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ONE

AMBITION

HOW WAS I DESIGNED TO LIVE?

NOVEMBER 2019



One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek,
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the
days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

Psalms 27:4

a practical introduction to life with God

G A V I N A N T H O N Y

I would love to hear how this book has helped you! If you would like to send some feedback or if need more copies, please email me at gavin@reflectingJesus.org

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where we are headed

welcome to the journey!

START HERE

OVERVIEW

- ***I was designed to live out the purposes of my Creator***
- ***being a Christian is about who I am, not simply what I do***
- ***life is about an intimate relationship with God that results***
- ***in His image being re-created in me***
- ***as I learn to reflect who God is, I will share in His work in the world—that others may also be restored in His image***

how was I designed to live?

Discovering our purpose as human beings is a profound and serious business. If I evolved by accident or chance, then perhaps questions of my purpose in the world are up to me to answer. But **if I was created, and if there was a designer, then the purpose of my life would be shaped by the purposes of my Creator.**

Christians believe that God created us with intentional design for a specific purpose. Yet we see such human brokenness around us, and experience much personal pain. Consequently, while many people have rejected God ^{because} life does not appear to make much sense, we are still driven by a search for meaning and purpose. I believe **the key to understanding our purpose is to understand God's original design for us.** Exploring life as God designed it to be lived is what this book is about.

overcoming legalism

In the mid 1600s, Henry Scougal wrote some letters that help us start to understand God's purpose for our lives. These letters are said to have resulted in the conversion of George Whitefield—one of the greatest preachers the world has witnessed. In his early years, Whitefield, along with John and Charles Wesley (cofounders of the Methodist church), struggled with a legalistic Christianity that seemed to promise much but delivered little. By contrast, Scougal wrote that people who have genuine Christianity,

know by experience that true religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle's phrase, "It is Christ formed within us..." (The Life of God in the Soul of Man, 38)

So being a Christian is not just about what we believe or think. Nor is it just about what we do. Most of all, it's about who we are—it's about intimacy with God Himself that results in us being re-shaped to be like Jesus.

one ambition

The Psalmist David wrote about his great desire for life with God. He wrote:

*One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)*

David's one, driving ambition was to gaze upon the beauty of God. Andrew Bonar

writes that such beauty means “all that makes God an object of affection and delight”. In this sense, **God's beauty is His character**. David desired to see God by moving into God's presence. **I believe that such a deep longing for communion with God and a desiring and treasuring of who God is, to be the greatest purpose a human being can have.**

the result of gazing at God' beauty

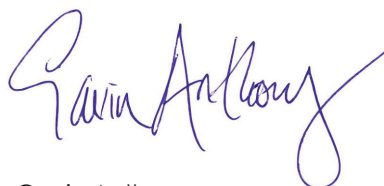
There are two significant consequences to gazing at God's beauty. **Firstly, as I desire God above all other things and move into His presence, I will reflect who God is. This is because I will inevitably be changed to be like the person I see and spend time with. As Paul explains, “and we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18).** At creation, the Bible describes that humans were originally created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). So as I enter into God's presence as a broken human being and begin to contemplate the beauty of the Lord, I enter into a process that will re-create God's image in me. **This re-formation will also prepare me to stand firm at the return of Jesus, for God's image is the Father and Son's “name” that is written on the foreheads of God's people (Revelation 14:1).**

Secondly, as I desire God above all other things and move into His presence and reflect who God is, I will naturally share in God's desire to see others re-created in His image. The apostle Paul reveals that the re-formation of Christ in our lives is God's personal priority, “for those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the image of his Son**” (Romans 8:29). God's own desire to see others re-created in His image is seen in the ministry of the apostle Paul. Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia, “My dear children, for whom **I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you**” (Galatians 4:19). Notice two things in this verse. Firstly, that the focus of Paul's ministry was the formation, or more specifically, the re-formation of the character of Jesus in people's lives. Secondly, that this ministry can be so challenging that it can feel like the spiritual equivalent of giving birth. But like Paul, we agree that this ambition to serve others is worth the effort. For in the middle of our dark and painful world, there is nothing greater than seeing others reflect the character and image of Jesus.

the greatest thing in the world

Ellen White writes that “the greatest work that can be done in our world is to glorify God by living the character of Christ” (6 Testimonies, 439). Focusing more directly on restoring the image of God in us, she declares, “To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption.” (Education, 15-16)

One Ambition will help unpack a process which explains how this can happen in your life. My hope is that it will encourage and guide your connection with God so you will reflect His image, and that this will be the overriding ambition for your life. I would love for you to join me in sharing this ambition as we travel together. All the best for the Journey!



Gavin Anthony
Hollywood, Ireland, 2016

how to use this book

what's inside and how does it work?

START HERE

what's inside?

This book is divided into 2 main parts:

1. **Foundations.** These topics will help you see the big picture of what God designed your life to be like. It focuses on the main idea that God designed you to reflect His character in the world. We will explore the problem that sin created for God's purpose, and what you can do about.
2. **The Four Pillars.** The rest of the book is divided into four spiritual pillars that are essential for building the life God designed you to live. You will gain many practical tools and important ideas that will unpack the four pillars of:
 1. openness
 2. faith
 3. divine power
 4. God's work

These four pillars are deliberately placed in this order. Life with God is only possible once I am open to Him. Openness provides the soil for faith to take root, for it is impossible to trust God completely if I am not open to him. If I don't trust God, it is not possible to live with divine power at work in my life because all transformation that God accomplishes requires faith. Finally, I can try to do God's work, but if His power is not at work in my heart and mind, I will get tired and worn out by my own efforts and the influence I will have with others will be limited. Being an effective influence for God is only possible when God's work is done with God's power.

Appendix. There are four things here. Firstly, an official summary of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Secondly, a review of baptismal vows for those considering baptism. Thirdly, a summary chart of the discipleship model used as the foundation for this book. Fourthly, some blank journal pages for your notes as you work through the exercises. You may prefer to buy yourself a separate journal for this.

how to begin

1. Start by completing the **Foundations** section. As you read, you may find it helpful to highlight the ideas that are helpful to you.
2. How you use **The Four Pillars**, is up to you. It may be best to study the lessons in order, but you can choose the lessons you think will be most helpful to you.
3. Pay special attention to the **question at the end of every lesson**: "What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?" When you read, always try to listen to what the Holy Spirit wants to

bring to you attention, and what He wants you to do about it. Your life will change according to how you learn to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit.

for baptismal students

One Ambition can be used to prepare you for baptism. As there is enough material to study for one to two years—depending on your speed—some of the lessons will be completed before your baptism while the rest can be studied afterwards. The person preparing you for baptism will help you with this.

If you would like to study further, you have two options that are explained in the section *Going Deeper*. Firstly, in the Appendix there are official summaries of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A number of the lessons are linked directly to these beliefs. You can read these and study the extra Bible texts at the end of each belief. Secondly, to study these fundamental beliefs in greater depth, you can read the appropriate chapters in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

disciples making disciples

As you will see in lesson 55 on Jesus' method of disciple-making, Jesus was interested in teaching disciples to make disciples who make disciples. Jesus was introducing a system of multiplication, not addition. So as you learn to live the life that God has designed for you, you may want to consider who you can share this material with, and help them to live the life God has designed for them!

help for teachers

extra help for leading groups

START HERE

disciples who can make disciples

One of the greatest joys in life is teaching people the good news about Jesus and His Kingdom and watching them deepen their commitment to Him. In the past, I have been excited when people decided to make a decision to follow God. However, I was shocked to realise that in teaching them, I had not equipped them to do for others what I had just done for them.

If I only add to the Kingdom of God, I am not following Jesus' method of discipling which was intended to make disciples who can make disciples. Jesus was using a method of multiplication, not merely addition. Therefore, your great task in teaching this material is not simply to teach the content, but to wrap it up in Jesus' method, so that at the end of the course, your students can do for others what you have just done for them. Disciple-making isn't simply about becoming a better me, but becoming equipped to make more disciples—who make disciples...

To learn more about this idea, you may like to read lesson 55 on Jesus' method before you go further.

Happy disciple-making!

help for teaching a class

One Ambition can be used one-on-one and in groups. This is how I would recommend using this book with a group of up to 6 people. More than 6 in the group can make the study time longer and some people may not get involved so much.

1. **Thankfulness**—From the past week, what is something you are thankful for? This opening question creates an atmosphere of gratefulness to God and emphasises that we are dependent on Him for every good thing.
2. **Challenges**—What has been challenging for you in the last week? This question enables participants to be open and transparent about their lives, by admitting their imperfections and need of help from God and each other.
3. **How did it go?** This is a review of the commitment participants made the previous week in number 5 and 6 below. Asking each other how things went in terms of responding to God and sharing with others provides accountability and encouragement.
4. **Lesson study.** Go through the lesson for this week. Ensure that participants have time to complete the answers for number 5 and 6 by themselves before sharing with the group.
5. **Highlighting.** You may find it helpful to ask your participants to highlight the ideas they found helpful as they read. This can help them to share with the group more easily.

6. **What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?** This question is included at the end of each lesson. It is an important question because we are not changed by learning more information but by hearing the voice of God for ourselves that results in obedience to what He says. In every lesson, teach participants to be sensitive to what the Holy Spirit is saying to them personally, and how they choose to obey, so that their lives may be increasingly re-shaped by God's own design for their lives.
7. **Who can you share this with?** This question is also included at the end of every lesson. As disciples, God calls us to pass on what we have learned from Him to others—so that they can pass it on to others. Sharing with others grows the habit of sharing, and builds a need for dependence on God as we pray for Him to open up opportunities for witness.
8. **What will be your greatest challenge in the coming week?** This section provides opportunities for people in the group to help each other out.

Notice that there are no specific **prayer times** included in this class schedule. The idea is that prayer is included at any time when the need becomes evident.

preparing baptismal students

1. If you are using *One Ambition* to prepare candidates for baptism, after completing the Foundations section, you will need to start by deciding which lessons in The Four Pillars will be done before baptism and which will be left for afterwards. While it may be tempting to focus on essential doctrinal lessons before baptism, remember that candidates need more than doctrinal information. They need critical spiritual habits and attitudes that keep them in communion with God. Before baptism, candidates should normally have a firm understanding *and* experience of what it means to be open, trusting, depending on divine power, and even have begun to be active in joining God in His work.
2. If you would like baptismal students to study the doctrinal subjects in more detail, some direction is provided in the *Going Deeper* segment of certain lessons.



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Psalm 27:4

CHAPTER 1 *laying* FOUNDATIONS

a practical introduction to life with God

G A V I N A N T H O N Y

everything is a response to love

the Christian journey begins with an encounter of God's love

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

1

starting in the right direction

I was talking with a man who told me he was leaving the church. A thought flashed into my mind and I asked him, "During your life, have you ever experienced God's love?" He looked at me puzzled and replied, "no."

I have thought a lot about that conversation. One thing was certain: if he had never encountered God's love, then obviously God's love was not the reason he had started attending church or decided to become a Christian.

1. Why do people choose to become Christians or attend church?

People make decisions to follow Jesus because they are convinced about what they believe is "the truth". But if you try to be a Christian without encountering the person of God, who is Truth, your Christianity can easily turn into formal religion — religious habits and rituals that are dry, boring, and burdensome. But this is not a recipe that will give joy and meaning to your life.

