Old Testament of the Fatherhood of God (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6); yet these seem to speak more in metaphor or figure of speech. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Ps. 103:13). While God is compared to but not commonly addressed as Father in the Old Testament, in the New Testament Christ teaches and demonstrates that God is “Father” in actuality and should be so addressed. Because Christ could say “my Father,” He could add “and your Father,” and proceed to teach us to pray to “Our Father” (John 20:17; Matt. 6:9).

What relationship gives us the right to address God as “Father”? Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 3:1.

A woman who had an adopted son found herself in a quandary as to how she should or could prepare him for his first day in school. Finally she decided to explain the circumstances of his adoption by telling him that sometimes when children are *born* into a family they are not wanted because they come unawares and unexpected; but *he* was *adopted*. When children are adopted it is because someone wants them.

The next day the boy was in school sitting next to a little girl whereupon he elbowed her and asked proudly, “Are you adopted?” She answered, “I don’t know, but I’ll ask when I go home.” When she arrived home, she inquired of her mother, “Mommy, am I adopted?” Mother replied rather impatiently, “No! Why would you ask something like that? Who put that in your mind?” Needless to say, the girl was disappointed because she had not been adopted. At school the next day she said to the boy who had been adopted, “No, I’m not adopted. I was only born.” The Bible describes our place in our heavenly Father’s family as adopted.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Use a concordance and look at listings under the word “name.” Compile a list of five promises that are based upon the name of God or Jesus.

Examples might be Psalm 23:3 or Matthew 18:20.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: When people look at my life-style do they recognize that I favor or “look like” my Father in heaven?



4

April 22-28
Adult Lesson

Knowing God Through Nature

MEMORY TEXT: “Ask now the beast, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?” (Job 12:7-9).

Consider Job—the man so horribly afflicted with a skin disease that his wife tried to persuade him to “curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Even in his miserable condition and in reaction to his friends’ insults, Job remained sensitive to nature as a source of knowledge about God and how He deals with us, whether in sickness or health, in poverty or prosperity.

All that comes from the Creator’s hand bears a witness to His Deity. His creation sustains, charms, and informs. The atmosphere we breathe contains oxygen and nitrogen suited perfectly to our lungs. The earth is positioned accurately in respect to sun and moon to maintain life, health, and happiness. Poets are entranced with earth’s verdant forests, majestic mountains, stately trees, and carpets of living green. Even moonlight and the delicate chirping of birds attract our notice while at the same time the unseen world of molecules, atoms, protons, neutrons, and electrons do not go unobserved. “Lift up your eyes on high,” cries the prophet Isaiah, “and behold who hath created these things” (Isa. 40:26).

We take that prophet’s counsel this week as we meditate on how nature reflects its Maker.



Knowing God Through Nature

Part 1 — Nature Declares God’s Glory

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge” (Ps. 19:1, 2).

David begins one of the most popular of the nature psalms by speaking in grateful terms about God’s revelation of Himself in creation. “Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 9. To the Hebrew mind, nature was never an end in itself but rather a means by which humans beheld the Creator and were led to praise His power and majesty. As a shepherd lad caring for his sheep on the Judean hills, David undoubtedly spent many hours under the open sky, praising God for His goodness.

Why is it that the “voice” of the heavens makes such a strong impression on the human race? Ps. 19:1-4.

The word “where” in verse 3 is a supplied word and does not occur in David’s original Hebrew. “The idea is that, despite the fact that the heavens have a language of their own . . . , their voice is inaudible; it does not speak to the ear, but to the understanding heart.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 676.

In “Thanatopsis,” William Cullen Bryant says:

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language.

In Psalm 19:4, the word “line” means a “measuring line,” used to fix boundaries and borders. Another interpretation prefers the meaning of “sound” or “speech.” At any rate, the worldwide extent of the testimony of the heavens to God’s creation is intended. When writing to the Christians at Rome about the spread of the gospel, the apostle Paul quotes from this Old Testament scripture when he says, “Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18).

THINK IT THROUGH: What is the intent of the following words?

“Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

FURTHER STUDY: Ps. 50:4-6; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 115, 116.

Knowing God Through Nature

Part 2 — Nature Reveals God's Care

“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. . . . And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food” (Gen. 2:7-9).

Like the potter with his clay or the sculptor with his stone, God is pictured fashioning Adam from the substance of the earth. “Man is composed of materials derived from the ground. . . . The major elements making up the human body are oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen. Many others exist in smaller proportions. How true that man was made of the ‘dust of the ground,’ and also that he shall ‘return to the earth’ whence he was taken (Eccl. 12:7).”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 222. Our inextricable link with planet Earth is further marked by our need of putting on special space suits (as astronauts and cosmonauts do) in order to preserve life when traveling beyond earth’s environment into outer space.

How did God make use of nature in sustaining as well as in creating humans? Gen. 1:29.

In the same way that earthly parents would be expected to support their offspring, God not only created but provided for and sustained Adam and Eve.

“We learn from the divine record that man was to eat of the products of both field and tree, in other words of grain, nuts, and fruit; the animals, to eat of ‘every green herb,’ vegetables, or green plants, and grass.

“The wording of this regulation reveals that it was not the will of God that man should slaughter animals for food, or that animals should prey upon one another; consequently, the violent and often painful destruction of life by man and animals is a result of the entry of sin into the world. It was not till after the Flood that God gave man permission to eat of the flesh of animals (see [Gen.] ch. 9:3). . . . That no animal of any kind ate flesh at the first may be inferred from the prophetic announcements in Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25, of the new earth state, where the cessation of sin and the complete transformation of the world into the kingdom of God are accompanied by the cessation of slaughter of any of God’s creatures.

“The clear teaching of Scripture that death entered the world through sin shows clearly that God originally intended that neither man nor animals should take life in order to provide themselves with food.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 217.

THINK IT THROUGH: Have I thanked God today for what nature provides at His hand and for what nature teaches me about His loving parental care?

Knowing God Through Nature

Part 3 — Nature Awaits a Brighter Day

“The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom. 8:19-22, NIV).

“The meaning of this passage has been debated at great length, and commentators have sought to draw fine lines of distinction between that which is and that which is not to be included under the term ‘creation.’ Some understand ‘the creation’ to refer to the whole world of nature, both animate and inanimate, exclusive of man. Others include also the world of humanity. Some think that humanity alone is under discussion. It is perhaps best not to limit the application, for certainly all nature, figuratively, and mankind, literally, groan under the curse and await a brighter day. It is not unusual in the Scriptures for the world of nature to be described *as if* capable of human consciousness (see Deut. 32:1; Isa. 35:1; Hosea 2:21, 22).”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 569. (Emphasis supplied.)

What does Genesis 3:17 indicate about the origin of the afflictions of nature?

Disobedience brought the wages of sin not only upon Adam and Eve but upon their environment. The first traces of ecological pollution dates back to that fateful day when sin first infected our planet. So real is sin’s fingerprint upon the face of nature that Paul portrays nature “groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom. 8:22, NIV).

Notice that sin has affected not only nature but also our ability to understand correctly what nature teaches.

“In losing the garments of holiness, they [Adam and Eve] lost the light that had illuminated nature. No longer could they read it aright. They could not discern the character of God in His works. So today man cannot of himself read aright the teaching of nature. Unless guided by divine wisdom, he exalts nature and the laws of nature above nature’s God. This is why mere human ideas in regard to science so often contradict the teaching of God’s word. But for those who receive the light of the life of Christ, nature is again illuminated. In the light shining from the cross, we can rightly interpret nature’s teaching.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 462.

Knowing God Through Nature

Part 4 — What Nature Foretells

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: . . . and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:29, 30).

The grandest event of all ages is sure to take place soon. Even nature testifies that the second coming of Christ is near. We await His advent in joyful expectation, with bated breath but calm assurance, as we read the signs in the most visible of all signboards, the heavens. The earth itself waxes “old as doth a garment” (Heb. 1:11). Environmental pollution is one sign that the world cannot continue much longer.

One day in the near future nature again will play its full role in revealing the Deity. “He comes again, Creator of the speeding spheres. The God of nature returns! Little wonder that the very elements will first herald and then accompany His triumphant descent! . . .

“At the time of Christ’s death the sun refused to shine on the scene. The earth quaked. All nature rebelled at what was done to its Creator. Would you not, then, expect that the God of the atom, the Christ who stilled the storm and quieted the waves with a word, would herald His return, the climax of human history, by manifestations in nature? Listen to this: ‘I will shew wonders in the heavens . . . before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.’ Joel 2:30, 31. And Jesus Himself said, ‘There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.’ Luke 21:25.”—George Vandeman, *Planet in Rebellion* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1960), p. 118.

In what spectacular way was Christ’s prophecy about the sun, moon, and stars fulfilled?

“According to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 306.

“In 1833, two years after Miller began to present in public the evidences of Christ’s soon coming, the last of the signs appeared which were promised by the Saviour as token of His second advent. . . . ‘The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.’ Revelation 6:13. This prophecy received a striking and impressive fulfillment in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars which has ever been recorded.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 333.

FURTHER STUDY: Matt. 24:14-35.

Knowing God Through Nature

Part 5' — Nature Symbolizes the Creator

“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 13:34, 35).

By definition, a Bible parable is a story or narrative placed alongside a certain spiritual truth for the purpose of comparison or drawing a lesson from that narrative. Just as Christ performed so-called “nature miracles” that is, miracles that demonstrate God’s power over the elements of nature (Matt. 8:23-27), so Christ told “nature parables.” A nature parable is based solidly on some element of nature.

Some of the major purposes why Christ used parables are that He sought to arouse interest, attention, and make lasting impressions; attempted to impart unwelcome truth without arousing prejudice; and did not want to aid the spies who stalked Him relentlessly. No doubt He also wanted to restore nature as an avenue for knowing God. Of the 40 recorded parables spoken by Christ at least 12 clearly deal with nature. Some of these include the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9), the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31, 32), and the new cloth and new wine (Mark 2:21, 22).

List below others that you can recall:

“Christ’s parables are links in the chain of truth that unites man with God, and earth with heaven.

“In His teaching from nature, Christ was speaking of the things which His own hands had made, and which had qualities and powers that He Himself had imparted. . . . To Adam and Eve in their Eden home nature was full of the knowledge of God, teeming with divine instruction. . . . The earth is now marred and defiled by sin. Yet even in its blighted state much that is beautiful remains. God’s object lessons are not obliterated; rightfully understood, nature speaks of her creator.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 17, 18.

Notice how God uses nature even in prophecy to reveal Himself and His plan for lives. Rev. 22:1, 2.

“The tree of life is a representation of the preserving care of Christ for His children.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 988.

Knowing God Through Nature

Part 6 — When Nature Is Renewed

“The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10, 13, NIV).

When nature’s Creator suffered on the cross at Calvary, nature itself metaphorically and actually shuddered at the scene (Matt. 27:45, 50-52). “The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight. Inanimate nature expressed sympathy with its insulted and dying Author. The sun refused to look upon the awful scene. Its full, bright rays were illuminating the earth at midday, when suddenly it seemed to be blotted out. Complete darkness, like a funeral pall, enveloped the cross.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

But Peter presents nature as undergoing a different type of experience. At Calvary nature witnessed an event of cruel shame. At the “day of the Lord,” nature will witness an event of judgment and drastic upheaval. By using the word “elements” in 2 Peter 3:10, the apostle no doubt means to indicate that everything in the earth will be “laid bare” or exposed for what it really is because of sin—worthless, temporary, obsolete.

What change will nature itself pass through as a result of Christ’s second coming? 2 Peter 3:12, 13; Rev. 21:1.

“In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called ‘a country.’ Hebrews 11:14-16. There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. . . . There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God’s people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:

Select some small, simple object from nature—a leaf, a feather, a weed, a fruit—any such thing will do.

Place this in a conspicuous place where you will see it frequently. Pray, “God, let this simple object teach me about You.” Give it your thoughtful attention five minutes each day for a week.

Write down insights as you find them. These may be shared with a children’s division as a “show and tell” presentation.



5

April 29 through May 5
Adult Lesson

Knowing God Through Christ

MEMORY TEXT: “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18).

To know Jesus Christ is to know God. Our response to Jesus is our response to God. It is said that a number of prominent literary men met in a clubroom in London, England, some years ago. Their conversation veered to a discussion of famous figures of the past, and one of them asked, “Gentlemen, what would we do if Milton were to enter this room?”

“Ah,” replied one of the circle, “we would give him such an ovation as might compensate for the late recognition accorded him by the men of his own day.”

“And if Shakespeare entered?” asked another.

“We would arise and crown him master of song,” came the answer.

“And if Jesus Christ were to enter?” asked still another.

“I think,” said Charles Lamb amid an intense silence, “we would all fall on our faces.”

While it is true and appropriate that if Jesus Christ visibly and actually were to appear before us today, we might respond in the way Charles Lamb stated, yet it also is true that when He did walk the earth as a man He came not to be worshiped but to make known what God is like. “As a personal being, God has revealed Himself in His Son. . . .

“Christ, the light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity, and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. . . .

“Christ came to teach human beings what God desires them to know. . . .

“ . . . He [God] sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 418, 419.

Christ Himself declared, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). We look at our Saviour this week in order to ascertain what His life and character reveal to us about God.

Part 1 — Christ Reveals the Father

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” (John 14:9).

The Father is revealed in the Son—Jesus. When Jesus, the Second Member of the Godhead, humbled Himself and became one with the human race for our salvation (Phil. 2:6-8), He taught us to call God “our Father” (Matt. 6:9) even as He, too, addressed God as His “Father” (John 17:1). “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2:16-18).

“In Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. . . . In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 25, 26.

Christ has united the human family to God in a way that no other created being can be united to Him. In doing so He has revealed the overwhelming love and condescension of God.

What clue do we find in John 3:16 as to how long God intends this arrangement to last? John 3:16.

“In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.’ John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. ‘Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.’ God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

THINK IT THROUGH: Recognizing Christ as my “Elder Brother” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329) and God as my Father, how may I maintain a constant, close relationship with God now that will be perpetuated throughout eternity?

FURTHER STUDY: Matt. 12:46-50; Eph. 3:14, 15.

Knowing God Through Christ

Part 2 — Christ Reveals the God of Salvation

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:9, 13).

The apostle Paul not only thought of Jesus as a mirror reflecting God’s interest in our salvation but also as being fully God and able to save sinners. Comforting beyond measure is the thought that the God of the universe also is our Substitute and Surety and is willing and able to redeem us through His atoning sacrifice. “God is approached through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, the only way through which He forgives sins. God cannot forgive sins at the expense of His justice, His holiness, and His truth. But He does forgive sins and that fully. There are no sins He will not forgive in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol.7, p. 912.

Can you recall a time in your experience when you called to the Lord to be saved as His disciples did in the tempest? (See Matt. 8:25.)