So we need to start with some real expectations of what Christianity, and therefore the Church, is all about. Christianity is not just a list ideas, but a relationship with a person. So unless the person of God is my starting point, my Christian life will be based on other things. I am going to pursue a life with Jesus, not just because what He said important and true, but also because I have encountered His love for me. Everything I do in the Christian life should be a response to a present, personal, experience of God's love for me.

love is an experience

Because God's love is at the heart of Christianity, Divine love is not only a theological idea to stimulate my mind but also an experience designed to involve my heart. Being loved brings security, belonging, certainty that I am safe, that I am treasured, that I can mess up and will not be rejected. Therefore, Divine love impacts body, mind and spirit. As a parent, Divine love is what I want my children to experience through me, and this is what I want visitors to experience when they

OVERVIEW

- ***True christianity flows from an experience of God's love***
- ***Christianity is not a philosophy but a relationship***
- ***when I experience God's love, I will 1) feel helpless in my sin, 2) yield my heart to God in repentance, 3) yield my whole life to God so that God's nature can replace my sinful nature, 4) place my faith in God's words***

come to Church. When we encounter Divine love, we cannot remain the same.

how do I know God loves me?

There are different ways God reveals His love for us...

1. **The Bible tells me directly** (John 3:16)
 2. **Through the love of others** (1 John 4:7)
 3. **The historical fact of Jesus death for me** (1 John 4:10)
 4. **Experiencing God's grace and forgiveness** (Ephesians 2:4-5)
 5. **Seeing God's love through the beauty of nature** (Psalm 19:1)
 6. **The Holy Spirit convicts my heart that I am God's child** (Romans 8:16)
 7. **Other ways?**
-

consequences of experiencing God's love

When we experience God's love, what will happen in our lives? The Bible describes at least 4 important consequences of encountering God's love...

1. **I feel secure and valuable** (Romans 8:16, 31-39)
 2. **I am able to love others** (1 John 4:19)
 3. **I feel a sense of helplessness in my own sin and desire to turn away from it** (Luke 5:4-8)
 4. **As I yield my heart to God, longing that His Divine nature will replace my sinful nature, I will become like Jesus** (2 Corinthians 3:18). As I increasingly submit to God, by looking away from myself and looking to Jesus, I will become increasingly like Him.
 5. **Other consequences?**
-

how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

I was created for the glory of God

understanding God's purpose for my life

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

2

OVERVIEW

- ***I was created to reveal God's glory***
 - ***God's glory is His character***
- ***I reveal God's glory as His Holy Spirit lives in me***
- ***when God's Holy Spirit lives in me, I will reveal the character of God—for God Himself is living in me***

God's purpose for my life

As we begin exploring God's design for our lives, we are going to start thinking about your purpose for living.

1. If you think about the past few years, what have you thought is your purpose for being alive?

Let's consider this idea further. In 1643, the English parliament requested a group of theologians and laymen to reform the Church of England. Over a period of five years they met in Westminster Abbey and eventually drew up a confession of faith which was voted by parliament. At the same time, they used questions and answers to teach people, particularly children, the most important aspects of Christian faith. One document, the Shorter Westminster Catechism, opens with a vital question and answer:

Q: What is the chief end of man?

A: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

2. Read Isaiah 43:6-7. What does God say is the reason His people were created?

In these verses, God uses the words "created", "formed", and "made", which prompts the reader to think back in time to the creation of the world. God is saying that when He first created Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, He created them for His glory—and that purpose is still driving God's actions. We will think a lot about our purpose as human beings throughout this book, but this text is perhaps one of the most important when it comes to our purpose from God's point of view. God clearly states that He created human beings for His glory.

3. Read Ephesians 1:11-14. What does Paul say is the reason the Father chose you to be holy and adopted as His child when you trust in Jesus' salvation for you?

All human beings were originally created for the glory of God, and that purpose never has changed—even when sin dramatically entered into our lives. In fact, Jesus came to earth to ensure that we could still live to glorify God.

what is God's glory?

In the Bible verses we have just considered, to be created for God's glory means we

were created for God's honour. God is honoured because He created us. But why is God honoured for this? To answer this question, we first need to think about God's own glory.

4. Read Exodus 33:18-23, 34:5-7. What is God's glory?

If God's glory is His character, how do humans glorify and honour God? We begin to see the answer through an important Old Testament picture. When God decided to ask His people to build Him a tabernacle, it was so that He could "dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8) in intimate relationship. On the day that services began, God's physical glory filled the tabernacle, and later the temple (See Exodus 40:35-36 & 2 Chronicles 7:1-2). But when we move into New Testament times, the glory—the person, the character—of God, is not seen filling a temple building made of stone, but something very different.

5. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19. What are you described as? _____

6. Read Ephesians 3:17. What does God desire to dwell in? _____

7. Read Galatians 5:22-23. When the Spirit of God enters into your life, what becomes visible?

Summary

While God has physical glory, it is an outward representation of His inner purity and character. He revealed His physical glory in the tabernacle and temple when He came to live with His people. Today, you are the temple of God and God desires to have intimacy with you by dwelling in your heart and life. Just as the physical glory of God visibly shone out of the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, so the glory of God's character through the presence of God's Holy Spirit is designed to visibly shine out of God's temple—your life. You were designed to reveal the glory of God, and despite the consequences of sin, God still intends your life to reveal His glory—His character—to the world. And when this happens, God Himself is greatly honoured and His glory fills the earth, one life at a time.



how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

I was designed in the image of God

the image of God defines what it means to be human

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

3

OVERVIEW

- **I was created in God's image**
- **God's image consists of everything I am: mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually**
- **character is foundational to the image of God**
- **the image of God defines what it means to be human**

defined at creation

The Bible opens with a description of the creation of our world, including human beings. The author writes,

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

*So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)*

In these verses, human beings are defined as being "in our image, in our likeness... in his own image... in the image of God". **According to the Bible, you did not evolve by chance or randomly, but purposefully, designed by God Himself specifically "in his own image". In this sense, the image of God defines what it means to be human.**

1. How is Jesus Himself described? (Colossians 1:15)

2. What does Paul say happens as we look at Jesus? (2 Corinthians 3:18)

a critical question

But what is the image of God? This is a question that has been debated for centuries. But it is critical for us to understand this as much as possible. For if the image of God defines what it means to be human, then **the image of God provides us with a template, or blueprint, for what sort of people we are designed to become and how we should live.** Part of the answer can be seen when God created Adam.

3. What might the image of God consist of? (Genesis 2:7)

This verse describes humans as a combination of dust and breath. This particular Bible version describes dust plus breath as "a living being". Other versions use the word "soul" (KJV). Traditionally, the soul has been thought of something similar to a vapour that is separate from the body, but this comes from Greek philosophy. Today, Bible scholars increasingly agree that **the human soul consists of everything we are,**

our bodies (dust) and inner life (breath), and that we cannot separate the parts of who we are from each other. So in this sense, we could say that the image of God is everything we are, or ought to be—mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

focusing on character

While the Bible emphasises the importance of using our physical bodies to honour God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), **perhaps the most critical area where the image of God is seen is in our character.** As many have observed,

*Plant a thought and reap a word;
plant a word and reap an action;
plant an action and reap a habit;
plant a habit and reap a character;
plant a character and reap a destiny.*

Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States (1858-1919) declared, "Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike", while a Christian author expanded this idea into an eternal perspective, "A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next." (Christ's Object Lessons, 332)

But what is character? D L Moody, famously said that "character is what you are in the dark." Perhaps my favourite definition of character is from Ellen White who wrote that **moral character is the "thoughts and feelings combined"** (5 Testimonies, 310).

In this sense, a mind shaped in the image of God develops a character that reflects the character of God, which in turn determines what we do in the world and in eternity.

We will return to this idea constantly in the following pages. But in this introduction we have concluded something significant—an idea that has the power to change the whole direction of our lives: you and I were designed in the image of God, and that image refers to everything we are meant to be, especially our characters.

Putting these ideas together, God originally designed you in His image which was to reflect His mind and therefore His character, As God's character is revealed through you, you are able to live out God's purposes on the earth and expand God's Kingdom on His behalf. But as we will consider next, something went wrong and that divine design of the image of God became corrupted in us—in us all.

Fortunately, we don't have to stay this way. We can live again as God designed.



how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

the problem we all face

it's all about our natures

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

4

OVERVIEW

- *I do not reveal the image of God today as clearly as God originally intended*
- *the root cause of my problems is the nature within me*
- *sin is rebellion against God's Kingly authority over me*
- *if I ignore the problem of my sinful nature, I will bring upon myself God's wrath*
- *I cannot modify my sinful nature—I have to replace it with the nature of Jesus*

why is a lamb gentle?

While humans were originally designed in the image of God, and designed for a wonderful purpose, how we actually live today can be the very opposite. But why?

1. What problem does the Apostle Paul face? (Romans 7:15)

At one time or another, we all feel like this, and it can become frustrating and depressing. So why do we do things that are the opposite of what we know to be right, and the opposite of how God designed us to live? Andrew Murray, identifies the root of our problem,

Why is a lamb always gentle? Because that is its nature. Does it cost the lamb any trouble to be gentle? No. Why not? It is so beautiful and gentle. Has a lamb to study to be gentle? No. Why does that come so easy? It is its nature. And a wolf—why does it cost a wolf no trouble to be cruel, and to put its fangs into the poor lamb or sheep? Because that is its nature. It has not to summon up its courage; the wolf-nature is there (Absolute Surrender, 16).

the sin factory

The problem Murray highlights lies at the core of who I am—it concerns my nature. It is not about my *actions* so much as the *factory* that produces those actions. **My primary challenge is not the sins I do, but the factory inside me that produces those sins. That factory is my nature. Indeed, the closer I move towards God, the more I will see the gravity of this situation. The closer I move towards God's light, the more the Holy Spirit is able to reveal to me about the power of my own sin factory.**

2. How does Paul describe our human condition and the root of our problem? (Ephesians 2:3)

Here Paul points out two things. Firstly, that we all have had to struggle with sinful cravings, but secondly, that because of our natures, we bring upon ourselves God's wrath. This is serious.

The problem of the sinful nature factory goes all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. While living in a perfect world, without any taint of sin, Satan arrived in Eden and tempted Eve to disobey God. She chose to follow Satan's

suggestion and Adam chose to follow her. The result was the corruption of the image and character of God within both of them. Rather than longing to be with God, Adam and Eve both hid from Him. They were both, by nature, in rebellion against His Kingly authority. If you are not familiar with this story, you can read about it in Genesis 3.

So if I am corrupt and sinful by nature, how will I be able to escape all the problems, pain, and discouragement caused by such a nature?

As you will see in the next chapter, the answer is not to try harder to become better. I cannot modify my nature to become nicer or kinder. The only thing I can do—the only thing that anyone can do—is to find some way to replace the nature I have inside with the nature that is in Jesus.

How we can do that, is what we will explore next.



how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

the key to restoring God's design

change happens as I maintain intimate communion with God

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

5

OVERVIEW

- *sin causes me to hide from God*
- *God initiates all relationship*
- *human beings are not transformed by information*
- *communion with God is the only place where change into God's image can happen*
- *all spiritual maturity is the automatic consequence of connection with God*

You were designed to live in a close, intimate, personal relationship with God. But as we have seen, while human beings were designed in the image of God—designed to live out His character in the world—that image is no longer clear and distinct but painfully broken. This is because **the nature that is within us is corrupted and sinful**. So how does a sinful person deal with this problem?

broken communion

If we return to the story of the first rebellion of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, we see that one of the first indications that something was wrong was that Adam and Eve hid from God, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:8-9) Their internal brokenness caused them to hide from Him because they felt ashamed of their nakedness. One author suggests they had been clothed with light (perhaps as God Himself is clothed with light, Psalm 104:2), but **their internal corruption resulted in their external glory disappearing. But God called out to them. He wanted them to return to His presence where they had been created to live without fear and with great joy.**

communion restored through sacrifice

However, this story hints at something that becomes increasingly clear throughout the rest of the Bible story. Adam and Eve could find wholeness again, but only because Jesus would personally pay the penalty of death that their rebellion demanded (Romans 3:23-34). Genesis 3:21 says that God made Adam and Eve clothes of skins. This meant that animals had to be sacrificed for them to be clothed and their shame removed. Such sacrifice has always been at the heart of worship for God's people. In the tabernacle and temple services in Israel, sacrifice was central. But **the purpose of the services was not sacrifice—the purpose was that through sacrifice, God and His people could find communion with each other.** As God declared, "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). Change could only happen when God's people were in God's presence. It's the same with us. We can only live as God designed once we learn how to return to live in God's presence. As sacrifice is a giving up of those things that are preventing us from connecting ourselves to God, anything that we give up to be re-connected with God is not really a sacrifice.

transformation through communion

Human beings are not transformed by information but by communion with God.