“Never did a soul utter that cry unheeded. . . .

“How often the disciples’ experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 335, 336.

Our gratitude for God’s saving grace should be like that of the old woman who explained to the famous preacher, Charles H. Spurgeon, “Ah, Mr. Spurgeon, if Jesus Christ does save me, He shall never hear the last of it!”

SEARCH AND LEARN: One of the outstanding Scripture portions that enables us to understand the blessing that comes from knowing God through Christ is 2 Peter 1:2-4. Study this passage and answer the following:

1. How are grace and peace *multiplied* in us? Verse 2.
2. What does Christ’s divine power provide for us? Verse 3.
3. To what does our knowledge of Him lead us? Verse 3.
4. What kind of promises are we given? Verse 4 (compare 3:13).
5. Of what do the promised gifts enable us to partake? Verse 4.

Knowing God Through Christ

Part 3 — Christ Reveals God's Forgiveness

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21, 22).

Inasmuch as the rabbis limited the exercise of forgiveness to three offenses, Peter considered himself going beyond the call of duty by extending it to seven, the number that signifies perfection. By “seventy times seven,” however, Christ did not intend to convey the impression that after we have exercised forgiveness a total of 490 times we have reached a God-given limit, but rather He intended that “we are never to become weary of forgiving” (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 243) just as God never wearies of forgiving us.

Contemplate once again the supreme example of the forgiving spirit that God provided us through Jesus Christ. Luke 23:33, 34.

“His mind passed from His own suffering to the sin of His persecutors, and the terrible retribution that would be theirs. No curses were called down upon the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No vengeance was invoked upon the priests and rulers, who were gloating over the accomplishment of their purpose. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness,—‘for they know not what they do.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 744.

How would you disprove the popular concept that forgiveness (which means to free the offender from guilt and to restore the personal relationship) implies that sin can be passed over carelessly? 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:10-13.

“Sin is not to be lightly regarded. The Lord has commanded us not to suffer wrong upon our brother. He says, ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.’ Luke 17:3. Sin is to be called by its right name, and is to be plainly laid out before the wrongdoer.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 248.

The only qualification God places on His forgiveness is that we must repent of and confess our sins. (See 2 Cor. 7:10; 1 John 1:9.)

THINK IT THROUGH: Have I found forgiveness for my sins through Christ? Have I been restored to a personal relationship with God?

FURTHER STUDY: *The Desire of Ages*, p. 568; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Lord's Prayer,” pp. 113-116.

Part 4 — Christ Reveals God's Friendliness

“There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage” (John 2:1, 2).

God's friendliness was revealed through Christ's sociability. But Christ's was friendliness with a purpose. Being social to save is God's will for His people today. To demonstrate His concern that we be friendly and sociable, Jesus began His public ministry not by doing some great work before the eyes of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Instead, he chose to add joy to a household wedding in a little Galilean village by turning water into wine, His first miracle. “Thus He showed His sympathy with men, and His desire to minister to their happiness. . . . He came forth to give to men the cup of blessing, by His benediction to hallow the relations of human life.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 144.

What do we learn from the obvious difference between Christ's friendliness toward all people and the attitudes shown by the Jewish leaders? Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34; Mark 2:15-17.

Jesus was not “gluttonous and a winebibber.” His friendship with people in this category led to charges of guilt by association.

“The ministry of Christ was in marked contrast to that of the Jewish elders. Their regard for tradition and formalism had destroyed all real freedom of thought or action. They lived in continual dread of defilement. To avoid contact with the ‘unclean,’ they kept aloof, not only from the Gentiles, but from the majority of their own people, seeking neither to benefit them nor to win their friendship. By dwelling constantly on these matters, they had dwarfed their minds and narrowed the orbit of their lives. Their example encouraged egotism and intolerance among all classes of the people. . . .

“Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 150, 151.

THINK IT THROUGH: What are the personal implications of the following statement?

“We are not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.

Knowing God Through Christ

Part 5 — Christ Demonstrates God's Great Love

“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8).

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” in order that we might obtain mercy (1 Tim. 1:15, 16). When we more than casually meditate on the closing scenes of Christ’s earthly trial and suffering, we reflect that He “was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

But in giving His all for us Jesus gave us a demonstration of the extent of God’s love for us. “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

In the light of the discussion above, what importance do you see in the statement in Romans 5:8 that “God commendeth his love toward us”?

The Greek word translated “commendeth” in Romans 5:8 can also be rendered “proves.” Thus the phrase can be translated “God gives proof of His love to us.”

Once when the Victorian English poet Alfred Lord Tennyson visited a woman known for her Christian faith, he asked her if anything of note was happening. The woman answered, “There is only one piece of news I know: Christ died for all mankind.” “Well,” replied Tennyson, “that is old news, and good news, and new news.” Indeed, the message of Christ, Calvary, and the cross—the gospel in verity—is God’s best news!

THINK IT THROUGH: What does the following statement mean to me and my quest to know more about God and Calvary’s atonement for my sins?

“Justice demanded the suffering of man; but Christ rendered the sufferings of a God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 913.

FURTHER STUDY: 1 Peter 3:18-22; *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 323, 324; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 333, 334.

Knowing God Through Christ

Part 6 — Christ Assures Us of God's Victory

“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

What a beautiful and amazing thought this text presents! Actually it summarizes the theme of the entire Bible. Is not victory through Jesus Christ the sum of the experience of God's people of the past, the present, and the future?

Victory implies enemies and battle. Specifically the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul refers to “death” as the “last enemy that shall be destroyed” (verse 26), and as that over which God's people are finally made victorious (verses 54, 55). Other enemies of God and His people include Satan himself (Matt. 13:39; Acts 13:10) and the sinfulness of the world (James 4:4). We Christians must often examine ourselves lest we become our own worst enemies (2 Cor. 13:5). Nevertheless, amidst all the problems and difficulties of life, including the last great onslaughts and acts of persecution by Babylon against the remnant church, ultimate victory is certain. As God's Word promises, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4, 5).

What is the significance to our experience of Jesus' indication that tension and struggle are inevitable in the life of those who follow God? Matt. 10:34; 16:24, 25.

Both the “sword” and the “cross” to which Jesus refers are symbols of spiritual warfare, pain, and sacrifice, inwardly and outwardly; but these come as no disheartening surprise to the born-again Christian. For he or she knows, as has been aptly stated: “Christ said not, ‘Thou shalt not be tempted, thou shalt not be travailed, thou shalt not be afflicted,’ but rather, ‘Thou shall not be overcome.’” If men hated Jesus for His goodness and purity, we certainly can expect the same kind of treatment He received when we manifest such traits by His grace. We “lose” our lives when we take up the cross of self-denial. But there is a happier picture—we “find” something much better, both in this world and in the perfect one soon to come.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Choose a story from the life of Christ. Select one that particularly illustrates a quality of the character of God. Review the story. Arrange an opportunity to visit with a young child under eight years of age. Offer to tell the story to the child. Tell the story with an emphasis on the quality of God that is described there.



6

May 6-12
Adult Lesson

Knowing God Through the Holy Spirit

MEMORY TEXT: “Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:24).

The work and power of the Holy Spirit evident in an individual’s life is one indication that the person knows God. Or to state it another way, our knowing God is directly related to and depends on whether we live the faith life in God under the Holy Spirit’s guidance. To John, having a knowledge of God meant that he and God were sustaining a covenant relationship with each other through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Such a relationship produces spiritual and moral qualities in the life-style.

It stands to reason, then, that if we come to know the Father through the Son, the Second Member of the Godhead, we can add more to our knowledge about Him through the Third Member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. One important reason for studying about God through what we can learn from and about the Spirit is found in Christ’s charge that you and I “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, NIV). As we see the Holy Spirit at work in our lives and in the lives of those about us, we realize that we are the continuing subjects of God’s love and care.

When the success of the evangelist Dwight L. Moody was brought to the attention of a group of clergymen, one of the ministers who was unimpressed commented, “Does Mr. Moody have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?” Another member of the group replied quietly, “No, but the Holy Spirit seems to have a monopoly on Mr. Moody.”

Our study of the Holy Spirit this week must keep in focus our need of a close, experiential relationship with the Spirit. May we grow in our knowledge of God through a better comprehension of the Third Member of the Godhead and through His guidance in understanding the Scriptures; but may we do more. May we be vessels filled by His influence. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

Knowing God Through the Holy Spirit

Part 1 — God's Gift of Love

“Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

God so loved us that He not only gave His Son Jesus (John 3:16), but He also gave us His divine ally and associate, the Holy Spirit. Not only is it true that Christ Himself died on Calvary's cross for our sins, but it also is true that God the Father and God the Son recognized that further supportive aid was necessary to enable us to appreciate, love, and respond to Christ's sacrifice.

“The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He [Jesus] could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and *without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail*. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671. (Emphasis supplied.)

What are some of the conditions for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38.

Notice the steps the disciples took that led to Pentecost:

1. “As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief.”
2. “As they meditated upon His [Jesus'] pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ's character.”
3. “The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ.”
4. “Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. They drew nearer and nearer to God.”
5. “These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving.”
6. “They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls.”
7. “In obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift, and in heaven Christ added His intercession. He claimed the gift of the Spirit, that He might pour it upon His people.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 36, 37.

Knowing God Through the Holy Spirit

Part 2 — God Our Comforter

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).

A famous preacher’s father was such a quiet man that his mother would often ask the father, “Why don’t you say something?” The father would always answer, “What shall I say?” Yet, after the father died, the mother would comment again and again that she really missed him. “Why,” inquired the son, “why do you now say you miss him? When he was alive, you always remarked that he never said anything—he was so quiet.” The mother responded, “Yes, he was so quiet. But I always knew he was there.” The Spirit is that “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12) saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isa. 30:21). Most of the time we may not hear a voice as such at all; nevertheless, the Saviour’s promise of the Spirit’s presence assures us, and we take courage from knowing that He is always there.

What is the significance of the word *comforter*? John 14:26.

The Greek word used only by John in the New Testament and translated “Comforter” is *paraklētōs*, which means “one called to be beside.” This same Greek word is translated “advocate” in 1 John 2:1, where it refers to Jesus Christ. Because of His desire to see us comforted, both the Spirit and Christ were appointed by God to be our “Comforter” and “Advocate.”

“God did not deem the principle of salvation complete while invested only with His own love. By His appointment He has placed at His altar an Advocate clothed with our nature. As our Intercessor, His office work is to introduce us to God as His sons and daughters. Christ intercedes in behalf of those who have received Him. To them He gives power, by virtue of His own merits, to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. And the Father demonstrates His infinite love for Christ, who paid our ransom with His blood, by receiving and welcoming Christ’s friends as His friends. . . .

“As Christ intercedes in our behalf, the Father lays open all the treasures of His grace for our appropriation, to be enjoyed and to be communicated to others.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 363, 364.

The Spirit ministers to us on earth to convict us of sin (John 16:8). Christ ministers for us in heaven at the Father’s side when we repent of sin. The Holy Spirit then abides in us to enable us to overcome sin (Rom. 8:1-4). God leaves no stone unturned that we may come unto a saving knowledge of and into a close covenant relationship with Him.

FURTHER STUDY: John 14:1-31; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 670-672.

Knowing God Through the Holy Spirit

Part 3 — God Our Helper

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

The Revised Standard Version translates this verse: “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; . . . but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.” Taken in the setting of his earlier verses in Romans chapter 8, Paul indicates that both nature and we Christians groan and sigh because of sin. But we can take hope, for the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspeakable and inexpressible groans. Such intimate and loving concern on the part of the Spirit in our behalf reminds us that “we need to realize that the Holy Spirit . . . is as much a person as God is a person. . . .

“The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 616, 617.

It also is important to recognize that, in helping us, that the Spirit does not necessarily remove our infirmities and weaknesses but rather provides strength to bear or overcome them (2 Cor. 12:8-10).

What meaning do you see in the word translated “helpeth” in Romans 8:26?

Literally it means “to take hold of together, facing.” Do you see the picture? It is that of the Holy Spirit’s standing on one side of our burden and we standing on the other side. We face each other while we lift the burden together—just as do two furniture movers bearing a heavy piece of furniture to a van. “The Holy Spirit is an effective helper in restoring the image of God in the human soul.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 67.

THINK IT THROUGH: “We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people ‘to will and to do of His good pleasure.’ Phil. 2:13. But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

Knowing God Through the Holy Spirit

Part 4 — God's Gifts Through the Spirit—1

"The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:7).

From the New English Bible comes this translation: "In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose." Later on in this twelfth chapter Paul makes it clear that as members of Christ's body we with our various talents and abilities are to serve the purposes of the kingdom of God.

How and why does the Bible suggest that God gives to one person more or fewer abilities than to another person? 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Matt. 25:14-30.

"The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable [of the ten talents]. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

Christ's Object Lessons draws our attention to some of the common abilities that most people share:

1. "*Mental faculties*": "God requires the training of the mental faculties. He designs that His servants shall possess more intelligence and clearer discernment than the worldling, and He is displeased with those who are too careless or too indolent to become efficient, well-informed workers."—Page 333.

2. "*Speech*": "Of all the gifts we have received from God, none is capable of being a greater blessing than this."—Page 335.

3. "*Influence*": "It is God's purpose that each shall feel himself necessary to others' welfare, and seek to promote their happiness."—Page 339.

4. "*Time*": "Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time."—Page 342.

5. "*Health*": "Health is a blessing of which few appreciate the value; yet upon it the efficiency of our mental and physical powers largely depends."—Page 346.

6. "*Strength*": "This covers the full, intelligent use of the physical powers."—Page 348.

7. "*Money*": "Our money has not been given to us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards, we are to use it for the honor and glory of God."—Page 351.

THINK IT THROUGH: Do I know what my natural and spiritual talents—both original and acquired—are, and do I give God the credit for all?

Knowing God Through the Holy Spirit

Part 5 — God’s Gifts Through the Spirit—2

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Cor. 12:1).

Compare the way that Paul lists the various spiritual gifts in the passages indicated in the chart:

Rom. 12:6-8	Eph. 4:7-11	1 Cor. 12:4-11	1 Cor. 12:28-31	1 Cor. 13:1-3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prophecy 2. Ministry 3. Teaching 4. Exhorting 5. Giving 6. Ruling 7. Showing mercy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apostles 2. Prophets 3. Evangelists 4. Pastors-Teachers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wisdom 2. Knowledge 3. Faith 4. Healing 5. Miracles 6. Prophecy 7. Discerning spirits 8. Tongues 9. Interpretation of tongues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apostles 2. Prophets 3. Teachers 4. Miracles 5. Healings 6. Helps 7. Governments 8. Tongues 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Martyrdom 2. Sacrifice 3. Faith 4. Knowledge 5. Prophecy 6. Tongues (Listed in order of importance rather than that given in text.)

The Greek in Ephesians 4:11 can be understood as combining pastors and teachers into one gift rather than two. That is why it is hyphenated in the second list.

But more important notice that the lists vary, apparently due to different reasons that Paul had in mind for listing the gifts in each particular passage. In Romans 12 he seems to be dealing with *usefulness*. In Ephesians 4 there seems to be a ranking of *importance*. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 he stresses the *communication* factor involved, but later in the same chapter he apparently ranks the gifts in order of *importance* again, this time giving a more extended list and including “tongues,” which he ranks at the bottom as he does in 1 Corinthians 13, where he deals with *lasting effects* in an increasing order of importance (the opposite of that shown on the chart). In fact, every time tongues is mentioned, it is at the bottom of the list. Also note that this gift is only mentioned by Paul in dealing with the church at Corinth.

“The gifts of the Spirit are promised to every believer according to his need for the Lord’s work. The promise is just as strong and trustworthy now as in the days of the apostles.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 823.

Knowing God Through the Holy Spirit

Part 6 — Resisting the Spirit

“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

While being taught the quality of the reformed life, the Ephesian Christians are warned that they must “not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, for that Spirit is the seal with which you were marked for the day of our final liberation” (Eph. 4:30, NEB). Here the personality of the Holy Spirit is clearly implied, for only *persons* can be grieved or pained or saddened. Here, too, the work of the Spirit that enables us to learn of God is emphasized. It is He whose work in us seals and approves us for sonship and daughtership and steers us through the fearful times of stress that are prophesied to precede the second coming of Christ, our final liberation. (See Rev. 7:2-4; Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 968-970.)

What is meant by grieving the Spirit, and how do people commit such an act? Matt. 12:31.

“Sinning against” and “blaspheming against” the Holy Ghost are other expressions by which the act of grieving the Spirit is known. Believers at Thessalonica were counseled to “quench not the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19). David prayed, “Take not thy holy spirit from me” (Ps. 51:11).

“It is not that God sends out a decree that man shall not be saved. He does not throw a darkness before the eyes which cannot be penetrated. But man at first resists a motion of the Spirit of God, and, having once resisted, it is less difficult to do so the second time, less the third, and far less the fourth. Then comes the harvest to be reaped from the seed of unbelief and resistance.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 120.

“No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. . . . [It] is the sin of the persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1093.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS: Am I willing to allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in me and make it possible for me to become better acquainted with God and His love for me?

• Review the memory text, 1 John 3:24. The Lesson Introduction suggests that our knowing God is related to having the Holy Spirit operative in the life. This week choose another member of your class. Encourage that member by an affirmation of his or her witness. Carefully evaluate this person’s life and experience. List the evidences you notice that give witness of the Holy Spirit’s presence. Give a positive affirmation of this person in class. An appropriate formula might be: “I have been blessed as I have seen in Brother (Sister) _____’s life an indication of the Holy Spirit at work. I have noticed that _____.”



7

May 13-19
Adult Lesson

Knowing God Through His Law

MEMORY TEXT: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Ps. 19:7-9).

As a mirror flashes back an image, God’s moral law reflects His divine character. “In the law every specification is the character of the infinite God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1104. The law of God transcribes His character. His character validates His law. “God’s law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but holiness made known. It is a code of principles expressing mercy, goodness, and love. It represents to fallen humanity the character of God, and states plainly the whole duty of man.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 1104, 1105.

In Psalm 19:7-9 David speaks of God’s glory as seen in His law. Employing the poetic structure known as Hebrew parallelism, the psalmist refers to God’s “law” also by several other names such as “testimony,” “statutes,” and “commandment.” As David describes the law as “perfect,” “sure,” “right,” “pure,” “clean,” and “true,” we learn something of God’s character.

To misunderstand the law of God is to misunderstand God Himself. Persistent misunderstanding leads to serious misconceptions. This is evident in our world today where “multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 177.

In order for us to understand Him more fully, God also has expressed Himself through other laws such as natural laws, civil laws, health laws, and ceremonial laws. Our attention this week, however, focuses on the moral law of God. What do the Ten Commandments teach us about God, His character, and His dealings with humankind? May each of us approach the Almighty this week with the prayer, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps. 119:18).

Knowing God Through His Law

Part 1 — Righteousness

“By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20).

Remember how some evangelists have illustrated the purpose of the law? With a mirror before them they would look into it to see a prearranged dirty spot on themselves or their clothes. Then they would ask, “What made it possible for me to discover this spot?” The obvious answer, of course, was “the mirror.” Another question followed, “Now that the mirror has revealed the stain, can it also clean the spot?” To which the answer invariably rang out, “No, no!” The point was clear. The mirror revealed the stain but could not cleanse it. So it is with the law. The law reveals sin. Thus we can expect only condemnation from the law until we have been cleansed by Christ.

How do we find cleansing and deliverance from sins for which the law condemns us? Rom. 8:1-4.

We must not take lightly or disdain as a series of negative prohibitions the fact that the law reveals sin and condemns the sinner. God’s law performs an essential purpose in the plan of salvation by pointing out and defining the sinner’s needs. Awareness of need precedes remedy. The remedy for sinners is Jesus Christ.

But the law serves more than a negative purpose. It also points out righteousness, both God’s and ours when we have been cleansed by Jesus. When understood in its positive aspect, the law portrays the clearest picture available both of the character of God and what He makes it possible for us to become through His grace.

What positive aspects of God’s character do you find in the following prohibitions?

1. “Thou shalt not kill” _____
2. “Thou shalt not steal” _____
3. “Thou shalt not covet” _____

As the psalmist declares, “Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne” (Ps. 97:2). “Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous” (Ps. 119:137, 138).

FURTHER STUDY: 1 John 3:4; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

Knowing God Through His Law

Part 2 — Eternity

“God spake all these words saying, . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:1-3).

The commandments did not come into being at Sinai. Rather, they were first introduced there in written form. In the same way that the Lamb was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), the law of God predated our world. “The law of God existed before the creation of man or else Adam could not have sinned. After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1104. Furthermore, “the angels were governed by it [the law]. Satan fell because he transgressed the principles of God’s government. After Adam and Eve were created, God made known to them His law. It was not then written, but was rehearsed to them by Jehovah.”—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 80. Obviously God’s laws have existed as long as God and the universe have existed—from eternity. The fact that they were arranged and expressed to meet the fallen human condition after Adam’s transgression does not in any way suggest that the eternal principles that express the character of God were changed.

Indicate after each of the following texts what the passage contributes to our understanding of the eternity of God and the viewpoint from which He ordains His laws:

- 1. Deut. 33:27 _____
- 2. Ps. 90:2 _____
- 3. Ps. 119:89-91 _____
- 4. Ps. 145:13 _____
- 5. Ps. 147:5 _____
- 6. Eph. 3:10, 11 _____
- 7. 1 Tim. 1:17 _____

Human laws are developed from a limited human viewpoint. Because of that they are constantly changed. But the eternal nature of God’s laws indicate the eternal viewpoint behind them. “Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 273.

Knowing God Through His Law

Part 3 — Goodness

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12).

The miraculous aspects of Christ’s birth were contrary to the laws of life. His death and resurrection were contrary to the laws of death. However, His life corresponded with the moral law of God which He Himself proclaimed at Sinai. He demonstrated in living color the goodness of God expressed in His law. “The Saviour’s life of obedience maintained the claims of the law; it proved that the law could be kept in humanity, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop. All who obey as He did are likewise declaring that the law is ‘holy, and just, and good.’ Rom. 7:12.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 309.

In what specific way did Christ fulfill the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 42:21 that the Lord would “magnify the law, and make it honourable”? Matt. 5:17-48; 1 John 2:6.

“In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ magnified the law by applying its principles to the motives of the heart as well as to the outward acts. . . . Christ’s life of perfect compliance with every requirement of the law confirmed all that He proclaimed concerning it.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 257.

By His example as well as His teachings Jesus taught us how to be law abiding without being legalistic, and He broadened the prevailing view of God’s commands beyond the letter to embrace the spirit as well. Several times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus used the clause “But I say unto you” (Matt. 5:21-44) to punctuate His concern that life be lived in the freedom, joy, and love of obedience to God’s revealed will. “In love, with a desire to elevate and ennoble us, God provided for us a standard of obedience. . . . This law reveals the whole duty of the human family; the first four precepts define our duty to God, and the last six our duty to man.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 80.

“God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

Indicate below how the psalmist testifies in Psalm 119 to the goodness of God and His law:

Verse 24 _____

Verse 39 _____

Verses 68-72 _____

Verse 129 _____

Knowing God Through His Law

Part 4 — Changelessness

“He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws” (Dan. 7:25).

God says, “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). If, therefore, His law transcribes His character, then His law also must be changeless. But humans and human laws do change. Probably because of this, human hands have dared to attempt to change that which cannot be changed.

Daniel 7 is one of the chapters where the prophet is writing in Aramaic. The word translated “laws” (7:25) in our King James Version of the Bible might better be rendered “law” since its Aramaic parallel is singular rather than plural. Many Bible students see in the following translations a more explicit and direct reference to God’s Ten Commandment law: “and shall think to change the times and *the law*” (RSV); “will intend to make alterations in times and *in law*” (NASB).

How has the “little horn” power portrayed in Daniel’s prophecy ventured to effect a change in the moral law of God? Dan. 7:20-25.

The “little horn” is identified as the papacy. “The papacy has attempted to change the law of God. The second commandment, forbidding image worship, has been dropped from the law, and the fourth commandment has been so changed as to authorize the observance of the first instead of the seventh day as the Sabbath. . . . The change in the fourth commandment exactly fulfills the prophecy [Dan. 7:25].”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 446.

Many believe that Christ did away with the fourth commandment. How can we demonstrate from the Bible that He did not? Matt. 5:17-19; Luke 23:56 to 24:1.

“On the mount He declared that not the smallest iota [letter] should pass from the law till all things should be accomplished—all things that concern the human race, all that relates to the plan of redemption. He does not teach that the law is ever to be abrogated, but He fixes the eye upon the utmost verge of man’s horizon and assures us that until this point is reached the law will retain its authority so that none may suppose it was His mission to abolish the precepts of the law. So long as heaven and earth continue, the holy principles of God’s law will remain.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 49, 50.

FURTHER STUDY: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “Spirituality of the Law” (Matt. 5:17-19), pp. 5-52.

Knowing God Through His Law

Part 5 — Grace

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).

By definition, the law is a code of conduct, a standard of behavior. On the other hand, the word *grace* is used to describe a gift or favor that is unearned, unmerited, and undeserved. The *law* pinpoints our sins and informs us that we need righteousness. God’s grace, provided through the gift of Christ on our behalf, makes us righteous. Faith accepts God’s gift. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). “We have access by faith into this grace” (Rom. 5:2). That we might receive or become that which the law requires, grace (God’s hand) reaches earthward. Faith (our hand) reaches up to lay hold on God’s hand. As Paul often declares, the saving power is nothing other than God’s grace acting in our behalf. In this way the law helps point to and reveal the grace of God to us.

What balanced understanding are Christians to have regarding the relationship of law and grace? Rom. 3:31; 5:20, 21; Gal. 5:6.

“There are two errors against which the children of God—particularly those who have just come to trust in His grace—especially need to guard. The first . . . is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy.

“The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.

“But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 59, 60.

Grace is given to accomplish in us that which it is impossible for us to achieve on our own. It abounds to the extent that it exceeds our expectations. (See Eph. 2:7; 3:20.) It includes all of God’s activity involved in restoring us to the image of God and to obedience to His law. Paul credits grace with giving him power to live and accomplish what God wanted him to do (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9).

FURTHER STUDY: Romans 5; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 317.

Knowing God Through His Law

Part 6 — Sharer of His Love

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them” (Heb. 10:16).

Apparently drawing from the prophet Jeremiah (31:33) and surely employing the words “heart” and “mind” as synonyms for the seat of our emotions and intelligence, the writer of Hebrews reminds us that God’s laws are part and parcel of our covenant relationship with Him. Both here (10:16) and in Hebrews 8:10 God is pictured as taking the divine initiative to render His laws our allies, not our enemies.

“At Mt. Sinai the Lord wrote His laws on tables of stone (Deut. 4:13), and in a book (ch. 31:24, 26). He intended that these laws should also be written on the hearts of the people. But the Israelites were content to regard these statutes simply as an external code and their observance a matter of outward compliance. God did not intend that His laws should be thus regarded. He offered His people the experience of a new heart . . . , but they were content with only an external religion. Under the new covenant men’s hearts and minds are changed. . . . Men do right, not by their own strength, but because Christ dwells in the heart, living out His life in the believer. . . . They are born of the Spirit and bear fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). The change can be effected only by divine power. Only God can ‘put’ His law in the hearts of His followers, though, of course, not without man’s consent and cooperation (Rev. 22:17; cf. MB 142).”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 446.

Dr. F. W. Robertson, the famous nineteenth-century preacher of Brighton, England, is reputed to have been once approached by a woman who objected to any ritual in church service. “I hear you are introducing some dreadful innovations in your church service,” she stated. “Indeed,” he replied, “but what innovations have we introduced?” “Oh,” said she, “I heard that you *read* the commandments in your service.” “Is that all you heard?” responded Dr. Robertson. “We have introduced a far greater innovation than that. We try to *keep* the commandments.”

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Write the numbers 1 to 10 down on a paper. Let these represent the Ten Commandments. Then do a personal evaluation with each one. Ask yourself, Do I respond to a situation involving this commandment quickly and naturally? Or do I hesitate, perhaps even rationalize a bit, and finally obey only because it is the proper thing to do? Grade yourself after each number by “always,” “sometimes,” “seldom,” or “very seldom.”

Chose one of the commandments for which obedience does not come easily. Then seek God’s help in coming into harmony with its principles according to His promise.



8

May 20-26
Adult Lesson

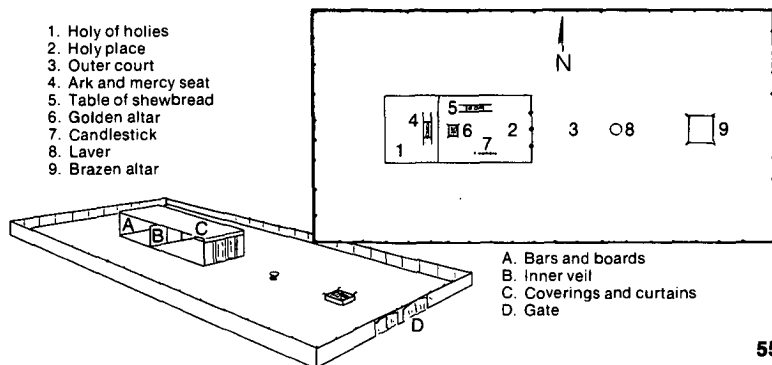
Knowing God Through the Sanctuary

MEMORY TEXT: "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" (Ps. 77:13).