Information is important, but only actual communion with God provides the intimacy that allows God's own nature to flow into us and replace our own sinful nature with His. Jesus explained this to His disciples by using the imagery of the vine. Jesus said, "I

am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). From John 15:1-15.

1. What is the purpose and consequence of being connected to Jesus? (verse 8)

2. What three terms does Jesus repeatedly use to reveal intimacy with God in the following verses, 9-10, 11 and 14-15?

3. In the passage, how many times is the word "if" used, and what does this mean?

Living as a Christian is like a television plugged into the wall. If you are watching TV and someone accidentally pulls the plug out of the wall, the picture disappears immediately. If you want sound and a picture, you have to have continuous power that stays at a constant level. That's why the plug is so important. The plug connects the power supply to the television. By contrast, **living as a Christian is not like running on batteries.** Some Christians think that life with God is like charging your batteries with God in the morning by praying and reading the Bible, and then recharge them later. But such thinking can be dangerous.

Jesus says He is the vine and we are the branches. **When we are connected to Him like the plug, and His nature is able to flow from Him into us, we will automatically bear fruit—because His character is now inside us. But we have to be connected at all times. Otherwise we face the danger of trying to live like Christians—but without God's power.**

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development. (Acts of the Apostles, 126)



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how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

why follow God's design?

it is all about joy

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

6

Why should we reflect the character of God—is it just to fix something that has been broken—the image of God in us? It has been a great discovery of mine that **God's purposes are all about joy**. It is a joy that is intended to permeate every part of our existence, and I think from God's point of view, is intended to permeate the deepest part of His cosmos. Just look at how joy has always been God's theme.

joy at creation

As God fashioned a world that reflected His glory, He was full of joy. As He put down His tools each evening, God could not help repeating that “it was good”, and “very good” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). Indeed, as a celebration of His remarkable creation, God made an extra day simply to enjoy what He had made, culminating in humans created “in his image” (Genesis 1:26-27), “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done” (Genesis 2:3). The angels and heavenly beings watching God creating in His own image were filled with joy. They were so amazed at the magnificence of His creation that they burst into song, “the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

joy at re-creation

Even the arrival of sin could not halt this joy. **As Jesus worked to re-form mankind back into the image of God so we would live out the ways of His Father's kingdom, joy was His goal**, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:10-11) For those wondering if such a life is a legalistic burden, Paul clarifies that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

Peter picks up this theme of joy in the re-creation process, “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9).

Joy is the destiny of the saved. Indeed, like a hallmark inside a ring that assures the wearer that the gold is genuine, so joy is an identifying mark that God is truly at work in us, for the fruit of the Holy Spirit within us “is...joy” (Galatians 5:22). So **when God is at work, seeing His joy and being thrilled by it, is unavoidable**. Even under pressure it was because of “the joy set before him [that Jesus] endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

But **joy is also God's intention for those who participate in this work for others**. As Paul explains to the Philippians, “If you have any encouragement from being united with

OVERVIEW

- *the internal consequence of reflecting the character of God is joy*
- *the external consequence of reflecting the character of God is a witness before our world and the universe*
- *joy is the hallmark that God is successfully revealing Himself through me*

Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose..." (Philippians 2:1-2). And as John writes about God speaking a word of re-creation in Christ, he adds, "We write this to make our joy complete." (1 John 1:4) In a later epistle, John states unequivocally, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." (3 John 4) No greater joy? Imagine that!

joy into eternity

God sees an eternity ahead of us that is completely filled with joy. As He looks ahead to a world without sin and sees His new creation eternally restored into His image—just as He always intended it—joy overflows between Him and His people, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more" (Isaiah 65:17-19). And again, "The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17)

Indeed, during our very first moments in this eternity, all John seems to be able to hear are sounds of joy, "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear" (Revelation 19:6-8).

Finally, the nakedness of Adam and Eve, and all their children who have trusted Jesus, has been forever covered by the righteousness of Jesus. They now have clothes that reflect the glory of God Himself. His children are now prepared to fill the earth with the glory of God, and experience a joy that will never cease.

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise (Great Controversy, 678).



how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

how much change is possible?

the journey of transformation is an eternal journey

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

7

a question

Let me ask you a question: do you think the angels in Heaven—the angels that cry “holy, holy, holy” around God’s throne—repeat themselves? Do angels sing like machines, unchanged through millennia, with the same old song?

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.
(Isaiah 6:3)*

I don’t think the angels repeat themselves. Rather, as eternity continues, they glimpse fresh insights into the beauty and glory of our God. Such new insights are possible because God Himself is infinite. So there is no such thing as having “arrived” or of coming to an end of knowing God. Rather, you have the possibility of entering into an eternal journey of continual growth—of increasingly reflecting the character of Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18). To help us begin to grasp these endless possibilities—which are based on the infinite nature of God—let’s consider some facts about the universe.

defining infinite

From what I have read, it is possible to put one million earths in the sun. While the sun is 1.4 million kilometers in diameter, VV Cephei is that is about 2000 times the diameter of the sun. If it was placed where our sun is today, it would fill the orbits of Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter and reach extremely close to Saturn!

Now imagine the thickness of this page is the distance from earth to the sun—93 million miles. Using this scale, the distance to the nearest star which is 4½ light years away would be a stack of paper over 21 and a half meters high. Again, using the same scale, the diameter of our own galaxy being 100,000 light years would be require a stack of paper 310 miles high.

And to the edge of the universe? Our stack of paper, each sheet’s thickness being the distance from the earth to the sun, would need to be 31 million miles high.

And what is contained within these spaces? Gerald Colvin brought together a few interesting facts to try and explain. The Milky Way is our home galaxy. A nearby galaxy, the Magellanic Clouds, is at just 170,000 light years away and has 15 billion stars. Around 2.2 million light years away from us is the Andromeda galaxy, twice our size, with 250 billion stars. Further away still is galaxy M87 with 750-1000 billion stars. We have mentioned just four galaxies, but Colvin says that **if Adam had begun counting galaxies at 100 a minute and was still alive today, he wouldn’t be finished counting.**

OVERVIEW

□ ***in a similar way that the universe is of unending size, so there is unending depth to the beauty, love, goodness, and righteousness of God’s character***

□ ***because God is infinite, my knowledge and experience of His love, kindness, joy, and greatness can increase throughout eternity***

□ ***the more I grow in a knowledge of God, the more I become like Him in character***

And this is only what humans with telescopes like the Hubble have managed to find.

The universe is infinite. It's boggles our minds with its size and "never-endingness". And this helps us to understand God a little better. God is also infinite. **There is a "never-endingness" to the beauty and virtue of His character and glory.**

And if this small insight into the size of the universe is anything to go by, we can certainly never know all of God—the One who "determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name." (Psalm 147:4)

As our amazing universe hints to us, we will never understand all there is about God. But, we can begin to know Him. And then we can continue to know Him.

This means that **the longer I spend on this journey to know God, the more I can learn. Because God is infinite, my knowledge of Him and His greatness, love, kindness joy, grace, and so on, can always increase.**

Always.

For the whole of eternity. That is, for billions and billions of years. And more. So the song the angels sing is always new. Always fresh. Always deepening and broadening with adoration and praise.

maturing for eternity

Because God is infinite, I will never be able to reach the point where I can say, "Now I know everything about God." I won't be able to say that about even a part of Him.

But you see, only knowing about God in an intellectual sense is not the point. It never is. Knowing God is always intended to be experiential. Because knowing God is always about becoming. Becoming—like Him.

And this knowing God—that is actually becoming like God—is at the centre of God's eternal, cosmic, purposes for our lives.

In fact, reflecting the character of God in increasing measure is at the centre of the cosmic purpose for every being God has ever made.

And will be for billions and billions of years.

Forever.



how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

cosmic attack on God's design

I live inside a cosmic battle started over the character of God

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

8

battle over the image of God

In the seventeenth century, English poet John Milton wrote about Lucifer's fall from Heaven in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Milton uses Bible texts (e.g. Colossians 1:16, Psalm 2:6-7, and Philippians 2:9-10.18) to describe the reasons for sin coming into the world.

In a Harvard essay, Gary Anderson highlights Milton's understanding of the rebellion of Satan. The story unfolds as Satan hears a rumour that the Father and Son were planning to create man. As the highest created being in Heaven, Satan's pride was hurt because he had not been involved in the discussions. Aware of this, the Father called all the angels together and exalted Jesus above all to demonstrate that no-one else could be compared to Him. Anderson describes how Milton depicts Satan's attitude at the elevation of Jesus,

If Satan found this objectionable and a cause for rebellion, then it is hardly idle speculation to say that he would have found the figures of Adam and Eve more objectionable. In some sense the elevation of Christ is a provoking moment that provides the necessary occasion for Satan to vent his hostility towards God's larger designs with His universe. The elevation of Christ smokes-out the secret hatred of this formidable angel and foe." (The Fall of Satan in the Thought of St. Ephrem and John Milton", Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 2000.)

Two hundred years after Milton's poem, Ellen White describes the origins of this rebellion in a similar way:

The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that He might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon His Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was His Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out His will and His purposes but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in Him. Lucifer was envious and jealous of Jesus Christ. Yet when all the angels bowed to Jesus to acknowledge His supremacy and high authority and rightful rule, he bowed with them; but his heart was filled with envy and hatred. (The Story of Redemption, 13-14.)

OVERVIEW

- ***I live inside a cosmic battle between God and Satan***
- ***the focus of the battle is Satan's desire to destroy the character of God in people designed to reflect the image of God***
- ***the work of salvation is to re-form what Satan has de-formed—the image of God in human beings***

the cosmic battle in the Bible

1. How does the Bible describes Satan's anger and fall from Heaven (Revelation 12:7-9)

In this passage, the apostle John describes Satan as the one "who leads the whole world astray." But where did Satan and his angels focus their deceptions?

We have already noted that humans were designed in the "image of God" (Genesis 1:27). The apostle Paul now describes how the work of salvation addresses people who have been formed in God's image, but through Satan's work, that image is now deformed.

2. What does Paul say is God's purpose for you? (Romans 8:29)

3. What will happen to you when you enter into God's purposes? (2 Corinthians 3:18)

4. What was the focus of Paul's ministry? (Galatians 4:19)

From these texts we see that **the focus of Satan's attack—which is being addressed by the gospel—is the image of God in us.**

In the diagram on the next page, you will see an summary of the story of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan over the issue of God's character. Notice there are seven key events. **You will find it helpful to memorise these because everything else that happens in the Bible relates to one or more of these critical times.** As you read through the chart, notice how each major event relates to the battle over the character of God.



how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

the cosmic conflict over God's character

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Fall of Satan and his angels from Heaven	Creation—in God's perfect image	The Fall—God's image deformed	Salvation—Re-forming God's image	Judgement	Second Coming	Destruction of evil and eternal re-creation
<p>Satan wanted to have the power of God without the character of God. Because of his pride, Satan started a war in Heaven against Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. As a result, Satan and one third of the angels were expelled from Heaven.</p> <p>Satan's pride and anger increased as he later began trying to destroy the people Jesus made in His own image. As a fallen angel, Satan and his angels work invisibly to human eyes.</p> <p>Isaiah 14:12-15 Ezekiel 28:14-17 Revelation 12:7-9 Ephesians 6:10-12</p>	<p>Jesus created us in His image. Everything He made was beautiful and caused great joy for Him and all in the Universe.</p> <p>Genesis 1:26-27 Genesis 1:31 Job 38:4-7 Colossians 1:15-17</p>	<p>Soon after creation, Eve went to the tree of good and evil—the very place God told her not to go. It was there that Satan was able to tempt her. Once she and Adam disobeyed God, they realised they were without clothes. This sin had broken God's character within them. It appears that bright glory had clothed them which represented God's glorious character within them. So now that God's character in them was broken, the glory around them also vanished. But more than that, they were beginning to experience the consequences of their disobedience—they were beginning to die.</p> <p>How could they, and all their children who would follow, be rescued from the consequences of their sin?</p> <p>Genesis 3:1-12</p>	<p>Sin always leads to death. As sinners we are condemned to eternal death. But Jesus came and died in our place. He took the punishment for sin that we should have taken. So when I trust that Jesus has died for me, God considers that I am saved from the consequence of my sin in the future—eternal death. But He also saves me from sin in the present. As I put my faith in the re-creative work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, Jesus restores His own character back into me—the character that became de-formed in Adam and Eve in Eden. When the Holy Spirit continues to work in us, we begin to reflect Jesus in increasing ways.</p> <p>Isaiah 53:4-6 Romans 3:21-24; 6:23 Romans 8:29 Galatians 4:19 2 Corinthians 3:18</p>	<p>Who can tell who is truly saved? Only God can. But as Satan has accused God of being unfair and unjust since the very beginning, God holds an open judgement, where the whole Universe can see that the decisions God has made are right, good, and fair. We are saved by our faith—our resting trust—in Jesus. This sort of faith results in the restoration of God's image in us, and therefore to practical change. That's why Jesus makes it very clear that we are judged according to our works—the inevitable fruit of faith. Such good fruit can be seen as the Holy Spirit reveals Himself through us.</p> <p>Romans 14:10-12 Daniel 7:9-10 Matthew 25:31-46 Galatians 5:22-23</p>	<p>Being restored in God's image is what prepares us to stand during the turbulent times of the second coming, for God's image is the same as the "name" of the Father and Son that is "written" on the foreheads of God's people. Jesus promised that He would return to earth, and would do so physically—just as when He came the first time. This will not be a secret event but will be visible for all to see. At this time, in "the twinkling of an eye" our bodies will be clothed with the same glory that Adam and Eve wore in Eden.</p> <p>Revelation 14:1 John 14:1-3 Acts 1:9-10 Matthew 24:24-27 1 Corinthians 15:35-55</p>	<p>After 1000 years with Jesus in Heaven, we will judge Satan, his angels, and the wicked. After this judgement has been announced, God will destroy the world by fire and recreate it as He intended at the beginning. We will then live on the earth, growing more and more in the image of Jesus for the rest of eternity.</p> <p>1 Corinthians 6:3 Revelation 20:7-15 Revelation 21:1-5 2 Corinthians 3:18</p>

a map for your journey

how to stay on track when the battle around me gets tough

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

9

OVERVIEW

- *life is a journey that leads us to God Himself*
- *God is always with us on this journey to Himself*
- *the Christian's motivation for going to Heaven is not merely to escape a sinful earth, but to live in the presence of a God*
- *God is continually appealing to me through the Holy Spirit to spend time with Him*

Psalm 23 outlines the stages of life's journey...



Psalm 27 explains the reason for this journey

- 4 One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.
- 8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.

journey within the cosmic battle

Living within a cosmic battle provides plenty of challenges for us individually. So when life gets tough, what keeps us going so that God's design for our lives remains on track? Psalm 23 and Psalm 27 are helpful in understanding the journey and why we should keep going, even though it may be difficult.

Notice that Psalm 23 is a journey with four important destinations connected by the path of righteousness—the path of discipleship. Firstly, there is an area of (1) green grass and quiet waters which provide refreshment. Further along the path is second location— (2) the valley of the shadow of death. Thirdly, the path passes by (3) a table full of all sorts of good things for me, yet is surrounded by my enemies. The path of righteousness ends at the fourth location—the destination of discipleship to Jesus—(4) the house of the Lord.

observations on the journey

So what can this Psalm teach us about how to cope when things get tough around us, so we do not lose sight of our eternal destination?

- 1. No matter how unprepared and weak I might feel on my journey, the Shepherd promises to provide everything I need.** *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters"* (verses 1-2). I remember reading "I shall not want" and blurting out loud back to God, somewhat agitated, "But I do want—I do want!" Here is our first challenge for the journey: if we are to travel without complaining against the Shepherd, we have to accept the fact that our expectations of the journey will start out very different from those of the Shepherd. The first obstacle we are faced with is learning to relinquish our escalating demands, expectations and ambitions for ourselves, and learning to accept that what God provides is all, and everything, that we need.
- 2. No matter how bewildering or confusing my journey might be, walking the Shepherd's paths will always accomplish the Shepherd's purposes for my life.** *"He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake"* (Verse 3). Notice how these paths are all called "paths of righteousness" (NIV) or "right paths" (NRSV). But why are they called right or righteous paths? Firstly, they are right paths because they lead to the right place, the Shepherd's home. Secondly, they are right paths because they keep us on a journey in the company of the right person, the Shepherd. Thirdly, they are right paths because they shape us into the right people. Notice how we travel the paths of righteousness *"for his name's sake"* (verse 3). *"For his name's sake"* means for the honour and glory of the Shepherd. But exactly how is the Shepherd honoured and glorified? We don't honour Him simply by surviving long enough to get to His house without giving up. To become the right people is to live out the purposes of the Shepherd. As we shall increasingly see, we honour the Shepherd most as we are filled with His nature and thus reflect His character. The strange truth is that the Shepherd may accomplish this in us most as He permits us to suffer. This last point is further expanded in the next point.
- 3. No matter how frightening our journey might be, the darkness is not a place to be feared for it is a place that the Shepherd uses to mature me to be more like Him.** *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me"* (Verse 4). When we cannot see the Shepherd because the darkness is so thick, Satan will tempt us to believe that God has abandoned us or we have taken the wrong route. The reality is the opposite, as Elisabeth Elliot explains, "A lamb who found himself in the valley of the shadow of death might conclude that he had been falsely led. It was needful for him to traverse that darkness in order to learn not to fear. The shepherd is still with him." (Elisabeth Elliot, *Quest For Love*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1996), 218.) Indeed, in the darkness as our enemies try to spring a surprise attack, we suddenly glimpse flashes of our Shepherd at work, beating back our enemies with His rod. And as we sometimes wander off blindly by ourselves and find ourselves so terribly alone and frightened by the sounds in the dark and what we imagine to be there, we feel the unexpected, and sometimes painful grip of a shepherd's staff, hauling us back to safety. In these dark valleys, perhaps more than any other places, we experience the salvation of the Shepherd and thus we develop confidence in His care.
- 4. No matter how easy we think our journey should be, the Shepherd may regularly**

allow our enemies to surround us in order for us to gain a deeper understanding

of His love for us. *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."* (Verse 5) "What would you be thinking", I asked the children at church, "If you had a table with everything you could possibly want on it, but your enemies were standing by?" "I think my enemies would want to steal it all!" chimed in one little boy. He was right! How many times are we concerned that our enemies are going to steal our happiness, our jobs, or destroy God's purposes for us? That is one of the lessons of the table. God places it even under the noses of our enemies and then we begin to realise that there is nothing they can do to take away what God has promised us. When we see how abundant God's blessings are for us, and how nothing and no-one can prevent us from receiving them, we are filled with a renewed wonder and thankfulness at the goodness of our Father. For we can then declare with the Psalmist, "I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me." (Psalm 30:1).

- 5. No matter how lonely my journey might appear to be, the Shepherd is always present.** *"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever"* (Verse 6). Both goodness and love are attributes of God. So to be followed by goodness and love, is to be followed by God Himself. As David assures us here, goodness and love is following him every single day. Goodness and love are following David through the fields of green grass, but goodness and love are also following him right into the dark valleys. Whether or not the Shepherd has led him into the darkness or whether David has charged off on his own, goodness and love is still behind him. And when David is mocked by his enemies, goodness and love are providing his every need. Goodness and love never leaves him. The Shepherd, Emmanuel, will be with him, even to the very end of the world.

motivation for the journey

The journey of discipleship with the Shepherd ends at the Shepherd's house. But I have some questions. Why does David want to travel this path in the first place? What is his motivation, particularly when the path holds so many difficulties? Why does David persevere while others give up and try other paths?

Psalm 27:4 explains what challenges the sheep to keep going to the house of the Lord and not quit, "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." David's deepest desire—which motivates the journey of his life, is to gaze—as one writer explained, a "clinging, lingering, chained gaze"—upon the character of the Lord.

Like someone we love to spend time with, David wants to spend all the time he can with God, because who God is, is desirable above all other things.

how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

?

who can you share this with?

not designed to walk alone

learning to find spiritual support

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

10

OVERVIEW

- *revealing the fullness of Christ is designed to happen best in community*
- *a spiritual community provides encouragement as I struggle with overcoming sinful habits*
- *a spiritual community encourages me as I encounter my supernatural enemy*

revealing Jesus together

1. Read Ephesians 4:11-13. What is the context for growing into the fullness of Jesus—for becoming like Him?

Notice how Paul describes growing into the fullness of Christ in the context of a community. There are apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and others with spiritual gifts who are working together to encourage each other in ministry and spiritual maturity. Growing in community is important because of two important challenges we face.

challenges: why we need community

The first challenge is ourselves. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, each of us is born into the world with a natural tendency to live in opposition to God and the ways of His kingdom.

2. How does David describe the problem we all face in Psalm 51:5?

So by the time we begin to choose to follow Christ, we already have many sinful habits which are deeply ingrained within us that are difficult to undo all at once. Along with this, we may be naturally shy or timid and so desire the support of others.

The second challenge is our supernatural enemy.

3. How does Peter describe the enemy we face in 1 Peter 5:8?

We cannot compete against such a supernatural enemy who has supernatural power by ourselves. We are continually in need of supernatural power from outside of ourselves that only God provides. Most importantly, we must remember that such power only comes as we rest in His presence, desiring God Himself above all things.

growing together

So how do we deal with these challenges as we pursue our discipleship to Jesus?

4. What can you learn from Solomon's counsel that could apply to your own journey of discipleship? (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

While having support from others is important in all areas of life, it is particularly important in our spiritual lives. Even though you may feel a little shy or awkward sharing your spiritual journey with other people at the start, it is important to remember that **God created you to live and grow in the community of the Church.** While there are things in your life that is between you and God alone, your spiritual journey is not intended to be private. This is so you can be continually surrounded by people to encourage and support you, and for you to encourage and support them. This is also why Jesus sent the disciples out to work together two by two.

And what about you? As you consider living life with God, can you afford to do it alone? I would suggest that you find someone who can journey along with you, so you can encourage and support each other, and particularly to pray for each other.