We improve our knowledge of God by relating positively to whatever way He chooses to reveal and represent His presence. God's sanctuary—His dwelling place—is located wherever His people are. When Abel presented his sacrificial offering to God (Gen. 4:4), he did so long before a physical tabernacle or sanctuary existed. Yet God was as verily present with Adam's younger son as He was later on with Moses when the prophet led out in building the first visible physical tabernacle.

God's way, says the psalmist, "is in the sanctuary." Inasmuch as the Hebrew word for *sanctuary* means "holiness" or "holy place," some Bible versions have chosen alternate translations of Psalm 77:13 as follows: "Thy way, O God, is holy" (RSV), or "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary [in holiness, away from sin and guilt]" (Amplified Bible). "If the KJV translation 'in the sanctuary' is accepted, the verse may be interpreted to mean that God's way is best understood in the place where He is worshiped, and from the principles expounded there."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 812. The physical sanctuary and its services provide a means of knowing God better.

Because the sanctuary points to a moral attribute of God—holiness—it becomes another excellent medium through which we may become better acquainted with our Maker.



Knowing God Through the Sanctuary

Part 1 — Knowing That He Dwells With Us

“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8).

Our caring God always provides a way for His people to understand Him better. Even before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8) God planned for humans, whom He foresaw would be separated from Him by sin, to be able to know Him. The earthly sanctuary qualifies as another of God’s means of teaching us about Him.

One lesson we learn from the sanctuary is that God does not want to remain separated—He longs to dwell with and in us.

In what sense do we become temples for God to dwell in? 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20.

Are not our bodies the most precious of all earthly temples? The *earthly* tabernacle was a provision made to demonstrate God’s method of dealing with the sin problem and symbolizes the direct contact we now have through our Mediator, Jesus, to the God who makes His abiding place with us. “From eternal ages it was God’s purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

As human temples of our Lord, we should practice His presence—that is, living moment by moment with reference to His nearness and love.

“I worshipped Him [God] the oftenest that I could, keeping my mind in His holy presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from Him. . . . Such has been my common practice ever since I entered in religion; and though I have done it very imperfectly, yet I have found great advantages by it. These, I well know, are to be imputed to the mere mercy and goodness of God, because we can do nothing without Him, and I still less than any. But when we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy presence, and set Him always before us, . . . it also begets in us a holy freedom.”—Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Flaming H. Revell Company, 1958), pp. 33, 34.

PERSONAL APPLICATION: Am I “practicing the presence of God”?

- Have I yielded myself to the Holy Spirit to fill me “with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19)?
- Am I willing for Christ to “cast out the evil throning that have taken possession of the heart” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161)?

Knowing God Through the Sanctuary

Part 2 — Knowing the Lamb

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Although the term "Lamb of God" does not occur in the Old Testament, John the Baptist's usage stems from the words of Isaiah, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa. 53:7). The lamb used in the sacrificial service typified God's sacrifice for us through the Second Person of the Godhead. The sacrifice presented in the sanctuary was to be "without blemish." Peter applies this to Christ whose sinless life and purity was "as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

"Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be 'without blemish.' Exodus 12:5. The priests were to examine all animals brought as a sacrifice, and were to reject every one in which a defect was discovered. Only an offering 'without blemish' could be a symbol of His [Christ's] perfect purity."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 352.

What aspects of Christ's nature were prefigured in the symbol of the lamb? Isa. 53:7. (See also Phil. 2:5-8.)

"As the people looked upon Him, they saw a face where divine compassion was blended with conscious power. Every glance of the eye, every feature of the countenance, was marked with humility, and expressive of unutterable love. He seemed to be surrounded by an atmosphere of spiritual influence. While His manners were gentle and unassuming, He impressed men with a sense of power that was hidden, yet could not be wholly concealed. Was this the One for whom Israel had so long waited?

"Jesus came in poverty and humiliation, that He might be our example as well as our Redeemer, If He had appeared with kingly pomp, how could He have taught humility? how could He have presented such cutting truths as in the Sermon on the Mount? Where would have been the hope of the lowly in life had Jesus come to dwell as a king among men?"—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 137, 138.

The courtyard of the sanctuary represents this earth where the drama of sin and salvation takes place. The altar in the courtyard can thus be said to represent Calvary where Christ died as our sin offering. In another sense the altar of burnt offering typifies God's work connected with the destruction of sin—the work of final judgment that will take place as a consequence of Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

Knowing God Through the Sanctuary

Part 3 — Knowing What the Furniture Represents

“A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread. . . . Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant” (Heb. 9:2-4, NIV).

Actually, the altar of incense was located physically in the first apartment (Ex. 30:6). Hebrews 9:4 does not indicate that it stood in the second apartment, but that it was associated with it. “The connection between the altar and the most holy place here indicated may be that its function was closely connected with the most holy place. The incense offered daily on this altar was directed to the mercy seat in the most holy.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 449.

SEARCH AND LEARN:

Study the following background information; then, in the box provided, list what you understand the sanctuary furniture to represent:

1. **The Table of Showbread**—Ex. 25:23-30; John 6:33-35, 57, 63.

“The showbread . . . taught that man was wholly dependent upon God for both temporal and spiritual food, and that both alike come to us through the One who ‘ever liveth to make intercession’ for us before the Father.”—S. N. Haskell, *The Cross and its Shadow* (South Lancaster, Mass: The Bible Training School, 1914), p. 56.

2. **The Golden Candlestick**—Ex. 25:31-37; John 1:4, 9; 8:12.

3. **The Altar of Incense**—Ex. 30:1-10; Rev. 8:3, 4.

“The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 353.

4. **The Ark of the Covenant**—Ex. 25:10-22; Deut. 10:1-5; Rev. 11:18, 19.

“The law of God, . . . pronounced death upon the transgressor; but above the law was the mercy seat, upon which the presence of God was revealed, and from which, by virtue of the atonement, pardon was granted to the repentant sinner. Thus in the work of Christ for our redemption, symbolized by the sanctuary service, ‘mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ Psalm 85:10.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 349.

Item of Furniture	What It Represents
Table of Showbread	
Golden Candlestick	
Altar of Incense	
Ark of the Covenant	

Knowing God Through the Sanctuary

Part 4 — Knowing Our Great High Priest

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Heb. 4:14).

The services in the earthly sanctuary necessitated the services of several courses of priests. There was no way one priest could keep up with all the work. But the combined work of all the priests during one year’s time pointed forward to the work of Christ as our High Priest in heaven. Their yearly work was divided into two phases—the regular daily services and the culminating work on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest went into the most holy place.

When Jesus returned to heaven He began His work in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. On the antitypical Day of Atonement our great High Priest began the second phase of His work that takes place in the most holy place. His work there will culminate with the blotting out of the sins of the truly penitent, freeing the sanctuary from the record of sin.

“The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.

“In the great day of final award, the dead are to be ‘judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.’ Revelation 20:12. Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 357, 358.

What significance did Christ’s cry on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), have to the services of the earthly temple?

“Type . . . met antitype in the death of God’s Son. . . . The way into the holiest is laid open. . . . No longer need sinful, sorrowing humanity await the coming of the high priest. Henceforth the Saviour was to officiate as priest and advocate in the heavens of heavens. . . . There is now an end to all sacrifices and offerings for sin. The Son of God is come according to His word, ‘Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.’ ‘By His own blood’ He entereth ‘in once into the holy place, having obtained redemption for us.’ Heb. 10:7; 9:12.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 757.

In contrast to the multiple sacrificial offerings of the ancient earthly sanctuary, why was it necessary for Christ to offer Himself only once? Heb. 9:24-28.

Knowing God Through the Sanctuary

Part 5 — Knowing About God’s Work of Cleansing — 1

“He said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Dan. 8:14).

The Hebrew word translated “cleansed” in the King James Version of Daniel 8:14 can also mean “to justify,” “to vindicate,” “to restore to its rightful place,” or “to make victorious.” The Hebrew word *nitsdaq* in Daniel occurs only once in Scripture. Therefore its meaning is subject to a variety of interpretations. While its root *sadaq* is a different word from that which Moses used for cleansing (*taher*) the sanctuary in Leviticus 16:19, 30, both of the root words *sadaq* and *taher* are placed together in parallel relationship by usages in the writings of other Old Testament prophets (Job 17:9; Ps. 19:9; Eccl. 9:2). This leads many to consider these two Hebrew words practically synonymous in application. Thus, the translations that render the sanctuary “cleansed” in Daniel 8:14 (KJV) and “restored” in Daniel 8:14 (RSV) might be understood as offering no serious contradiction.

Ellen White specifically applies Daniel 8:14 to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary:

“As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But before this can be accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation—a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people; for when He comes, his reward is with Him.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 421, 422.

In fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy, the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary began in 1844 and still is being carried on today.

The final removal of all sin comes at the end of the millennium, “When the high priest, by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, removed the sins from the sanctuary, he placed them upon the scapegoat. When Christ, by virtue of His own blood, removes the sins of His people from the heavenly sanctuary at the close of His ministration, He will place them upon Satan, who, in the execution of the judgment, must bear the final penalty.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 422.

FURTHER STUDY: 1 John 1:9; Rev. 14:6, 7; *The Great Controversy*, p. 424.

Knowing God Through the Sanctuary

Part 6 — Knowing About God's Work of Cleansing — 2

“Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:12, 13).

“Slowly descending the steps, and raising the scourge of cords gathered up on entering the enclosure, He [Jesus] bids the bargaining company depart from the precincts of the temple. . . . Jesus does not smite them with the whip of cords, but in His hands that simple scourge seems terrible as a flaming sword. . . .

“ . . . God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple. God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin,—from . . . the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 158-161.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:

- In this lesson I have learned that the God of holiness longs to dwell in my heart. How do I respond to His desire, and what will it mean to my life-style?
- What have I learned in this lesson about righteousness by faith in Christ?
- As I contemplate the work of the investigative judgment in heaven am I moved with an urgency to share with those about me the fact that the hour of judgment has come?

APPLICATION EXERCISE:

Because periodically in Adventist history the doctrine of the sanctuary has been challenged as inappropriate, we need to spend more time in studying it than we do.

Schedule a fifteen-minute period sometime on Tuesday or Wednesday of next week. Use that time to review the matter studied in class tomorrow. As you study prepare a list of the qualities and characteristics of God that are revealed to you in the Bible's presentation of the sanctuary and its services.

Some of these might be shared with your class the following Sabbath in order to keep this topic alive.



9

May 27 to June 2
Adult Lesson

Knowing God Through the Family

MEMORY TEXT: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31, 32).

Writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul develops the theme of unity in Christ. Making use of the recurring expression “in Christ” as his key phrase throughout the book, he appeals to the church at Ephesus composed of Jews and Gentiles, Asiatics and Europeans, slaves and freemen. He calls them to oneness in the family unit and in the church.

God established the first family and first home in Eden and ordained that both should serve as a model for the descendants of Adam and Eve. Because of that the Christian family forms another window through which we look at and learn more about God. Because marriage symbolizes the relationship of God to His people and Christ to His church, we should have an elevated concept of this relationship.

“God would have our families symbols of the family in heaven. Let parents and children bear this in mind every day, relating themselves to one another as members of the family of God. Then their lives will be of such a character as to give to the world an object lesson of what families who love God and keep His commandments may be. Christ will be glorified; His peace and grace and love will pervade the family like a precious perfume.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 17.



H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS

Knowing God Through the Family

Part 1 — Wives

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22).

Before Paul gave the counsel to wives to submit to their husbands he already had admonished all persons to submit “one to another” (verse 21). Paul’s word translated “submit” is the Greek term that means “to obey,” “to be subject,” “to give way,” and “to voluntarily yield in love” and is practiced toward persons worthy of respect such as a *spouse* (Eph. 5:21, 22), a *parent* (Luke 2:51), a *master* (Titus 2:9); and toward *secular authorities* (Rom. 13:1), *church officials* (1 Peter 5:5); and to *God* (Heb. 12:9) and *Christ* (Eph. 5:24).

“The ethics of Christian relationships within the family are clear when once it is seen that difference and subordination do *not* in any sense imply *inferiority*. The submission enjoined upon the wife is of the kind that can be given *only between equals*, not a servile obedience, but a voluntary submission in the respects in which the man was qualified by his Maker to be head (cf. Gen. 3:16). Every community must, for purposes of organization and existence, have a head. Even in our free age of insistence on the equality of men and women, the man who does not assume the leadership of his family in love is regarded with something akin to contempt by men and women alike. This *principle* of submission is permanent, but its *specific application* may vary from age to age according to custom and *social consciousness*.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1036. (Italics supplied.)

Summarize the change that takes place in loyalties when a person marries. Matt. 19:5, 6.

The commitment to oneness of marriage steers two persons to grow toward mutual understanding of and commitment to goals, values, sex, customs, likes, and dislikes. Regarding the wife’s individuality, Ellen White says, “Her individuality cannot be merged into that of her husband, for she is the purchase of Christ. It is a mistake to imagine that with blind devotion she is to do exactly as her husband says in all things, when she knows that in so doing, injury would be worked for her body and her spirit, which have been ransomed from the slavery of Satan.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 116.

THINK IT THROUGH: What do these human ties teach us about our relationship with God? Particularly, what happens to our individuality when we submit to Him?

FURTHER STUDY: Prov. 31:10-31.

Knowing God Through the Family

Part 2 — Husbands

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Eph. 5:25, 28).

“The husband is the *house-band* of the home treasures, binding by his strong, earnest, devoted affection the members of the household, mother and children, together in the strongest bonds of union.

“His name, ‘*house-band*,’ is the true definition of husband. . . . I saw that but few fathers realize their responsibility.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 211. (Emphasis supplied.)

“We must have the Spirit of God, or we can never have harmony in the home. The wife, if she has the spirit of Christ, will be careful of her words; she will control her spirit, she will be submissive, and yet will not feel that she is a bondslave, but a companion to her husband. If the husband is a servant of God, he will not lord it over his wife; he will not be arbitrary and exacting. We cannot cherish home affection with too much care; for the home, if the Spirit of the Lord dwells there, is a type of heaven. . . . If one errs, the other will exercise Christlike forbearance and not draw coldly away.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 118.

As has been so aptly stated: Man is superior to woman, as man; and woman is superior to man, as woman; both of them together are superior to either one of them separately.

SEARCH AND LEARN:

• What do we learn about the Deity from the husband-wife relationship discussed in Ephesians 5:25-33?

• What do we learn about the Deity from the husband-wife illustration discussed in Isaiah 54:5-8?