In finding someone that you could help you connect to Jesus in this way, spend some time asking God for His direction. Then consider the following questions:

- Who can be a spiritual encouragement and support to me?
- Do I want a more mature Christian to mentor me, or someone at the same level as I am?
- Who do I feel comfortable with? Who I can trust?
- Who could I spiritually encourage and support?

someone to walk with

Write the name of someone you would like to ask to walk with you in the next stage of your spiritual journey.



how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

a process for restoring God's design

four Pillars for re-forming the image of God

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

11

OVERVIEW

- **a sanctuary is a place where God lives**
- **re-formation in God's image happens as I contemplate God's glory in His sanctuary**
- **my heart is a sanctuary for God**
- **communion with God that restores His image in me involves a 4 stage process: 1) desiring openness, 2) deepening faith, 3) depending on divine power, 4) joining God's work**
- **openness provides the possibility to gaze on God's beauty, faith enables me to trust God enough to gaze upon beauty, depending on divine power is the core element that enables transformation to reflect God's beauty, joining God's work is the consequence of gazing on God's beauty**
- **this process is like a spiral, continually cycling around as each part of the process matures in my life**

re-formation is a process

Let's summarise some of the main ideas we have discussed so far. Human beings were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and so the image of God defines what it means to be human. Sin has profoundly broken God's image in human beings (cf 2 Corinthians 4:4), so salvation focuses on re-forming His image in us—not merely on escaping this world for Heaven. **However, while reconciliation with God can be instantaneous, transformation into His image is not. Growing ever more deeply in the image of God is a process. But how does this work?**

re-formation in God's sanctuary

This book is based on a process of discipleship based on the biblical sanctuary. **A sanctuary is a place where God lives.** David expresses his deep longing to be in such a place,

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)

David's desire was to personally gaze upon the beauty of God—the beauty and glory of God's character. The only place this gazing could be done was in God's presence. In David's time, God's presence was in the temple. Not only was God attractive to David, but being in His presence would result in his own transformation. **As Paul noted in 2 Corinthians 3:18, re-formation in God's image occurs as we “with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory”—and God's glory and personal presence is experience in His sanctuary.**

Indeed, while this transformation process begins on earth, it will not stop at the return of Jesus. As we continue to gaze upon the “beauty of the Lord” throughout eternity, we will continue to be “transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory...” This idea of transformation is the core idea that shapes this book.

God's personal presence was first encountered by Adam and Eve in Eden (Genesis 2-3). In Eden, they would have grown increasingly in God's image as they met with Him in daily communion. Eden was the first sanctuary. After sin, God's personal presence was in the Israelite tabernacle. God said to Moses, “then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). God's personal presence was later experienced in the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 7:1). **These sanctuary and temple rituals were to teach God's people how they could become holy like He was holy (Leviticus 11:44; 20:7; cf 1 Peter 1:16).**

John used the language of the sanctuary to describe how Jesus came to

"tabernacle" with us (John 1:14). Paul writes that the church is God's temple (2 Corinthians 6:16-17), and our individual bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Paul also writes how "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:17), suggesting that my heart is a temple for God. This means each of us has the capacity for God's personal presence to live within us. So sanctuaries are places where we can dwell in communion with God and see His glory. Consequently, sanctuaries are places of transformation. One day, we will live as transformed people in God's presence in the Heavenly temple! (Revelation 3:12; 21:3)

Paul underlines God's purpose in re-forming His image in us, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..." (Romans 8:29) He then writes that this is also the purpose of those who work for God. Paul illustrated this from his own experience, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19) But what does all this involve? What is going to enable me to encounter God's beauty in His sanctuary and be re-formed in His image?

the 4 pillars

This book is built on 4 Pillars that enable you to build the life God has designed you to live. Each pillar needs to be built in order.



pillar 1—openness

The first Pillar to build is openness. Openness to God is a choice I make (Psalm 65:4) that enables me to move towards the place where I have the possibility to "contemplate the Lord's glory" (1 Corinthians 3:18).

1. How does the Bible describe the condition of Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 7:13) and the hearts of Jesus' disciples? (Mark 8:17)

-
2. What does God promise to do for those with hard hearts? (Ezekiel 36:26)
-

A hard heart prevents the Holy Spirit from making an impression in me. By comparison, a soft heart is a heart that is open to the impressions of the Holy Spirit. **By nature, I do not desire openness with God (Romans 3:10-12). So from the beginning, God has always initiated communion (Genesis 3:8-9). My journey begins as I open myself to God's initiative for relationship.**



pillar 2—faith

The second Pillar to build is faith. Faith enables me to start trusting Him enough to "contemplate the Lord's glory."

3. Who is responsible for creating commitment in our hearts? (Romans 2:28-29)
-

4. What does God promise to do with the hearts of those who are open to Him, and what does this mean? (Genesis 17:10-11 and Deuteronomy 30:6)
-

Circumcision in Israel was a physical sign of commitment to God's covenant (an agreement for a relationship). In a spiritual sense, my heart as God's sanctuary must be circumcised, reflecting a trusting relationship with Him. Simply being open to God doesn't mean I trust Him yet, but openness provides the soil for faith to come into my heart and take root. As someone who has a sinful nature within, I cannot change myself. Only God can transform my life. So I have to learn to trust that God will really do what He has promised.

If you think about these two conditions of the heart, a soft or open heart goes before a heart that trusts God. Without openness, I cannot put my faith in God. Building the Pillar of faith is critical as faith is necessary for me to depend on God's power rather than my own.

pillar 3—depending on divine power



The third Pillar describes the most critical dynamic that enables continual transformation in my life. At the heart of the tabernacle rituals were the daily services. These consisted of morning and evening sacrifices which were burned by divine fire on the altar in the courtyard. **The continual sacrifices consumed by divine fire were at the heart of the Israelite sanctuary services, illustrating Israel's continual dependence on God.**

5. Using the imagery from the sanctuary services, what does Jesus and Paul say I have to do to become a disciple? (Luke 9:23-24; Romans 12:1; cf Romans 6:5-7)
-
6. The sacrifices in the daily services were not only killed but were consumed by fire. Where did that fire come from? (Leviticus 9:24; 2 Chronicles 7:1)
-
7. What can fire represent in the New Testament? (Acts 2:3-4 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19)
-

Both the sacrifices and the divine fire in the tabernacle are linked to the Hebrew word *tamid* which means "continual". Continual sacrifices were needed so that the fire on the altar—that had originated from Heaven—would continually burn and not go out. Otherwise people would have to make their own fire which was not appropriate for God's holy purposes (Leviticus 10).

So Pillar 3 may be described as having two sides like a coin.

Side 1—making of a continual sacrifice. Spiritually, death is the only way to deal with my sinful nature.

Side 2—the continual burning of the sacrifice by divine fire. Once my own sinful nature is dead it needs to be replaced by the nature of God. This comes through the fire of God's Holy Spirit, continually filling my life.



pillar 4—joining God's work

The fourth Pillar to be built may be described as the consequence of “contemplating the Lord's glory”. It is important to realise that any work I do for God is a consequence spending time with Him. As Oswald Chambers cautions, “The main thing about Christianity is not the work we do, but the relationship we maintain and the atmosphere produced by that relationship. That is all God asks us to look after, and it is the one thing that is being continually assailed.” (My Utmost for His Highest, August 4.) So as I deepen my intimacy with God, a divine atmosphere is created by the Spirit. This sharpens my own desire to help broken and hurting people and enables God to influence others through me.

This idea is emphasised by the daily work of the priests. In the Holy Place were three offerings of bread, light and incense. **These offerings required fire to exist. But only holy fire from the altar of sacrifice was permitted—holy fire kept alive by the continual offering of sacrifices.** It was the priests' job to take the holy fire from the altar into the Holy Place so the light, incense and bread would be continually presented before God. The devotion of the priests and these three offerings are all to be continual.

The offerings of bread, light and incense pointed to the person and continual ministry of Jesus. Consequently, they also point to us and the work we do for Jesus. We are continually to be priests for God, becoming living sacrifices who are filled by the Holy Spirit. Imitating Jesus, we also hold out His word to others, intercede for others, reveal the light of the character God to others. We are to do all these things continually. These three offerings are the priorities of your mission for God.

8. How does Peter describe your continual purpose? (1 Peter 2:9)

The work of the priests enabled God's people—though sinful—to remain in communion with their holy God. However, this relationship was not supposed to be private or hidden.

9. How was God's presence visible from the Israelite sanctuary? (Exodus 40:34-35)

10. What do you think could be the impact of people seeing God's glory increasingly visible through the sanctuary of your own life? (2 Corinthians 3:18)

summary

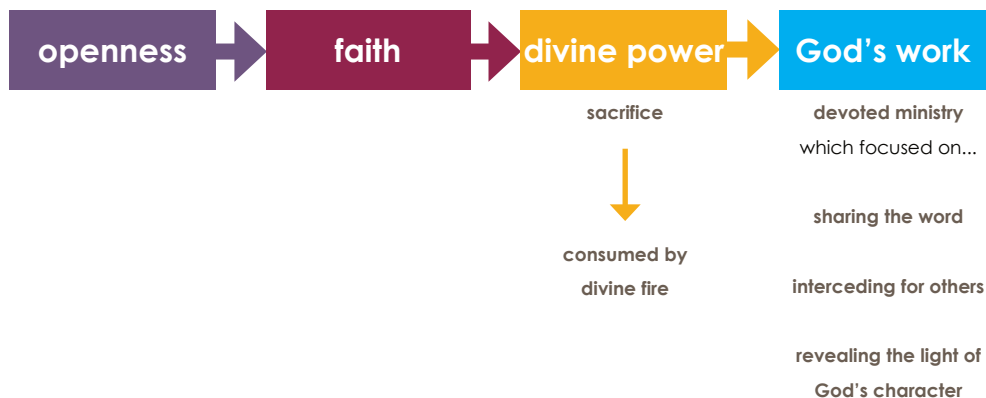
God designed me to live out His image and character in the world. In order to move into God's presence where I can see God's glory and be change to be like He is, a Discipleship Process of four key elements is at work:

1. **Firstly, desiring openness.** I need to be open to the impressions of the Holy Spirit on my heart if anything is to change.
2. **Secondly, deepening faith.** Once I am open, faith is able to take root in my heart. Faith is critical to the change process because without faith I will not trust God and His promises for changing me.
3. **Thirdly, depending on divine power.** When my faith is strong enough to sacrifice (yield / submit) everything I am and have to God, the divine power of the Holy Spirit enters into my life and I increasingly reflect who God is.
4. **Fourthly, joining God's work.** When I join God in His work to continually share His word, intercede for others, and reveal His character in the world, I will do it with the Holy fire of the Holy Spirit in my life. When His divine power is involved in His work—as happened with the disciples at Pentecost (see the book of Acts)—astonishing things can happen as God's personal presence becomes visible and active through me.

the One Ambition process

to desire to enter into God's sanctuary and see His glory

with the result that I will reflect the glory and image of God



It is important to realise that this process is like a spiral upwards. Our journey is not simply to start at openness and end doing God's work. Rather, we will be continually moving in a cycle, continually maturing in the image of God—forever.

joining the journey with prayer

Prayer is vital at every part of this discipleship process. So try writing a prayer that takes you through these 4 pillars. Here is a guide to help you:

Dear Father, (my desire for openness to God:) _____

(my desire for a deeper faith:) _____

(my desire to depend on divine power:) _____

(my desire to join God's work with God's power:) _____

In Jesus' name, Amen

?

how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

when my heart gets stuck

identifying symptoms, and how to remove the blockages

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED TO
LIVE?

12

blockages and their symptoms

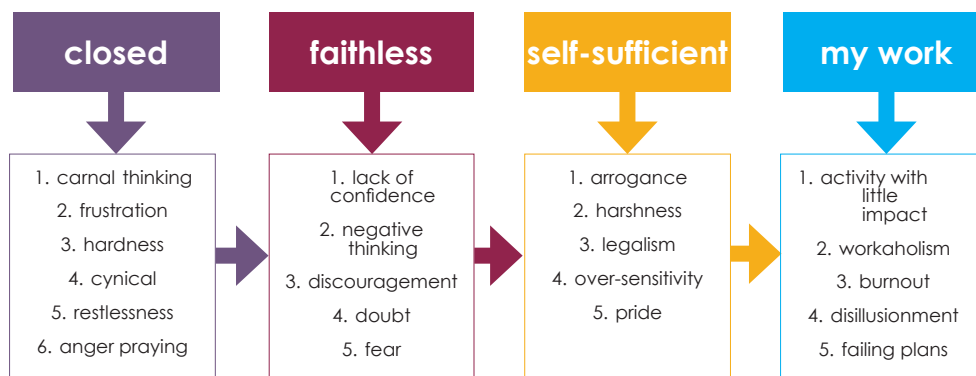
We have looked at 4 Pillars—desiring openness, deepening faith, depending on divine power, and joining God's work—which together show how the image of God can become increasingly built within in us.