A. In regard to ancient Israel (See also Jer. 3:1-11; Hosea 2:5, 13; 3:1-5.):

B. In regard to the world as a whole:

Knowing God Through the Family

Part 3 — Non-Christian Mate

“Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold the chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1 Peter 3:1, 2).

“It was not uncommon for a wife to accept the truth in Jesus Christ and for her husband to reject it and to set himself in opposition to it. Nevertheless, the Christian wife was not to seek freedom from her marriage bond so long as her husband was content to live with her. . . . She was to continue to live with her husband, in subjection to him as his wife, hoping and praying that her godly life would win him to the Master. . . .

“ . . . Sometimes a believing wife may be tempted to argue, and to attempt to overwhelm her husband by logical evidence. Generally speaking this is not the best way to win an unbelieving husband. A spirit of nagging, argumentative discussion is foreign to the spirit and methods of Christ.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 569.

Although the specific case to which Peter refers here in 1 Peter 3:1, 2 is that of a Christian wife with a nonbelieving husband, the principle of winning through chaste and reverent influence rather than through nagging would apply also to the case of a Christian husband with a nonbelieving wife.

Summarize Paul’s elaboration on how a believing spouse becomes an instrument of salvation. 1 Cor. 7:12-17.

“Christianity is a religion of peace; it seeks to prevent or avoid strife and discord (see John 14:27; Rom. 14:19; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:7). If peace cannot be had while the Christian and the non-Christian are living together in lawful marriage, and the unbeliever insists on departing, there should be agreement on a peaceful separation. . . .

“The reason why the believing party to a marriage should not leave the other, or desire to be separated from the unbeliever, is that the non-Christian might be led to accept Christ as his Saviour by the example and influence of the believer. The conversion of the unbeliever would bring great happiness and blessing to the family as a whole and to the unbeliever in particular. This object is so important that the Christian should be willing to be patient and long-suffering in order to bring it about. He should never cease for one moment to live a true Christian life, no matter what provocation may arise to prompt him to do otherwise.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 710.

What aspects of God’s character are highlighted by the biblical teaching about Christians who are married to unbelievers? 2 Cor. 6:14-16.

Knowing God Through the Family

Part 4 — Lifelong Commitment

“What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. . . . Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery” (Mark 10:9-12).

In these words Jesus repudiated the Old Testament practice of men putting away their wives (women did not have such a right). From the beginning God intended that marriage be for keeps. The words “till death do us part” in the marriage vow reflect the biblical principle, and are not to be taken lightly.

In these days when much of the Western world takes such vows lightly and many live together without benefit of vows in so-called “trial marriages,” there is a great need to get back to basic Bible principles.

Of course, marriages should be held together by love—a love that grows each day and reflects God’s love for His people on earth. (See Eph. 5:25; 1 John 4:7, 11, 12.) When marriages are characterized by God’s kind of love they become a most appropriate symbol of the union between the believer and God and lead us to better understand and appreciate His love and His commitment to the vow He has made to never leave us or forsake us.

God, through His covenant, has bound us to Him with ties that only we can break—He will never break them. God’s faithfulness to His vow of love is proclaimed and illustrated in a variety of ways in the Bible.

SEARCH AND LEARN

Consult the texts that follow and indicate how they contribute to our understanding of God’s faithfulness:

1. Ps. 37:28 _____
2. Ps. 94:14 _____
3. Isa. 49:16 _____
4. Lam. 3:22, 23 _____
5. Heb. 10:23 _____
6. Heb. 13:5 _____

Knowing God Through the Family

Part 5 — Divorce

“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Matt. 5:31, 32).

“Jesus made plain that there should be no divorce except in the case of marital infidelity. The marriage relationship had been perverted by sin, and Jesus came to restore to it the purity and beauty originally ordained by the Creator. . . .

“ . . . The companionship of husband and wife was ordained of God as the ideal environment in which to mature a Christian character. Most of the personality adjustments of married life, and the difficulties encountered by many in making these adjustments, call for the exercise of self-restraint and sometimes self-sacrifice.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 337.

What further principle concerning severance of the marriage tie does Paul mention in his letter to the Christians at Corinth? 1 Cor. 7:39.

Death to a Christian’s spouse certainly frees the living husband or wife either to remain single or to marry again. The apostle adds the phrase “in the Lord” with the hope that a person’s commitment to Jesus Christ would regulate all matrimonial choices.

In what way is divorce a symbol of the break between God and His apostate people, and what is it that justifies His “bill of divorce”? Jer. 3:6-11.

“In the days of King Josiah the prophet is asked whether he has seen what Israel did. Jeremiah has seen quite well, as indeed have all the people of Judah. For approximately a hundred years have passed since Israel fell at the hands of Assyria. At the time she was sent away with a decree of divorce. Israel had turned her back on Yahweh. She had played the harlot in the places of the Baals—on every high hill and under every green tree. Yahweh had sent prophet after prophet to bring her back, and hoped she would return; but she would not. All this her sister Judah witnessed. All this she saw, and all its consequences. And so she is doubly guilty.”—*The Interpreter’s Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), vol. 5, p. 825.

Knowing God Through the Family

Part 6 — Children

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother. . . . Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4).

As the story goes, the king of Prussia was welcomed by the schoolchildren in a certain village he was visiting. After having made his speech and having thanked them for their greeting, he took an orange from a plate and asked: “To what kingdom does this belong?” “The *vegetable* kingdom, sir,” replied a little girl. The king then took a gold coin from his pocket and asked, “To what kingdom does this belong?” “The *mineral* kingdom,” answered the little girl. “And to what kingdom do *I* belong, then?” asked the king. The child flushed with embarrassment if not fear, for she thought his majesty would be offended if she told him he was from the *animal* kingdom. But just then and there it flashed into her mind that “God created man in his own image” (Gen. 1:27); so with brightening eyes she looked up and said, “Sir, you belong to *God’s* kingdom.” God would have both kings and little girls, both parents and children, know that they belong to His eternal kingdom. Ephesians 6:1-4 is a vital part of God’s road map to lead us there.

Children not only are a precious legacy, but they teach us much about our relationship with God.

In what way are we God’s children? What has made this relationship possible? Rom. 8:14-17.

What is God’s attitude toward His children? Ps. 103:13, 14.

What attributes of children should characterize our relationship with God? Matt. 18:3, 4; Mark 10:13-15.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Considering the great privilege that has been bestowed upon us to become members of the family of God, how should we relate to our heavenly family?

Here is an opportunity to affirm someone in your earthly family. Choose a person from your family circle who is related to you by blood line or by marriage. What have you seen in that person’s life, either in actions, words, or attitudes, that has helped you to know God better?

This week write a letter to that person. Express your appreciation to him or her by telling how their life has helped you to know God better. Be specific. Make this a special “thank you” note, not just part of a family news report. Mail it right away.



10

June 3-9
Adult Lesson

Knowing God Through the Laws of Health

MEMORY TEXT: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2).

Gaius, to whom this epistle of John was first written, was encouraged by the apostle to concern himself with general prosperity including sound “health” and spiritual advancement. In the Bible there is a close link between health of body and health of soul. But even in John’s time dualism had crept into much of the world’s thinking—dividing humans into two parts, spirit and body, and setting one against another. But Jesus and the New Testament writers viewed human beings in their wholeness, thus giving great significance to physical as well as spiritual well-being.

What do we mean when we speak of health? Health refers not only to the absence of ailments and defects, but to physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. Because of the sinfulness of our human state (Rom. 3:23), none of us enjoy *perfect* health; nevertheless, being restored to God’s image includes health of mind and body as well as soul.

When we realize God’s concern for the health of the whole person, we come to appreciate His concern for our welfare. He has given laws that, when followed, will enable us to get the most out of life.

What are these laws of health? They “involve fundamental, immutable principles that apply across the board—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. . . .

“ . . . We . . . have to make a clear distinction between important health rules such as ‘Brush your teeth regularly’ and the great, basic, universal principles on which the rules are founded. . . .

“ . . . Leading the list and basic to all is the law of cause and effect. The others are:

- The law of activity and growth
- The law of rest and restoration
- The law of balance and regularity
- The law of cleanliness and hygiene
- The law of self-control
- The law of mutual dependence

The law of positive ideals.”—L. Van Dolson, *The Golden Eight* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), pp. 9, 10. We will touch on some of those which involve major health concerns this week and help us to become better acquainted with our Creator.

Knowing God Through the Laws of Health

Part 1 — Health Through Obedience

“My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. . . . Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones” (Prov. 3:1-8).

Inspiring indeed is the belief that “there is no greater stabilizer for nerves fretted by the rush and worry of life than the knowledge that God is an active partner in all that we do, an influence ensuring present contentment and ultimate victory.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 956.

Study and be prepared to discuss the obvious and implied messages of the following:

1. 1 Tim. 4:8.
2. “There is health in obedience to God’s law.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1105.
3. 1 Peter 3:10-12.
4. “The assurance of God’s approval will promote physical health. It fortifies the soul against doubt, perplexity, and excessive grief, that so often sap the vital forces and induce nervous diseases.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1146.
5. “The consciousness of right doing is the best medicine for diseased bodies and minds. The special blessing of God resting upon the receiver is health and strength. A person whose mind is quiet and satisfied in God is in the pathway to health.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 30, 1886.
6. Prov. 17:22.
7. “The sympathy which exists between the mind and the body is very great. When one is affected, the other responds. The condition of the mind has much to do with the health of the physical system.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 60.
8. The law of cause and effect—is impartial. It works for us as well as against us. We reap what we sow. “Disease, hurt feelings, disappointments, are not the result of an immature God getting mad at capricious creatures. They are simply the natural results of man’s choosing less than the best. Far less.”—Donald John, “The Uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church . . .” *Insight*, July, 1974, p. 8.
“What’s important, then, is for us to learn specifically what’s involved in choosing that which is best for us. . . .
“. . . The common-sense approach is to learn the simple, basic principles that govern life and health and to apply them as best we can to the various circumstances in which we find ourselves.”—L. Van Dolson, *The Golden Eight*, pp. 18, 19.

Knowing God Through the Laws of Health

Part 2 — The Law of Activity and Growth

“The LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”

Activity is a primary law of life. It applies to every dimension of existence—physical, mental, social, spiritual. Without exercise none of these capabilities would grow or remain strong. Ellen White expresses it this way:

“One of the first laws of the being is that of action. Every organ of the body has its appointed work, upon the development of which depends its strength. The normal action of all the organs gives vigor and life; inaction brings decay and death.”—Ellen G. White, *Youth’s Instructor*, Feb. 27, 1902.

This law, one of the main sources of usefulness and enjoyment, pre-dates sin on earth. “To the dwellers in Eden was committed the care of the garden, ‘to dress it and to keep it.’ . . . God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. In mental and physical activity Adam found one of the highest pleasures of his holy existence.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 50.

Physical-education experts often remind us that some form of exercise has become even more important today because, particularly in developed and in some developing countries, machines have taken over so many tasks once performed by hand. Added to this is the nonactivity often caused by modern means of transportation and communication, and you begin to understand why millions of people around the world have resorted to jogging, bicycling, tennis, golfing, walking, joining, “health spas” and similar organizations in order to get physical exercise.

What principle underlying the parables of the talents and the pounds can be applied to using fully the abilities and opportunities God gives us? Matt. 25:21, 29; Luke 19:16, 17, 26.

“Physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually there is a great law of life and health that all of us are aware of but too often ignore or violate. It is the law of activity which clearly informs us that we lose what we don’t use. The law itself is neutral. It is there—operating every day in every dimension of life. We can be either helped or harmed, depending on how we choose to relate to it. In order for us to get the most out of life—to stay physically fit, mentally alert, socially acceptable, and spiritually aware and functioning—we must choose to act in harmony with this law. By doing so we can avoid a personal energy crisis and enjoy life at its best because we are at the peak of strength in body, mind, and soul.”—L. Van Dolson, *The Golden Eight*, p. 34.

Knowing God Through the Laws of Health

Part 3 — The Law of Rest and Restoration

“He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately” (Mark 6:31, 32).

Christian recreation involves true *re-creation*. It involves a renewing, a restoring, a rebuilding of strength and energy usually following or in close proximity to sustained and taxing work. However, there is a danger that some innocently may choose inappropriate entertainment or so overengage in otherwise appropriate pastime activities that their recreation becomes harmful to their physical and spiritual well-being. Such recreation tears down rather than builds up.

That God is so caring and loving as to encourage our rest and recreation was demonstrated by Jesus when He bade the twelve disciples, “Come ye yourselves apart in a desert place, and rest awhile.” Rest is essential for proper functioning of body, mind, and soul.

Consider the following suggestions concerning proper recreation and rest:

1. “Recreation is needful to those who are engaged in physical labor and is still more essential for those whose labor is principally mental.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 494.

2. “Let several families living in a city or village unite and leave the occupations which have taxed them physically and mentally and make an excursion into the country.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 392.

3. “There is a distinction between recreation and amusement. Recreation, when true to its name, re-creation, tends to strengthen and build up. . . . Amusement, on the other hand, is sought for the sake of pleasure and is often carried to excess.”—*Education*, p. 207.

4. “In order for children and youth to have health, cheerfulness, vivacity, and well-developed muscles and brains, they should be much in the open air and have well-regulated employment and amusement.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 137.

When temptations assail you, when care, perplexity, and darkness seem to surround your soul, look to the place where you last saw the light. Rest in Christ’s love and under His protecting care. When sin struggles for the mastery in the heart, when guilt oppresses the soul and burdens the conscience, when unbelief clouds the mind, remember that Christ’s grace is sufficient to subdue sin and banish the darkness. Entering into communion with the Saviour, we enter the region of peace.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 250.

FURTHER STUDY: Prov. 3:21, 24; *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 515; *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 335.

Knowing God Through the Laws of Health

Part 4 — The Law of Balance and Regularity

“Blessed art thou . . . when thy . . . princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness” (Eccl. 10:17).

The law of balance and regularity can be illustrated by diet. Proper diet includes both balance and regularity. Food serves the primary purpose of providing us with physical strength rather than serving as an opportunity for indulging appetite.

When properly regulated as to nutrition and time of eating, food contributes to growth and keeps our bodies strong and healthy. With what care, then, ought we to select and consume our foods! In His love and concern for our well-being, the God who created us has supplied us with simple and basic guidelines for doing so.

What constituted the diet of Adam and Eve at Creation? Gen. 1:11, 12, 29.

What was added to their diet as a result of sin? Gen. 3:18.

“Fruits, grains, and vegetables, prepared in a simple way . . . make . . . the most healthful diet. They impart nourishment to the body and give a power of endurance and vigor of intellect that are not produced by a stimulating diet.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 115. “We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God’s people. . . . If meat eating was ever healthful, it is not safe now.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 159.