But what happens when this process gets stuck? What symptoms surface in my life that reveals I am closed to God? Or living faithlessly? Or running on my own power? And when I do realise there is a problem, how do I remove the blockages in my spiritually stuck heart?

This is how the 4 Pillars should look:



However, their opposites can become blockages. This results in symptoms which indicate a de-formed heart. Here are some examples:



OVERVIEW

- **outside of communion with God my heart will naturally become increasingly closed, faithless, and self-sufficient**
- **each blockage in my heart can be identified by symptoms that become visible**
 - **because I am designed in the image of God, the symptoms of a spiritually stuck heart will impact me spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically**

1. Look at the list of symptoms. Circle the ones that you recognise in your own life.
2. What other symptoms could you add to these lists that you have noticed in people's lives? You can write them on the lines above.

symptoms and the image of God

Think about these symptoms for a moment. **Notice how some symptoms are more obviously related to sin, while others noticeably impact us emotionally, mentally,**

and at some point physically. Yet all are consequences of a sinful nature at work. As everything we are is designed in the image of God and every part is connected to each other, our mind, body, and spirit, will be affected by the symptoms of a spiritually stuck heart.

unblocking

Once the symptoms of a spiritually stuck heart are recognised, I can begin to work on unblocking. Here are some suggestions on how you can move from closed to open, faithless to faithful, and self-sufficient to dependent on God's power. Part 2 of *One Ambition* will unpack these ideas more fully.



3. Hearts that are closed, faithless, and self-sufficient, are the default settings of a heart outside of communion with God. Ask God now to identify anything in your life—mentally, physically or spiritually—that may be causing your heart to be:

closed: _____

faithless: _____

self-sufficient: _____

4. From the symptoms you have identified in the question above, circle the blockages you find most challenging. Your answer will help you decide which Pillars to focus on in the next section.

how was I designed to live?

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?



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ONE AMBITION

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED
TO LIVE?

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek,
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the
days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

Psalm 27:4

CHAPTER 2 *desiring* OPENNESS

a practical introduction to life with God

G A V I N A N T H O N Y

opening the Bible

becoming open to God's guidebook for the journey

desiring
OPENNESS

13

OVERVIEW

- *the Bible is God's own revelation of Himself to me—that I might know Him*
- *my life changes as I read God's words because the Holy Spirit who inspired those words is also at work in me as I read*

what is the Bible?

The Bible was written by over 40 authors across 1500 years. Its authors include kings, shepherds, fishermen, doctors, peasants and many others. They wrote from palaces, prisons, and deserts, across the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa. They wrote histories, stories, poetry and prophecy—totalling 773,000 words in the Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic languages. There are 39 books in the Old Testament that point forward to the coming of Jesus, and 27 books of the New Testament which reflect on the coming of Jesus. Together they form the Holy Scriptures. Astonishingly, these different authors provide a harmonious story, and this points to its divine origin.

Indeed, the Bible itself claims to be the words of God to us. The purpose of the Bible is to guide and shape our lives according to the way God designed us to live.

Without God's guidance, we would not know what is good, ethical, or moral. We would not know our own purpose for existence, and we would not be able to understand what God is doing in His world and in the universe.

There are thousands of manuscripts which verify the historical authenticity of what was written. So the challenge we face is whether we are ready to accept its authority over our lives. Are we open to hear God speak through these words, and then respond in obedience?

what happens when God speaks

Words are very important to God. He chose to reveal Himself primarily, not with pictures, but with words. When we read these words, we hear Him speak. When we hear what is on His mind for us to know, things happen.

1. What happened when God spoke in Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26?

2. What happened when Jesus spoke in Mark 2:5-12?

3. What happened when God's people spoke and wrote down God's words for others to read?

a. Ezekiel: Ezekiel 37:1-10 _____

b. Peter: Acts 2:40-41 _____

c. Paul: Romans 1:13-16 _____

the Bible's claims about itself

4. What does the Apostle Paul tell Timothy about the use of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:14-17?

5. What do you learn from Peter's statements in 2 Peter 1:20-21?

practical application

6. Are there any issues you need to address in order to accept the authority of God's words over your life?

7. What can you do to become more familiar with what God desires to say to you in the Bible?



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the Bible in Fundamental Belief 1: The Holy Scriptures. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

applying the Bible to my life

I grow in openness to God as I ask how the Bible applies to my life

desiring
OPENNESS

14

OVERVIEW

- ***by asking questions as I read the Bible, I allow the Holy Spirit to bring important issues to my attention for me to address***

how does this apply to me?

Sometimes when I have read my Bible, I have thought to myself, “but what has this got to do with me?” or, “what difference does this make?” If I don’t learn anything that will shape my life to become more like citizens of Heaven, I will have wasted my time.

8 questions to ask the Holy Spirit

Applying the Bible to our own lives is the most important part of Bible study. Here are **8 questions to ask the Holy Spirit** in order to apply the meaning of the text to your own life.

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin that God wants me to avoid or repent of?
3. Is there a command for me to obey?
4. What does this passage teach me about God?
5. Is there a difficulty for me to explore?
6. Is there a promise for me to claim?
7. Is there something in the passage for me to pray about?
8. Who needs to hear what I have learned?

passages to start with

The stories about Jesus in the Gospels are great places to begin studying. You can start at the beginning of a Gospel and work your way through to the end. As you think about the 8 questions, remember that these stories are not simply historical records, but were inspired by God for your spiritual growth.

If you want to move outside of the four Gospels, you can also use this way of studying in Acts and the writings of Paul. Paul’s letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are also great texts to explore.

how to use the questions

1. **Prayerfully choose a passage to read or continue on from where you finished reading last time.**
2. **Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read, that your life will be increasingly shaped by the truth that is in the Bible.** (This truth reflects the principles and laws of God’s kingdom, which is a reflection of His character.)

3. **Read through your chosen Bible text a few times until you really understand what you are reading.**
4. **Once you have read through your passage, begin to ask questions that will help apply the meaning to your own life.** Write your questions and answers in your journal. You can go through the 8 questions one at a time.
5. **Praying at the end of your study is really important.** Pray that the Holy Spirit will remind you of what you have learned, and that your life will increasingly reflect the priorities and purposes of Jesus.

practice it

Take some time to practice using the 8 questions now. In the coming week, use your journal to practice what you have learned. The more you practice this exercise, the easier it will become. You may also find it helpful to practice asking these with a friend or in a small group.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

keeping a spiritual journal

openness to God increases as I learn to reflect on my spiritual journey

desiring
OPENNESS

15

OVERVIEW

- *a spiritual journal helps me remember what God is doing and has done in my life*
- *journaling provides a safe place to express my doubts and struggles to God*
- *journaling helps to make my spiritual life concrete and specific*

why reflection is so helpful

John Dewey wrote, “We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.” This is true in our life with God. As we learn to reflect on God's words, God's actions around us, as well as our own questions and struggles, we will increase our ability to grow spiritually.

Reflection is helpful for two important reasons. Firstly, it is important to become aware of God's work in our lives. Sometimes we can clearly see God at work. At other times it is more difficult. We may be tempted to think that because we can't see God, He is not with us or caring for us. But that is not true.

Did you know that in the book of Esther, the word “God” is never mentioned? Although God appears invisible, He was busy working to bring about His purposes for Esther and her people. Our lives may often be like Esther's life where God chooses not to reveal Himself in obvious ways. That is why it is helpful to spend time to pause and think about where and how God might be at work for you now. This builds confidence that God will be with you in the future, no matter whether you can see Him or not.

God may be at work for you in many different circumstances such as:

1. Personal Bible study and prayer
2. Attending church or other religious meetings
3. Conversations with people
4. Reading books or listening to music
5. Things that happened at work or school
6. Small things that seemed unimportant at the time

Secondly, it is useful to reflect on our lives to become conscious of how we are growing as Christians. Socrates said that the “unexamined life is not worth living.” One implication of this is that we have to first recognise what we are like on the inside in order to have a chance to grow and change. **God has given us the Holy Spirit to act like a mirror to our souls**—so we can see what we are really like. When we spend time to pause, think, and be silent before God, it gives the Holy Spirit an opportunity to communicate to us about the issues in our lives, and the plans God has for us to increasingly reflect His character.

what is a spiritual journal?

A spiritual journal is like a diary in which you reflect on your life with God and make it concrete and memorable. To begin journaling, all you need is somewhere to write down your thoughts and reflections.

It's often called a spiritual journal because we are writing about our life with God. However, this may not be a good way to describe it, because **all of life is about**

God. We can't separate our life with God from everything else we are doing. So when we journal, we are writing about life and how God is in it with us.

You can use your journal to reflect on:

1. Important spiritual discoveries from your Bible study, prayer, time at church, or other Christian meetings.
2. Insights gained from painful or difficult times in your life.
3. Prayer requests for others and God's answers.
4. Questions about painful and difficult problems you are experiencing.
5. Private thoughts and feelings about your journey with God.
6. Helpful quotations or Bible verses you want to remember.
7. Questions you want to ask about yourself, God, and life.
8. Successes and thanks to God.
9. Explore a particular subject related to your personal journey. For example, how does God communicate to me?

It is important that **writing in your journal should be something you enjoy** and is helpful. If it feels too difficult, you will probably want to give up quite soon. For some people, writing ideas down on paper may not come naturally or easily. You may prefer to think more than write. Even though this might be true for you now, try and persevere for a while. If you can learn to enjoy journaling, it will be an invaluable help as you are able to look back at the record of God's work in your life.

benefits

There are many benefits to keeping a spiritual journal:

1. Encouragement as you are reminded later of what God has taught you
2. Confidence in God as you see how He has led you over time
3. You will have a growing resource of discoveries, texts, and quotations, that will not be forgotten
4. The journal becomes a safe place to explore your feelings and thoughts that are too private to share with others

when and where?

Some people write in their journals at the end of the day. Others write the moment a new insight comes to mind. Others do it regularly at their Bible reading and prayer time. So find a time that fits you. Journaling is normally something very private—only you may ever see what is written inside. So find a quiet place where you can be in peace which is quiet enough for you to hear the Holy Spirit as you read, reflect, pray, and write.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

living in God's presence

learning to be open to God who is with me

desiring
OPENNESS

16

OVERVIEW

- **being continually open and aware that God is with me helps me to avoid being swamped by busyness and distracted by priorities that are not essential to God and His Kingdom**

struggling with remembering

I tend to forget that God is with me. I get caught up in the moment and my thoughts of God evaporate. Or I go through difficult times and don't see much evidence of God's with me. Over time, I unexpectedly find myself drifting away from God.

I think this is why Jesus was given a particular name. The angel said to Joseph, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel"—which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). "God with us"—God doesn't want you to forget that He will never leave you. And as Jesus reminded His disciples as He went to Heaven, "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). This promise of His continual presence is for you too.

Again, I think our tendency to forget that God is present with us now is why God reminded the Psalmist, "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10). So **the more we can develop mental moments of openness to God throughout our day, the easier it will be to develop unbroken communion with Him.** This in turn brings will bring us a continual source of divine wisdom, encouragement, and power.

practicing the presence of God

The term "practising the presence of God" comes from a book written by Brother Lawrence. He lived in the 1600's, and having read many books about how to have a relationship with God, he found them a little puzzling. As a consequence of his desire to live completely for God, Brother Lawrence decided that he was going to live as though only he and God were together in the world. In a letter, he describes how

at all times, every hour, every minute, even at the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of God. (The Practice of The Presence of God, 32)

He tried to make this the habit of his life. This enabled him to remember consciously and continually that he was always walking in God's presence.