Later on in the history of the world, after the Flood, when God permitted flesh food as a regular part of mankind’s diet, what were His guidelines to govern their selection? Lev. 11:1-47; Deut. 14:3-20.

What does the law of balance and regularity demonstrate about our Creator? Eccl. 3:1, 2.

“Physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually there is a great principle that in every area of life we must keep a proper balance. The Creator who made us has also built into our bodies and into all of nature itself a system of checks and balances that enables us, if we cooperate with it, to get the most out of life.”—L. Van Dolson, *The Golden Eight*, pp. 52, 53.

Knowing God Through the Laws of Health

Part 5 — The Law of Cleanliness and Hygiene

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

Holiness is an attribute of God that is the distinctive mark and signature of the divine. In the Bible the contrast between “holy” and “profane” parallels the contrast between “clean” and “unclean.” (See Lev. 10:10.) Cleanness is a major aspect of holiness. Habakkuk says of God that He is too pure to behold evil (ch. 1:13). All who serve God must be able to make the distinction between clean and unclean, between pure and impure, between sinless and sinful. That is why so many of the Levitical laws and the ceremonies of the sanctuary revolve around cleanness and cleansing.

In the physical world cleanliness is essential to life and health. “Public-health researchers have been impressed with the fact that Moses gave the early Hebrews such enlightened health legislation. Many public-health texts speak of him as the ‘father of preventive medicine.’ Old Testament prohibitions regulate the essentials of air, water, shelter, food, and personal cleanliness and reveal such startling modern public-health practices as personal and community responsibility for health and environment, control and containment of communicable diseases, avoiding touching contaminated objects, proper handling and protection of food, disinfection, . . . protection of water supplies, careful waste disposal, sanitation of campsites, and avoidance of overcrowding.”—L. Van Dolson, *The Golden Eight*, pp. 56, 57.

The Creator wanted humans to be beneficent stewards of their environment rather than plunderers of its resources and polluters of its streams and atmosphere.

**Why did Jesus correlate the forgiving of sins and the healing of sickness?
Matt. 9:2-7.**

Just as cleanliness of body is essential to physical life and health, cleanliness of soul is equivalent to spiritual life and health. “The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. He needed health of soul before he could appreciate health of body. Before the physical malady could be healed, Christ must bring relief to the mind, and cleanse the soul from sin. This lesson should not be overlooked. There are today thousands suffering from physical disease who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul. The peace which He alone can impart would restore vigor to the mind and health to the body.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 76.

Knowing God Through the Laws of Health

Part 6 — The Law of Self-control

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:24, 25).

In many respects, the Christian who “striveth” for the prize of an incorruptible crown resembles the contestant in the Olympic Greek games. Both are “in training.” Perseverance, courage, industry, self-denial, hope, and faith mark their daily routines.

To be “temperate” is to exercise self-control. It is difficult to improve upon the well-known definition that *temperance involves the moderate use of those things which are helpful and total abstinence from those things which are harmful.*

In a morally degenerate world, Christians are to remain without “spot” or “wrinkle” or “blemish” (Eph. 5:27). As aliens and pilgrims in the present world system, we live aloof from degrading habits and pleasures by God’s enabling grace. Fleshly lusts or carnal desires may be present but not overpowering. For, like Paul, we “can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth” us (Phil. 4:13).

What reason does the Bible give for abstaining from “fleshly lusts”? 1 Peter 2:11.

Applying this text to health values, Ellen White comments: “The Word of God plainly warns us that unless we abstain from fleshly lusts, the physical nature will be brought into conflict with the spiritual nature. Lustful eating wars against health and peace.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 382.

She also gives this clear counsel: “In relation to tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcoholic drinks, the only safe course is to touch not, taste not, handle not.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 335.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:

Select a life experience in which a change that harmonizes with God’s counsel brought His blessing to you. How did this impress you with God’s care and concern? What did it reveal about His character?

Seek an opportunity to share this in a natural way with someone who is not a member of your church. Watch for these principles:

1. It will honor God, not yourself.
2. It will not be seen as bragging.
3. It will not be critical of their life-style.
4. It will be positive. Rather than “I don’t—” it will say “I am so glad that I—”



11

June 10-16
Adult Lesson

Knowing What Is False in Teachings About God

MEMORY TEXT: “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16, 17).

In the main there are two approaches toward interpreting the meaning of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” First, we must understand that the tree was real, not imaginary, and the fruit actual, not make-believe. Although not poisonous in itself, the fruit of that tree presented a test of obedience to Adam and Eve—not merely a test of appetite but an examination of their trust in God’s goodness, their belief in His word, and their acceptance of His authority. (See *Education*, p. 25.)

In attempting to analyze the nature of the knowledge that was gained by our first parents when they ate the forbidden fruit, Bible scholars have come up with varying suggestions. Some hold that the knowledge gained was a sudden *intellectual* awareness of evil (a kind of knowledge that Adam and Eve were just too inexperienced to handle although members of the Godhead Themselves handle such knowledge well). Others take the position that the knowledge of evil gained caused Adam and Eve suddenly to *become* evil. One thing is clear: Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command and thereby sinned, personally experiencing evil.

Second, and not negating the first, there is a symbolic or figurative application in which the tree can be said to represent erroneous beliefs and teachings about God. Ellen White observed that when persons make half reforms and refuse to advance in greater knowledge, “they pluck and eat of that tree of knowledge which places the human above the divine.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 141. Partaking of the tree “brought into the world a knowledge of evil. It was this that opened the door to every species of falsehood and error.”—*Education*, p. 25. Moreover, “multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 177.

This week we will review claims some people make which we believe are examples of false knowledge about God—knowledge that comes from symbolically plucking the fruit of the forbidden tree. By studying these we learn how Satan tries to keep us from knowing the truth about God.

Knowing What Is False in Teachings About God

Part 1 — Was God Dependent on Preexisting Matter?

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3).

In creating our world God was not dependent on “ready-made” matter which He did not produce. “The theory that God did not create matter when He brought the world into existence is without foundation. In the formation of our world, God was not indebted to pre-existing matter. On the contrary, all things, material or spiritual, stood up before the Lord Jehovah at His voice and were created for His own purpose. The heavens and all the host of them, the earth and all things therein, are not only the works of his hand; they came into existence by the breath of His mouth.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 258, 259.

God created the world “out of nothing” (*ex nihilo*) and His was a first creation, that is, a creation which came about solely as a result of His command. This does not necessarily assume that God did not or cannot make use of one form of His creation to bring forth another. Adam was created from the earth and Eve from Adam’s rib (Gen. 2:7, 21, 22). God Himself was the originator of all that was involved in the creative process. Therefore, when the Bible proclaims that “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), we are “introduced to an Omnipotent Being, possessed of personality, will, and purpose, who, existing before all else and thus dependent on naught else, exercised His divine will.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 208.

In what telling way does God’s challenge to Job lay bare the false claims of the theory of evolution and other claims about Creation that contradict what the Bible teaches? Job 38:2-4.

We human beings need to face the question of the origin of life with a sense of humility. Instead of pontificating so much about events to which there were no human eyewitnesses and drawing conclusions from very limited and inconclusive scientific evidence, we need to listen to what the Creator has to say. Is not God addressing us as well as Job and his friends when He asks, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Scientific investigation is limited to studying the artifacts of Creation long after the event took place. How much more sense it makes to accept the word of the Creator as to how He went about creating this world!

THINK IT THROUGH: Am I growing in the realization that the God I worship is truly all-powerful and self-sufficient?

FURTHER STUDY: Isa. 45:7-12; 48:13; Ps. 33:6-9.

Knowing What Is False in Teachings About God

Part 2 — Is God Aloof From His Creation?

“Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15).

Inasmuch as God has so many billions of planets to look after in His vast universe, some think that when He creates an additional world like ours, He fashions it and its inhabitants in a manner to enable them to live and operate on their own. Such a notion is wrong. Unlike the watchmaker whose skillfully constructed timepiece is left to tick independently of its origin, the God of heaven, although dwelling “in the high and holy place,” still keeps in constant communion and contact with His creation. By definition, persons who believe in the watchmaker-type God are called deists. To them, God lives so far away from planet Earth and is so transcendent above earth that the earth and its creatures must fend for themselves.

What assurance does the Bible give us of God’s sustaining presence? Neh. 9:6; Matt. 6:26, 32, 33; 28:20.

Many who study natural law lose sight of, if they do not deny, the continual and direct agency of God. They take the position that nature acts independently of God, having in and of itself its own limits and its own powers. “In their minds there is a marked distinction between the natural and supernatural. The natural is ascribed to ordinary causes, unconnected with the power of God. Vital power is attributed to matter, and nature is made a diety. It is supposed that matter is . . . left to act from fixed laws with which God Himself cannot interfere. . . .

“This is false science. . . . He is continually working through them [His laws], using them as His instruments. They are not self-working.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 259.

“In God we live and move and have our being. The beating heart, the throbbing pulse, every nerve and muscle in the living organism, is kept in order and activity by the power of an ever-present God.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 417.

THINK IT THROUGH: Have I been able to combine an understanding of God’s righteous and transcendent distinctness from me, a sinner, with the concept of His constant, immanent saving presence with me, His child?

FURTHER STUDY: *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 260.

Knowing What Is False in Teachings About God

Part 3 — Is God the Same as Nature?

“To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa. 40:25, 26).

Not only does nature speak to us as a lesson book of salvation and science, but it also shares its goodness by providing food, shelter, clothing, and beauty to regale the senses. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that “God’s handiwork in nature is not God Himself in nature. The things in nature are an expression of God’s character; by them we may understand His love, His power, and His glory; but we are not to regard nature as God. The artistic skill of human beings produces very beautiful workmanship, things that delight the eye and these things give us something of the idea of the designer; but the thing made is not the man. It is not the work, but the workman, that is counted worthy of honor. So, while nature is an expression of God’s thought, it is not nature, but the God of nature that is to be exalted.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 263.

Notice that although Christ pointed men and women to salvation through object lessons drawn from nature, He did not teach pantheism—a teaching that God is an essence pervading all nature.

“Had God to be represented as dwelling personally in the things of nature,—in the flower, the tree, the spire of grass,—would not Christ have spoken of this to His disciples when He was on earth? But never in the teaching of Christ is God thus spoken of. Christ and the apostles taught clearly the truth of the existence of a personal God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 265, 266.

The theory of pantheism, if carried to its logical conclusion, would do away with the plan of salvation and the divine intervention of a supernatural God to rescue us from sin. We must not confuse God with His footprints.

THINK IT THROUGH: How may I know and appreciate more about God through nature without confusing God with nature?

FURTHER STUDY: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 428, 429.

Knowing What Is False in Teachings About God

Part 4 — Is Christ a Created Being?

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Some misinterpret John 3:16 as suggesting that, as the “begotten” Son of God, our Lord once was created or somehow brought into existence by the Father. Such a false concept results in some concluding that as a human being Jesus was no more than other men or women and that as a member of the Godhead He was less than the Father and the Holy Spirit.

How can we meet such false concepts from the Bible?

1. The phrase “only begotten” in John 3:16 is translated from the Greek word *monogenēs*, which would be better translated “only one of His kind,” “unique,” or “only son.”

2. When Revelation 3:14 refers to Jesus Christ as the “beginning” of God’s creation (KJV), John the revelator’s use of the Greek word *archē* would best be translated as “that which initiates an action, a first cause, a prime mover.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 760. Some Bible versions refer to Christ in Revelation 3:14 not as the “beginning” of Creation (as if He Himself were created) but as “the origin of all that God has created” (TEV) or as “the ruler of God’s creation” (NIV) or as “the ultimate source of God’s creation” (Jerusalem Bible) or as “the prime source of all God’s creation” (NEB).

3. Christ’s deity and preexistence are established in such texts as Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-3, 14; and Philippians 2:6-8. Ellen White puts the case unequivocally: “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530. “Christ is equal with God, infinite and omnipotent.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1136. “Christ is the pre-existent, self-existent Son of God. . . . There never was a time when He [Christ] was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.”—*Evangelism*, p. 615.

4. The Greek word *prōtotokos* (firstborn) in Colossians 1:15 has been thought by some to suggest that Christ was a created being. But it is “a figurative expression describing Jesus Christ as first in rank, the figure being drawn from the dignity and office held by the first-born in a human family, or, more precisely, the first-born in a royal family. Christ’s position is unique, authoritative, and absolute. He has been entrusted with all prerogatives and authority in heaven and earth. Paul emphasizes the position of Christ because he is seeking to meet the arguments of the false teachers, who declared that Christ was created, and who denied His supremacy.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 191. Colossians 1:16, 17 describe Christ as the Creator who existed *before* all created things were brought into existence.

Knowing What Is False in Teachings About God

Part 5 — Does God Hate Sinners?

“God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

That God hates *sin* is true (Prov. 6:16-19). That God hates *sinners* is false. For it was “while we were yet sinners” that God’s love led Christ to Calvary to atone for our waywardness. The grammatical tense of the Greek word translated “commendeth” in Romans 5:8 suggests that God is continuously and always directing His love toward us. But the “deeds of the Nicolaitanes” (Rev. 2:6) and the sins of sinners, your sins and mine, must meet His divine judgment which is “God’s antagonism to sin, resulting ultimately in the complete eradication of sin from the universe. So long as men choose to remain under the dominion of sin they are inevitably involved in God’s wrath.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 527.

In the book of Romans, Paul declares that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18). Sin is so contrary to the will and way of divine providence that it cannot enter the presence of God. But love has found a way to bridge the gap between God and sinners caused by sin. The cross provides a way out—and remember that it is God Himself who has made the provision for our salvation.

In what practical way did Christ demonstrate the falsity of the charge that God hates sinners? John 8:3-11.

List below other Bible illustrations you can think of that demonstrate the fact that God hates sin but loves the sinner:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

THINK IT THROUGH: What have I discovered in my personal relationship with God through Christ that convinces me that God hates my sin but loves me?

FURTHER STUDY: Rom. 7:14-25; *Steps to Christ*, “God’s Love to Man,” pp. 9-15.

Knowing What Is False in Teachings About God

Part 6 — Other Misconceptions

“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor. 15:34).

We must exercise care not to push labels too far; nevertheless, they can offer help in identifying certain persons who, like those referred to by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, either know God falsely or are without a clear knowledge of God. *Atheists* are without true God-knowledge because they say there is no God (Ps. 14:1); *agnostics*, because they do not think there is enough evidence that there is a God; *fanatics*, because they are extremists and legalists and try to outdo God’s revealed requirements (Eccl. 7:16, 17); *presumers*, because they take for granted and sometimes disregard that which God requires (2 Sam. 6:6, 7); and *false prophets*, because they misrepresent God or speak lies supposedly in God’s name (Matt. 7:15-20).