Brother Lawrence wasn't trying to avoid people or living real life. Rather, **his intention was to let God's presence be so real and strong in his mind that God's way of thinking and living would shape how he lived with people.**

When in prayer, Brother Lawrence would often think of himself in different ways,

Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld him in my heart as my Father, as my God.... Sometimes I considered myself there as a stone before a carver, whereof he

is to make a statue; presenting myself thus before God, I desire Him to form his perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like himself." (Ibid., 31-37)

Ellen White explains how both Enoch and Moses practiced the presence of God,

And how did Enoch walk with God? He educated his mind and heart to ever feel that he was in the presence of God, and when in perplexity his prayers would ascend to God to keep him. He refused to take any course that would offend his God. He kept the Lord continually before him. He would pray, "Teach me Thy way, that I may not err. What is Thy pleasure concerning me? What shall I do to honour Thee, my God?" (Ellen White, Christ Triumphant, 43)

Let us work for the Master with disinterested energy, keeping before us a sense of the constant presence of God. Think of Moses, what endurance and patience characterized his life. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says: "For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."... Moses had a deep sense of the personal presence of God... God was real to him, ever present in his thoughts. (Ellen White, 5 Testimonies, 651)

Do you desire to live with a deep sense of God's presence? Whatever your past, God will teach you how to live continually in His presence today. You can have continuous peace and joy knowing that you are not alone, but have someone with you at all times who loves you very much, and will provide for everything you need.

practice it

Read Hebrews 11:27 which is about Moses persevering because he kept a continual sense of God's presence. Now spend some time to focus on how this may be done in your life. Try practicing God's presence for 10 minutes. In your journal describe how practising the presence of God affects your thoughts, choices, and actions. You may also like to think specifically about the values that drive your life. David's primary reason for desiring God's presence was to "gaze upon the beauty of the Lord" (Psalm 27:4) When you spend time gazing on God's beauty, how does this shape your values? Write set of value statements for yourself that are shaped by the "beauty of the Lord".

Trying focusing on the presence of God in your life each day in the coming week. In your journal, you can reflect on how practising the presence of God changes the way you talked to people. Does it change how you spend your time or what you thought about? Does it affect the way you experience God? Is it hard to do? If so, why was that? This may not be easy to do at first, but the more you practice, the easier and more rewarding it will be!



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

reading to hear God speak

I am open to God as I listen to His Spirit through His Word

desiring
OPENNESS

17

OVERVIEW

- *God still speaks to us today—primarily through His words*
- *the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals wisdom to me*
- *God promises wisdom to anyone who asks Him with faith*

it's about a person

Wisdom is not found in knowing about things, but knowing a person—Jesus. This was Paul's desire for the Colossians, that they would "know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:2b-3)

Therefore, as we invite the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us wisdom in our Bible study, He will teach us about Jesus and what is on Jesus' heart and mind for us. As we apply what we learn, continually gaining wisdom, we will become like the One who is Wisdom—Jesus Christ.

promises for us

In her book, *Lord Change me*, Evelyn Christenson explains a helpful way to study the Bible. She starts by encouraging us with a promise in James 1:5. Read this verse and write down God's promise to you.

This is an amazing promise! No matter who you are, or what you may have done in the past, God promises to give you wisdom for your life. All you have to do is ask. What does Jesus also promise you in Matthew 7:7-8?

So as you begin your Bible study, know that God is longing to fill you with His wisdom—which is a wisdom about Himself.

here is how to listen through Bible reading

This method of Bible study focuses on listening to God as we read His words to us. Here is how it works:

1. **Prayerfully choose a Bible passage to study.** A good place to start would be the beginning of one of the four Gospels.
2. **Claim James 1:5** and pray that God will honour His promise to give you wisdom as you study.
3. **Begin reading the text slowly and thoughtfully.** If you don't understand something, try reading it again.
4. **Keep reading until God alerts you to something.** When God calls your attention to something, stop. Don't go any further.

Christenson notes that God can stop you in different ways. These include:

- A bolt out of the blue - "This is it!"
- A quiet nudge or prompt—"Have you thought about?"
- An encouragement—"This will help with...."
- A whisper—"How about?"

5. Thank God for what you have learned.

6. The next time you study, continue reading from where you have just stopped.

practice it

Jesus said this about how He speaks and His people listen,

...the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice. (John 10:3-5)

Try practicing the method of listening to Jesus' voice through your own Bible and practicing this way of Bible reading in the coming week. Use your journal to write down what God teaches you. If you date each entry, you can look back at how God has taught you over the weeks and months.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

receiving forgiveness

forgiveness removes the sin that blocks my communion with God

desiring
OPENNESS

18

OVERVIEW

- *sin creates a barrier between myself and God, so acknowledging sin is a critical step in restoring my relationship with Him*
- *any possibility of receiving God's forgiveness is because of the historical act of Jesus dying as a substitute for me—He died in my place*

removing sin

The Old Testament tabernacle and sanctuary services were God's way of teaching the Israelites how to have their sin removed so that they could enjoy the life that God intended for them—a life of joy in close relationship with Him. Their **sin had to be removed in order for them to clearly reflect His character**.

These services were to explain what the coming Messiah would do as He offered His life as a sacrifice for their sin. Therefore, we can learn a lot about the process of forgiveness that God designed into these services.

5 step process of forgiveness

Imagine you are an Israelite who has stolen some money from your neighbour's tent. What would have to happen in order for you to receive forgiveness from God? You would need to:

1. **Confess your sin.** Before anything happens, you have to realise that you have disobeyed God. It is this acceptance of wrongdoing that leads you to do something about it.
2. **Decide to trust in God's forgiveness.** If you don't make a decision to trust in the work of the coming Messiah, you will never go and restore your relationship with God. But to go and do that, you have to believe that God has the power and desire to help you. As an Israelite, this decision to trust God would lead you to choose a bull without any markings for a sacrifice and go with it to the tabernacle. (Different animals were used for different types of sacrifices.)
3. **Offer your sacrifice.** Before God you tell Him you are sorry. To remind you that sin always kills, you have to lean your whole body weight onto the bull sacrifice. Then with a knife, you cut the animal's throat. You feel its life disappear, knowing that you are the cause of its death.
4. **Place your faith in Jesus to remove your sin.** Your sin, confessed onto the bull, is now transferred to the bull. The priest, also representing Jesus, takes the animal's blood (with your sin symbolically in it) and drips it inside the tabernacle before the veil separating the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Your sin has now been transferred from you, to the bull, to the Holy Place. Symbolically, the sin stays in the tabernacle until the end of the year when it is removed forever on the Day of Atonement.
5. **Thank God.** The sin that was powerful enough to destroy you has been taken away by your sacrifice. That is really something to thank God for! There were other types of offerings specifically for giving thanks.

You can read about this forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament times in Leviticus 4.

what about when I sin today?

While the Israelites looked forward to the coming Messiah by faith, we look back to the death of Jesus by faith. Whether looking forwards or backwards, the process which enables a human being to be freed from the punishment of sin is the same. You can follow the same process to allow the Bible to shape your confession to God and restore your relationship with Him.

Look up the texts as you read through the five steps again:

1. Confess my sin, which happens as the Holy Spirit works in you (John 16:7-11).
2. Decide to trust in God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
3. Yield yourself and your sin to God (Romans 6:13).
4. Place your faith in Jesus who takes away your sin (Romans 3:22-24).
5. Thank Jesus for what He has done for you. (Psalm 13:5-6).

See how these steps can shape your prayers of repentance. Here is a sample:

Dear Father,

(Step 1) I realise that lying about what I was doing last night was wrong. (Step 2) I know that you promise to forgive my sin and change my life. (Step 3) I really am sorry for doing this. (step 4) I trust that Jesus' died in my place so my sins could be forgiven and I can be made totally clean inside. (Step 5) Thank you for what you have done for me.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen.*

practice it

Practice this type of prayer now. Use your journal to record your prayers of forgiveness and thanks for what God has promised to do for you. Like David who recorded his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51 for others to read, you may want to record God's cleansing of your life from sin. However, there may be times when you may not want to write anything down, as it is extremely personal and private to you and God alone. Try practicing this type of praying each day in the coming week.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

savouring God's words

openness sometimes requires gentle listening

desiring
OPENNESS

19

OVERVIEW

- *there are times when it is important to listen gently to the biblical text rather than simply "digging" hard*
- *biblical meditation is to fill our minds with God's words—not empty our minds*

savouring God's words

We can study the Bible and ask questions about the text like a man digs up the ground to find treasure. With time, effort and a pickaxe, the treasure is discovered.

But there is another way to hear and understand God's word which is more like tasting an expensive chocolate. You don't just gobble it down, but keep it for as long as you can in your mouth, to sense its texture and flavours. The Psalmist says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103) We can learn how to savour God's words as we learn how to meditate on Scripture.

As Joshua takes over from Moses to lead God's people into the Promised Land, Jesus appears to Joshua and says, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (Joshua 1:8) Notice two things in the text. First, that God's word was to be in Joshua's thoughts continually. Secondly, as God's words were in Joshua's mind, it would lead him to obedience. Then Joshua would be as successful as God had called him to be.

This sort of meditation is very different from what is found in Eastern religions. For example, in Buddhism, meditation is a way of emptying the mind. Biblical meditation is just the opposite. **In biblical meditation we learn how to fill the mind with God's words.** We do this as we learn to listen to the words God speaks to us.

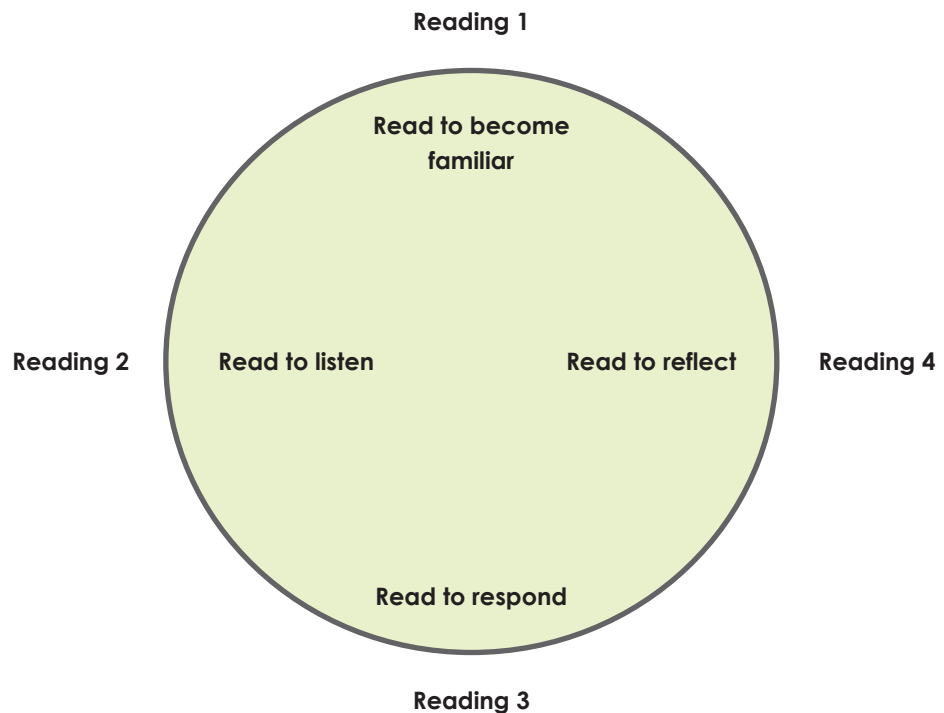
listening to God's words

Here is one way of learning to listen to God's words through scriptural meditation on a specific passage. Before reading, pray for the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Once you have selected a passage.