What must we do to make sure that our busy life does not keep us from knowing the truth about God? Ps. 46:10.

Many years ago a young Indian brought to New York City became desperately homesick—homesick for the great arching skies, for the long waving prairie grass, for the distance, quietness, and solitude he had known in his part of the country. Walking down a busy New York street one day, he suddenly stopped, turned to his companion, and said, “Did you hear that?” To which his friend asked indifferently, “Hear what?” “But did you hear that cricket?” asked the Indian. “A cricket?” exclaimed the companion. “Who can hear a cricket out here?” Then the Indian darted across the street to a window plant box and pulled out a cricket. The friend asked in amazement, “How in the world could you hear that cricket amid noise like this all around us?” In answer, the Indian took out a fifty cent piece, tossed it up in the air, and let it land with a tinkle on the New York pavement where in less than 20 seconds, otherwise unconcerned and noise-soaked pedestrians scrambled for it. Then the Indian turned to his friend and said, “You always hear what you are listening for.”

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Here is an opportunity for a form of community outreach. Select a newspaper item or something in a book that gives a false picture of the character of God.

Write a letter to the editor of the paper or book, expressing your concern about the issue. State on what basis you see the point in error. What do you see as the correct view, and why do you so see it?

Be careful not to appear critical of any group or persons. Let a Christian awareness and concern be felt. Be positive.



12

June 17-23
Adult Lesson

Knowing That God Knows Us

MEMORY TEXT: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust” (Ps. 103:13, 14).

The previous eleven lessons on the theme “Knowing God” have dealt with knowledge about Himself that God has revealed to human beings. In our concluding lessons we will study the nature of God’s knowledge about His people and our response to His love and interest. We approach this lesson with the general question, How much does God know?

Because God’s knowledge is “infinite” (without limits and immeasurable), we who are finite and limited can never hope to comprehend what God knows and much less explain or communicate it. Nevertheless, from a practical point of view, we can discover what God has revealed on this topic through His prophets; and we can apply what we learn to our contemporary lives with the understanding that we are only scratching the surface and that there is much more beyond our comprehension. In the final analysis, what matters is His true and perfect knowledge of us.

We can expect to know very little of what God knows. Perhaps the experience of George Washington Carver bears this out. The internationally famous American scientist once prayed, “Lord, teach me all about Your grand universe.” He reports that God answered, “No, George, that is too much for a human being to understand. Ask for something else.”

“Then tell me all about this world, planet Earth, Lord,” the scientist asked.

“No, George,” God responded, “that, too, is beyond any man’s ability to know.”

“Well, dear God,” pleaded Dr. Carver, “teach me just about the little peanut.”

“Now, George,” he reports God saying, “that is more your size.”

Carver went on to make approximately “300 products from the peanut. They ranged from instant ‘coffee’ to soap and ink. He made 118 products from the sweet potato, including flour, shoe blacking, and candy. He produced 75 products from the pecan. He made synthetic marble from wood shavings; dyes from clay; starch, gum, and wallboard from cotton stalks.” In short, Carver “revolutionized the agriculture of the South” and “convinced Southern farmers to grow these crops in place of cotton, to provide new sources of income.”—*The World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corp., 1964), vol. 3, p. 197.

Knowing That God Knows Us

Part 1 — “From the Foundation of the World”

“All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

Before this world was created God knew about our needs and made provision for Christ to die for our sins. John is joined by Peter (1 Peter 1:19, 20) in telling us that, before events happen, God knows they will take place. God’s knowledge depends not on experience, but rather His knowledge is what some Bible students call a priori. This means that what God knows is independent of or prior to all experience. When the psalmist says that God “tellethe the number of the stars; he called them all by their names” (Ps. 147:4) and that God’s understanding is “infinite” (verse 5), he uses the same Hebrew root word for both “number” and “infinite,” adding the preposition “without” to the latter. The thought conveyed is that God numbers the stars; however, His knowledge is “without number” or incapable of being numbered. He “sees all things at a glance, as it were. He does not learn. He was never ignorant, and he can never come to know more.”—E. F. Harrison, editor, *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 314.

How does God’s ability to know the end from the beginning relate to how much He knows about us? Isa. 46:10; Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:13-17.

Note the following examples:

1. **Jacob and Esau.** “God knows the end from the beginning. He knew before the birth of Jacob and Esau, just what characters they would both develop. He knew that Esau would not have a heart to obey him. He answered the troubled prayer of Rebekah, and informed her that she would have two children, and the elder should serve the younger.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 113.

2. **Peter, when Paul was forced to rebuke him (Gal. 2:13, 14).** “God, who knows the end from the beginning, permitted Peter to reveal this weakness of character in order that the tried apostle might see that there was nothing in himself whereof he might boast. Even the best of men, if left to themselves, will err in judgment. God also saw that in time to come some would be so deluded as to claim for Peter and his pretended successors the exalted prerogatives that belong to God alone. And this record of the apostle’s weakness was to remain as a proof of his fallibility and of the fact that he stood in no way above the level of the other apostles.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 198, 199.

THINK IT THROUGH: How does the fact that God knows everything before it happens allow for the free will of human beings to make decisions?

Part 2 — Good and Evil

“The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (Gen. 3:22).

How can God know evil and still remain sinless?

There are at least two main explanations of the nature of the knowledge of good and evil:

1. One interpretation sees “good and evil” only as an expression that refers to everything there is to know of life, both sides to all situations. No morality, no goodness or badness as such, is thought to be involved but rather a state of being “in full possession of mental and physical powers.”—*The Anchor Bible: Genesis* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964), p. 26. The *quantity* of knowledge becomes the emphasis in this explanation.

2. The other interpretation emphasizes the *quality* of knowledge and explains “good and evil” in the Garden of Eden as being a moral matter of righteousness and sin, goodness and badness. This moral explanation may point to the principle meaning with the understanding that God knows evil only intellectually and objectively. God does not experience evil. However, Adam and Eve in disobeying God’s commands came to know evil not only intellectually but experientially—they *became* doers of evil. “God knows these oppositions [good and evil, light and darkness, fortune and misfortune, etc.] but He is above them; He knows them intellectually but does not experience them.”—V. A. Demant, *Christian Sex Ethics* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 20.

We are reminded by Ellen White that “God did not create evil, He only made the good, which was like Himself. But Satan would not be content to know the will of God and do it. His curiosity was on the stretch to know that which God had not designed he should know. Evil, sin, and death were not created by God; they are the result of disobedience, which originated in Satan. . . . The sons and daughters of Adam are . . . seeking forbidden knowledge. They gain *experience*, a *knowledge*, which God never designed they should have.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 503, 504. (Italics supplied.)

Knowing the nature of evil and the inability of humans to free themselves from sin, what has God done to unmask sin and make it possible for us to overcome evil? Ex. 34:6, 7; 2 Cor. 5:19.

In spite of the terrible, devastating nature of evil, God understands its power in our lives and has made more than adequate provision for us to conquer sin through the victory of Jesus.

Knowing That God Knows Us

Part 3 — God Knows Everything About Us

“O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways” (Ps. 139:1-3).

That God takes it upon Himself to know everything about us must not be mistaken as interference or authoritarianism or even the sheer accumulation of knowledge on His part. On the contrary, God’s perfect intelligence reveals that “He has an intimate knowledge of, and a personal interest in, all the works of His hand.”—*Education*, p. 132.

How acquainted is God with even our words, and what deeper significance can be found in the psalmist’s statement in Psalm 139:4?

“The Hebrew of this clause [“not a word”] may be understood as implying that before the thought has been formed into words, the Lord knows it. Everything is open and transparent before God.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 925.

Dr. John Baillie, teacher at Edinburgh University in Scotland, made it a practice to begin his class on the “Doctrine of God” with words like these: “Ladies and Gentlemen, we must remember that in discussing God we cannot talk about Him without His hearing every word we say. We may be able to talk about some of our fellows, as it were, behind their backs, but God is everywhere, yes even here in this classroom. Therefore, in all of our discussions we must be aware of His infinite presence and talk about Him, as it were, before His face.”

Ellen White admonishes, “If we were to cherish an habitual impression that God sees and hears all that we do and say and keeps a faithful record of our words and actions, and that we must meet it all, we would fear to sin. Let the young ever remember that wherever they are, and whatever they do, they are in the presence of God. No part of our conduct escapes observation. We cannot hide our ways from the Most High. . . . The deepest midnight is no cover for the guilty one. He may think himself alone, but to every deed there is an unseen witness. The very motives of his heart are open to divine inspection. Every act, every word, every thought, is distinctly marked as though there were only one person in the whole world, and the attention of heaven were centered upon him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

THINK IT THROUGH: How may I develop a saving awareness of God’s thorough knowledge of and concern for me?

FURTHER STUDY: Read all of Psalm 139; *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 323.

Knowing That God Knows Us

Part 4 — “I . . . Know My Sheep”

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine”
(John 10:14).

The caring shepherd always knows the sheep of his flock and pasture and takes a personal, loving interest in each of them. The sheep, in turn, trust their shepherd, placing implicit confidence in and giving willing obedience to his guidance.

“As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. ‘Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, said the Lord God.’ Jesus says, ‘I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.’ ‘I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.’ Ezek. 34:31; Isa. 43:1; 49:16.

“Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

“Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of everyone touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 479, 480.

What is the import of the words Paul uses to express God’s knowledge of His people? 2 Tim. 2:19.

To “seal” an object implies giving it a stamp of approval. As a sign that we are accepted and known in a saving way by God, the Holy Spirit performs a sealing work in our lives (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). The sign that God has appointed is conformity to His law: “The Israelites placed over their doors a signature of blood, to show they were God’s property. So the children of God in this age will bear the signature God has appointed. They will place themselves in harmony with God’s holy law. A mark is placed upon every one of God’s people just as verily as a mark was placed over the doors of the Hebrew dwellings.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 968, 969.

THINK IT THROUGH: How may I be sure that I bear God’s seal of ownership?

FURTHER STUDY: Psalm 23.

Knowing That God Knows Us

Part 5 — “I Know Thy Works”

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil” (Rev. 2:2).

Common to the messages to all seven of the churches is the declaration that their works are known to God. “Works” generally refers to deeds, actions, and activities, particularly those that depict moral character. But “works” with reference to the seven churches and to us does not always imply *good* works. God, the righteous and unerring Auditor, determines their ultimate quality, although we certainly bear responsibility for choosing what seems best and good in regard to our activities.

How are the followers of Christ encouraged by Paul to cooperate with God in the work necessary to build up His kingdom? 1 Cor. 3:9-13.

How do we cooperate with God in building houses of character? Matt. 7:24-27.

“God has given us our intellectual and moral powers, but to a great extent every person is the architect of his own character. Every day the structure is going up. The word of God warns to take heed how we build, to see that our building is founded upon the eternal Rock. The time is coming when our work will stand revealed as it is: Now is the time for all to cultivate the powers which God has given them, that they may form characters for usefulness here and for a higher life hereafter.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 656.

Never do we want to think that we are saved by works, for “the just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). And yet, ours must always be a “faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Often our motives and outlook make the difference.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study Matthew 6:1-6 in order to determine what constitutes proper motivation for good deeds. What did Jesus mean by the phrase used in verses 2 and 5, “They have their reward”?

THINK IT THROUGH: Can I pray this prayer? Dear God, grant me to know my works as Thou dost know them and to perform them as Thou dost empower.

FURTHER STUDY: Rev. 2:9, 13, 19; 3:1, 2, 8, 15.

Knowing That God Knows Us

Part 6 — He Knows Our Future

“Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matt. 24:36).

God foreknows who will *choose* to accept His salvation and has planned for their future. They will be with Him in His kingdom—will be “glorified” (Rom. 8:28-30). This will take place at Christ’s return. We must be alert to the signs of Christ’s return (Matt. 24:33). But there is no way we can calculate precisely the year, day, or hour of His return.

As you reflect on the second advent, think through the following statements:

1. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Rom. 13:12).
2. “Behold, I come quickly” (Rev. 22:7).
3. “Has the word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional.”—*Evangelism*, p. 695.
4. “The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready. God’s unwillingness to have His people perish has been the reason for so long delay.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 194.
5. “It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 22.
6. “It [the coming of Jesus] will not tarry past the time that the message is borne to all nations, tongues, and peoples.”—*Evangelism*, p. 697.
7. “It is the duty of the people of God to have their lamps trimmed and burning, to be as men that wait for the Bridegroom, when He shall return from the wedding.”—Ellen G. White, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 616, 617.

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS: When you think of God knowing all about you, including your motives, are you comfortable, uncomfortable, or a little of each? Why?

● Here is a challenge to try something special. It may be easier than you think.

1. Choose a hymn tune or melody that you know well and like.
2. Choose two or three verses from Psalm 139. Write a paraphrase of these verses as a poem to be used with the melody you chose as a hymn of praise to God for His knowledge of your life.

Here is an example based on verses 2 and 3:

O Lord, my God. You search my life
And know my every way.
When I lie down and when I rise
I’ve Your care through the day.



13

June 24-30
Adult Lesson

Knowing That We Know God

MEMORY TEXT: “Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

The life of the Christian takes on a healthier balance when he or she knows God both intellectually and experientially; that is, when God is known from factual information and from personal involvement and experience. Paul witnessed to both types of knowledge in his life and testifies to both in his writings. When writing to the young pastor Timothy, the apostle Paul affirms that “I know whom I have believed” (2 Tim. 1:12). In that passage he employs the Greek word that may indicate acquired and progressive knowledge received from facts, information, and data—a knowing that engages the mind and intellect in much thinking and decision making.

But in writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul stresses the other aspect of knowledge when he declares, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 8:9). Here “know” is the word used in the Greek that sometimes indicates perceptive knowing from personal experience and personal relationships. Indeed, the Corinthians and Paul could witness to having taken part actually and personally in the miracle and mystery of God’s saving grace.

In our first lesson this quarter we studied about the disciple Thomas. In John 14:4, 5 we find Jesus saying to him, “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” Thomas replied, “We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” At this point in their conversation, both Jesus and Thomas acknowledged Thomas’ *intellectual knowledge* by using the Aramaic equivalent of the word Paul used in 2 Timothy 1:12. But after having affirmed Himself as “the way, the truth, and the life” (verse 6), Jesus switched in verse 7 to the same Greek word used for “know” in 2 Corinthians 8:9, thereby possibly turning the mind of Thomas to knowledge by *experience* and personal *relationship*—that type of knowing which makes the Christian’s life more effectual and complete: “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”

Knowledge of the head as well as the heart, knowledge of information as well as participation, knowledge of what as well as how—only such knowledge of God will stand the test of challenge and be considered that knowledge which is unto salvation.

Knowing That We Know God

Part 1 — God’s Love Discerned

“Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

In last week’s lesson we learned that God knows everything there is to know about us. Actually, He knows more about us than we know about ourselves. There are many mysteries of human physiology scientists have not been able to solve as yet, and God also is able to read the secret motives of our hearts of which we ourselves may not always be aware. There is no way that we will ever know as much about God as far as factual information is concerned. But we *can* become acquainted with Him fully on the experiential level and come to have complete trust and confidence in Him.

Whatever our circumstances in this life, Paul reminds us that shame and disappointment need not be our portion inasmuch as the love of God is “shed abroad” in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Expressed another way, we might say that although disgrace and disappointment often accompany human ambition, hope founded on the consciousness of justification and endorsed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart cannot suffer disappointment or be put to shame because of God’s love in us.

The love of God manifests itself in nature, in the Bible, in human relationships, and in other ways as He chooses. Nevertheless, the sum total of divine love for planet Earth unveils itself most perfectly and plentifully in the atonement of Jesus Christ for our sins. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

What is the basic biblical test of our relationship with God?

A test of whether or not we know God lies solidly in our consciousness of God’s love for us and our love response to God and our fellow human beings. “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). False knowledge (worldly wisdom) puffs up in pride (1 Cor. 8:1, 2), but God-knowledge builds up in love (1 Cor. 8:3).

THINK IT THROUGH: As I think of my saving relationship with God, do I understand that it began with God searching for me rather than my searching for Him?

FURTHER STUDY: 1 Cor. 13:2, 8; *Steps to Christ*, “God’s Love for Man,” pp. 9-15.

Knowing That We Know God

Part 2 — Faith Awakened

“He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

The desire to know God does not arise naturally from the carnal nature. It ultimately must be a spiritual experience. “As your conscience has been quickened by the Holy Spirit, you have seen something of the evil of sin, of its power, its guilt, its woe; and you look upon it with abhorrence. You feel that sin has separated you from God, that you are in bondage to the power of evil. The more you struggle to escape, the more you realize your helplessness. . . . You long to be forgiven, to be cleansed, to be set free. Harmony with God, likeness to Him—what can you do to obtain it?”

“It is peace that you need—Heaven’s forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. Money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain to it; you can never hope, by your own effort, to secure it. But God offers it to you as a gift, ‘without money and without price.’ . . . It is yours if you will but reach out your *hand* and grasp it.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 49. (Emphasis supplied.)

Is it “our” faith that saves us? Eph. 2:8, 9.

The hand that we reach out to God is the hand of faith. But it is not “our” faith that brings salvation, for it is not nor ever can be something we credit ourselves for having accomplished by ourselves. Faith comes as God’s gift. It is given us that we might believe in Him in an effectual way. “Faith working by love is the key of knowledge, and everyone that loveth ‘knoweth God.’ 1 John 4:7.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 139.

Note three aspects of faith outlined in Hebrews 11:6 that distinguish it as genuine.

Belief that He is. God has provided us with all the evidence of His existence that we need to make an intelligent decision to believe in Him.

Belief that He is a rewarder. Our faith must include belief that it matters to Him that we respond to His love through obedience.

Diligence in seeking Him. We must ever grow in our understanding of God and in becoming like Him.

THINK IT THROUGH: “Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 175.

FURTHER STUDY: Heb. 11:1-40.

Knowing That We Know God

Part 3 — Obedience Rendered

“Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”
(1 John 2:3).

As bold and abrupt as it might sound, the Bible concept of having a knowledge of God virtually is a synonym for obedience to God’s will. (See Hosea 6:6.) To know God means to exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness as He does (Jer. 9:24). “The knowledge of God is a fourfold strand binding together obedience to God’s will, worship of his name, social righteousness and national prosperity; ignorance of God *per contra* spells disobedience, idolatry, social injustice and national disaster.”—Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 40.

In the biblical sense of the word, knowledge of God has more to do with a subjective relationship, as between one person and another, than with theoretical contemplation. It involves our attitude toward God more than it does our acquaintance with information about Him.

Why is it that obedience, trust, and respect provide evidence of our knowing the Lord? 1 John 2:4-6.

Many in the Christian world today claim to know God but disregard His commandments. But that cannot be. John does not leave his readers with the negative side but hastens to assure that when God’s love fills our hearts we naturally and gladly will walk as Christ walked. When Christ lives out His life in us it will be no different from the kind of life He lived while on earth. “John insists that he who claims to abide in Christ should give daily evidence that he is emulating his Saviour. The life must tally with the profession.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 638.

“**The Enabling Grace of God.**—In His Word God reveals what He can do for human beings. He molds and fashions after the divine similitude the characters of those who will wear His yoke. Through His grace they are made partakers of the divine nature, and are thus enabled to overcome the corruption that is in the world through lust. It is God who gives us power to overcome. Those who hear His voice and obey His commandments are enabled to form righteous characters. Those who disregard His expressed commands will form characters like the propensities that they indulge.”—Ellen G. White *Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 943.

THINK IT THROUGH: How may I be sure that my religious obedience stems from my knowing God and not from fear of what I do not know about God?

FURTHER STUDY: Col. 3:9, 10; Gal. 5:22, 23; *Steps to Christ*, “The Test of Discipleship,” pp. 58, 59.

Knowing That We Know God

Part 4 — Calvary Cherished

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

Prior to his labors at Corinth, Paul had worked in Athens, the intellectual citadel of the Greeks, and found limited success in using argumentation to combat heathen idolatry. “In preaching the gospel in Corinth, the apostle followed a course different from that which had marked his labors at Athens. While in the latter place, he had sought to adapt his style to the character of his audience; he had met logic with logic, science with science, philosophy with philosophy. As he thought of the time thus spent, and realized that his teaching in Athens had been productive of but little fruit, he decided to follow another plan of labor in Corinth in his efforts to arrest the attention of the careless and the indifferent. He determined to avoid elaborate arguments and discussions, and ‘not to know anything’ among the Corinthians, ‘save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 244.

When Karl Barth, the Protestant theologian from Europe, visited America for the first time during the 1960s, he was asked to give a brief summary of his accumulated religious learning and experience. After reflecting for a short moment, he answered in the words of Anna Warner’s famous children’s hymn:

Jesus loves me! this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.

It is as simple as that—yet so profound!

SEARCH AND LEARN:

How do the following texts establish the centrality of the cross to our relationship with God?

1 Cor. 1:17, 18 _____

Gal. 6:14 _____

Col. 1:19-23 _____

THINK IT THROUGH: “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

FURTHER STUDY: Gal. 2:20; *Steps to Christ*, “God’s Love for Man,” pp. 14, 15.

Knowing That We Know God

Part 5 — Prayer Practiced

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

Because prayer is opening the heart to God as we would to a known and trusted friend, effectual prayer signals acquaintance with the Almighty. But is it possible to follow the admonition of this text and pray without ceasing? One woman testified that when she awakes in the morning, she prays that God will open the eyes of her understanding. While bathing she prays that God will give her the washing of regeneration. During breakfast or any other meal, she asks that the Lord feed her with manna from heaven. While dressing herself her prayer is that she will be clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Her approach has merit without being a universal prescription in its details.

“There is necessity for diligence in prayer; let nothing hinder you. Make every effort to keep open the communion between Jesus and your own soul. . . .

“Pray in your closet, and as you go about your daily labor let your heart be often uplifted to God. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. These silent prayers rise like precious incense before the throne of grace. Satan cannot overcome him whose heart is thus stayed upon God.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 98, 99.

Victor Hugo put it succinctly: “There are times in a man’s life when, regardless of the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.”

What example in coming close to God through prayer did Jesus set for us? Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15, 16; 6:12.

SEARCH AND LEARN:

Summarize how the texts that follow contribute to our understanding of drawing closer to God through prayer:

Ps. 145:18 _____

Isa. 65:24 _____

Phil 4:19 _____

James 4:8 _____

THINK IT THROUGH: How may there be a difference between “saying” prayers and “praying” prayers? In communing with God, am I certain to have something to say to Him about my actual life?

FURTHER STUDY: Matt. 6:9-13; John 17:1-26.

Knowing That We Know God

Part 6 — Knowledge Growth

“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).

As with all living things, growth characterizes the true child of God; for he or she has been “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). By aspiring to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15), the Christian begins now and also looks forward to “endless growth in character and in understanding the will and ways of God.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 619.

Grace represents one of the spheres in which the Christian is to grow in this life. Knowledge is a sphere in which we can grow throughout eternity as well as in this life. We are taught in the Word to “abound in . . . knowledge,” to “add to . . . knowledge,” and to be “increasing in the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 8:7; 2 Peter 1:5; Col. 1:10). The opposite or counterpart of such spiritual advancement is that of “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7)—being hamstrung by vain philosophy and the kind of “vaunted” knowledge that formed the mystery-cult religions of New Testament times against which Paul taught and labored. (See Col. 2:8; 1 Cor. 13:2.)

Throughout the endless ages of eternity, both men and angels will be learning more and more about the plan of salvation. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19, 20.) A legend tells of a man who dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord.

He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life. He questioned the Lord about it. “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow You, You would walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times of my life there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed You most You would leave me.”

The Lord replied, “My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”

PERSONAL APPLICATIONS:

- Think back over the past three months of lesson study. Select a significant concept of knowing God that you have learned or had confirmed this quarter.
- Prepare a written testimony on this point. Emphasize your faith, assurance, and confidence in this quality of God. Tell what this characteristic of God means to you in daily life.
- Keep this testimony in your Bible and review it occasionally.

Lesson for 3rd quarter, 1984

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1984 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "God's Forgiveness and Love's Response."

First Lesson

GOD AND FORGIVENESS

Memory Text, Rom. 5:8

1. *God's Eagerness to Forgive* (2 Cor. 5:18)
2. *How Do We Experience Forgiveness* (1 John 1:9)
3. *Accepting Forgiveness* (Luke 5:18-20, NIV)
4. *Forgiveness Greater Than Sin* (1 John 2:2, NIV)
5. *God's Forgiveness Illustrated* (Matt. 18:21, 22)
6. *Focus of the Week* (Matt. 5:43, 44)

Second Lesson

FORGIVENESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Memory Text, Ex. 34:6, 7

1. *Moses' Intercession* (Ex. 32:9, 10, NIV)
2. *Questions About Forgiveness* (Ps. 99:8, NIV)
3. *Healing Broken Relationships* (Hosea 3:1, NIV)
4. *Forgiveness, Love and Discipline* (Hosea 3:2, 3, NIV)
5. *God's Attitude Encourages Repentance* (Luke 15:22-24)
6. *Focus of the Week* (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

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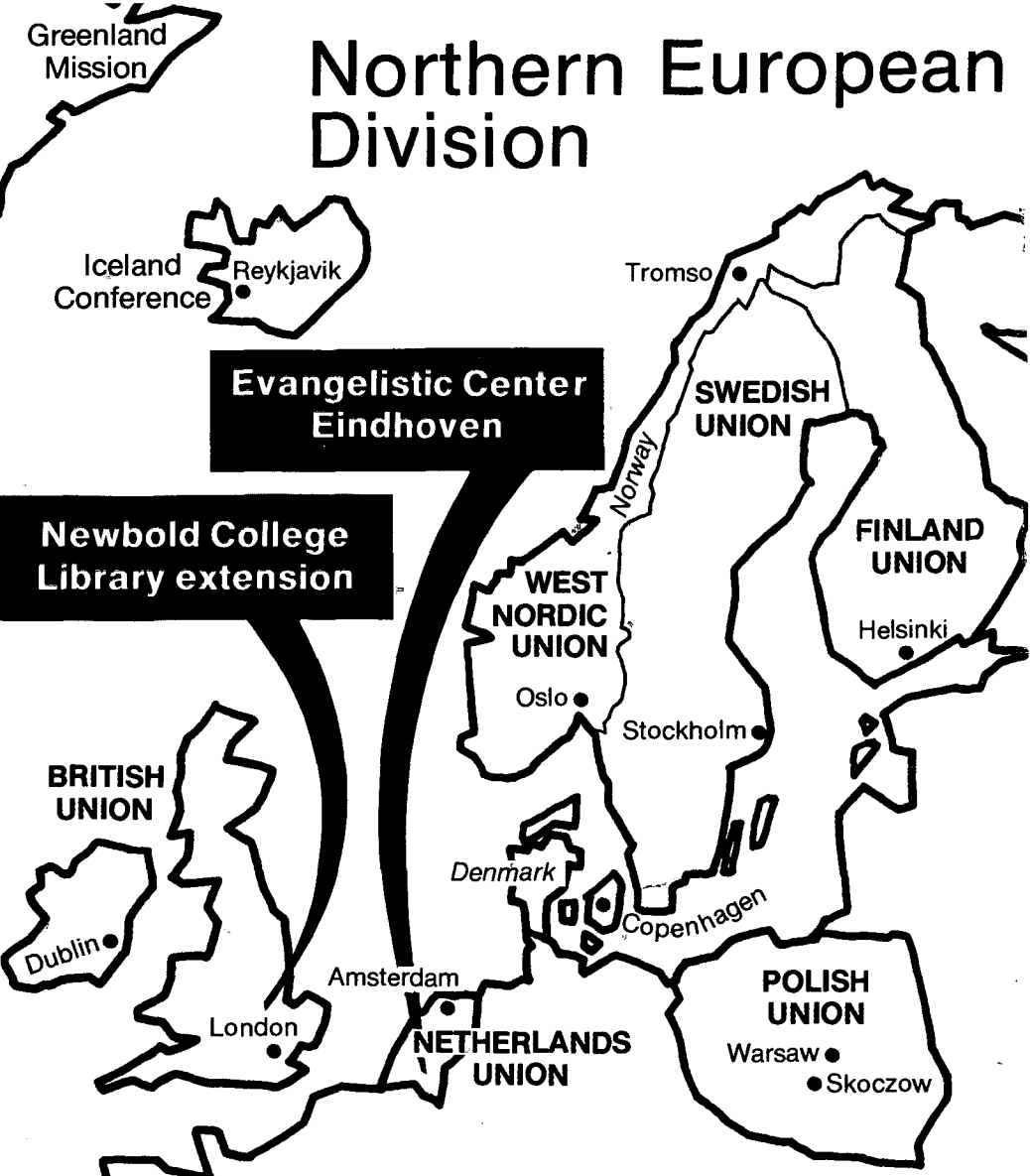
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Northern European Division



Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members	S. S. Members
British	53,608,529	165	14,632	15,866
Finland	4,780,000	54	5,995	4,004
Iceland Conf.	229,187	7	550	383
Netherlands	14,200,000	47	3,965	2,674
Polish	35,600,000	121	4,050	4,977
Swedish	8,582,000	57	3,613	4,390
West Nordic	9,264,256	129	9,068	8,268
	126,263,972	580	41,873	40,562

(Figures as of September 30, 1982)