1. **Read to become familiar.** You may want to read the passage out loud. You may do this a couple times until you are familiar with the text. (It is suggested that you don't take too many verses to begin with.) If there is something you don't understand, don't worry. As you increasingly immerse yourself in God's words over time, God will give you understanding.
2. **Read to listen.** Read the passage a second time to identify an idea or phrase that you noticed after the first reading. Take time now to "listen" to its meaning. Don't rush. Don't try and force the text open but rather allow time for the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning of the text to you. This is a time to pause, listen, observe, watch.
3. **Read to respond.** Read the passage a third time. Based on what you have seen and heard, respond back to God in prayer. It could be a prayer of praise, thanks, or a specific request.
4. **Read to reflect.** Read the passage a final time. Take time in silence to wait a

little longer in God's presence. This prevents us hurrying off quickly to do the next thing on our agenda, and lose what God has just been teaching us. God may also bring new insights to your attention that you had not noticed before.

With practice, you do not have to follow the specific order for meditation. You can move backwards and forwards between reading, listening, responding and reflecting. If you use this in a group setting, it is possible to share what people have learned with a partner or group after the third and fourth sections.



NB This form of biblical meditation can be done with a reader in places where people are not able to read the Bible for themselves.

practice it

Try practicing this type of scriptural meditation now. You can use your journal to jot down your thoughts or prayers at any time. If you are not sure what Bible passages to start with, you can try the following: (1) Mark 10:46-42. (2) Isaiah 53. (3) Psalm 103:1-5. (4) Psalm 51:1-12. Try practicing this each day in the coming week.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

what can I pray for?

I grow in openness to God as I learn how to pray

desiring
OPENNESS

20

OVERVIEW

- **regular prayer keeps my mind and heart open to God**
- **while God cares about my physical circumstances, my spiritual condition and the spiritual condition of others is most important**
- **categorising my prayers can help give balance and focus**

two types of prayers

The more I spend time in God's presence, the deeper my relationship with Him will grow. An important part of spending time with God is talking with Him about the things He wants for us. The Bible promises,

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. (Matthew 21:22)

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5:14-15)

There are many things we can ask for, but they all fit in two major groups.

The first group of prayers is for physical requests. Many of our requests are for things like having a good day at school or work, having sunny weather, or for getting over an illness.

The second group of prayers is for spiritual requests. Spiritual requests are directly related to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. For example, to develop a stronger trust in God's promise to guide me (Proverbs 3:5-6), to become more patient (Colossians 3:12), to love those who are difficult to love (John 13:34-35), to not gossip about others (2 Corinthians 12:20).

Did you know that God will always answer such prayers with a "yes". He will never answer "no" because these requests are about reflecting who He is. As Paul writes,

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:28-29)

There is nothing more important to God than for us to reflect the life and character of Jesus. So whatever God gives us, or doesn't give us, it is always for this important reason—that we can better reflect His character, and then everyone can tell that God really is alive—and living in us.

Jesus advised His disciples to prioritise things of eternal importance,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19-20)

We can also apply this idea to our praying.

four categories for praying

One way to organise our prayers is to use the four categories of praise, thanks, requests for myself and requests for others. Using these categories can guard us from being self-centred and keep our prayers balanced.

List what these Bible writers included in their prayers that cover these four areas:

1. Praise—Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:34-35).

2. Thanks—Psalmist (Psalm 118:1-9).

3. Prayers for self—David (Psalm 27:4).

4. Prayers for others —Paul (Ephesians 3:14-21).

practice it

Below, or in your journal, spend some time now to pray using these four categories. Then spend some time to practice this way of shaping your prayers each day this week.

Date	Praise For who God is	Thanks For what God has done	Requests for myself	Requests for others



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

memorising the Bible

openness to God grows as I fill my mind with His words

desiring
OPENNESS

21

OVERVIEW

- **memorising becomes easier when we learn to pray God's words**
- **memorising helps us to 1) know God, 2) imitate Christ, 3) worship God, 4) fulfil God's mission**

I like the idea of memorising Bible verses. Ever since I was a child I have done this, but as I grow older, I find it more challenging. I am excited for the first couple of days but then my best intentions become overwhelmed by the demands of ordinary life.

In *Scripture by Heart*, Joshua Choonmin Kang sets out a compelling vision for memorising the Bible. His main conviction is that **"to memorise the Bible, we have to pray the Bible first."** This changes the way I look at Bible memorisation. It is not merely about being able to quote verses but about the Bible becoming a trigger and guide for communion with God. When the Bible becomes important to my prayer life, memorising becomes easier because I have a motivation for storing up God's words in my heart.

Kang gives four main reasons for memorising the Bible: 1) to know God, 2) to imitate Christ, 3) to worship God, and 4) to fulfil God's mission.

4 reasons to memorise

to know God

We cannot have a relationship with God without knowing Him. This is why God has given us the Bible. To have the Bible filling our minds is to have our minds growing in a knowledge of God.

1. Read Isaiah 11:9. What does God tell Isaiah about how far a knowledge of Him will go?

The knowledge of God spreads as it is first stored up in our minds and then shared.

to imitate Christ

As you may have already noticed, discipleship to Jesus is a process that will continue throughout your life, and into eternity. Paul writes that God's purpose for you is "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29) So how are you shaped into the image of Jesus?

2. Read John 1:1 How does John describe Jesus?

This text sends us back in our minds to creation when God created by speaking (Genesis 1). John wants us to know that the same Jesus who created the world (Colossians 1:15) by speaking, is going to speak again—and re-create our lives in His image through His words.

3. Read 2 Timothy 3:16 What can the word of God accomplish in your life?
-

to worship God

4. Read Isaiah 43:21. What will God's chosen people do?
-

God tells us that He created humans for worship. This means that our lives are designed to revolve around worshipping God. Years after God spoke through Isaiah, Jesus told the woman at the well that true worshippers would worship "in Spirit and truth" (John 4:23). Worship is two-fold—it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and shaped by God's word—God's truth. So to worship God is to have God's words shaping our minds. This happens best as we learn to store up God's words in our minds.

to fulfil God's mission

As Jesus walked the earth, He continually quoted Scripture, what today we call the Old Testament. Indeed, the Gospels record Jesus quoting passages from 24 different Old Testament books from memory!

5. Read 2 Timothy 3:17. What does Paul say the Bible accomplishes in your life?
-

getting started

Kang gives many helpful suggestions for memorising Scripture. These include:

1. Just start, but start small and build up over time.
2. Ensure you understand what you are memorising.
3. Set a goal and work to a deadline to give you focus.
4. Write Bible verses on index cards that you can carry, but also place around the house or in the car or office where you will regularly see them.
5. Go back and review previously memorised verses to keep them fresh.
6. Develop a habit of memorising, choosing a specific time of day.
7. Find a pleasant environment where memorising is enjoyable.
8. Apply what you are memorising to your life.
9. Remember that memorising the Bible is to bring you into communion with God.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

hearing God in the noise

I grow in openness as I reduce the noise around me

desiring
OPENNESS

22

OVERVIEW

- **God often speaks in a quiet voice**
- **when it is too noisy, it can be difficult to hear God speak**

why doesn't God speak louder?

Think about this: God loves you so much He allowed His only son to die for your sins. He did this so He could be in relationship with you, for He longs to restore you into His image. Would a God like this, in trying to communicate with you, speak so softly or so strangely, that you wouldn't be able to understand Him at all?

Do you think God is trying to be difficult or awkward when He communicates to us? Why then do we often have such a hard time hearing Him speak? Is God playing hard to get?

For God to have all the power in the universe, but then make it really difficult for us to hear Him doesn't make sense. So could there be other reasons why we don't hear God?

Could it be that we fail to hear God speak to us personally, not because God is not speaking loudly enough, but because we are not listening carefully enough?

Perhaps so. Perhaps it's a combination of both our lack of time to listen, but also because we create so much noise that God's voice is drowned out in the din. Such "noise" is not necessarily literal noise that we hear with our ears, but anything which distracts our attention from the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The story of Elijah illustrates how God is often to be found in the quietness. Once when Elijah was feeling depressed, God came to speak to him in order to get him back on track. As Elijah sat in his cave, there was a great earthquake, then a great wind, then a fire—but God was not in any of these. Finally, God arrived to speak to Elijah with a "gentle whisper". You can read about this story in 1 Kings 19:1-18. Similarly, God instructed the Psalmist, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). **God is heard most clearly in the quietness.**

noise

So what noises block our ability to hear God's voice? Here are some examples of "noises":

- **Physical noise:** Playing music. Watching TV or movies. Addicted to the news, surfing the web, or checking email.
- **Mental noise:** constant complaining, whining, feeling sorry for myself.
- **Emotional noise:** dreaming about what it feels like being in love, being successful; desiring revenge or justice for people who have hurt me; following the gossip about celebrities or people I know; being hooked on following a sports team.
- **Spiritual noise:** always filling my time reading Christian books or even listening

to Christian music. I may think that it is all very good and spiritual, but if I don't have time to reflect and hear God because I am busy cramming my mind with new thoughts, it can still end up being just "noise".

Perhaps you have read through this list and thought, well that's not noise. I certainly don't have a problem with any of those! Well let's see.

One of the ways to see how addicted we are to the noise around us is to take a break from it all—a noise fast. Fasting is an important spiritual discipline because it provides time and space for us to pause and observe what we are really thinking and doing during the day. It therefore helps to expose our real motives for why we do what we do.

So how does a noise fast work?

how a noise fast works

While a regular fast includes not eating, a noise fast includes choosing to take a break from the physical noise around us. Here's how you can try it.

- For the next 10 days, don't listen to any music, TV, radio, or movies. Don't surf the internet at all, or read any newspapers.
- In their place, spend the same time you would have spent on these things in listening to God, in prayer, reading your Bible, or looking for God's fingerprints in nature.

You will be surprised how difficult this is! But if you can keep doing this for 10 days, you will find that the things you couldn't live without are not as attractive as they once were. Importantly, you will get to know your own inner "noise", your own feelings and desires in a way you could never have imagined.

You may conclude that you want to change the way you live. Most of all, you may begin to hear God communicate to you in much clearer ways.

practice it

Try a noise fast this week. During your fast, use your journal to keep a diary of your experience. Write about your experience, the difficulties, your prayers, what you learn, and how you grow in becoming sensitive to the voice of God.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

open to the trinity

I gain knowledge and direction for life as I am open to God

desiring
OPENNESS

23

OVERVIEW

- **all members of the trinity are by nature God**
- **it is only through being open to God's own revelation of Himself that I understand who He is and how He wants me to live**
- **the Holy Spirit is with me constantly to guide, comfort, and convict me of sin**

three in one

There is a tradition that Saint Patrick used the clover leaf to explain the nature of God to early Irish Christians. Just as there are three parts for each leaf, yet it is a single leaf, so there are three individuals of the trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—yet all three are by nature God. In a similar way, water, ice, and water vapour are the same substance, but are seen and experienced in very different ways.

Luke describes the baptism of Jesus where the three members of the trinity are seen together:

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21-22)

Here we see the God the Son in the water of the river Jordan, God the Holy Spirit descending onto Jesus from Heaven, and God the Father speaking from Heaven. The word 'trinity' is not found in the Bible itself, but is a Latin word simply meaning 'three'.

While the nature of God and how God works is mysterious to us, **the Bible describes all three members of the trinity as having the same qualities and abilities**. Yet the Bible emphasises certain aspects that are important to our life in this world.

Let's explore some things about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit from the Gospel of John.

understanding God

Jesus is perhaps the easiest member of the trinity to grasp as He came to earth in the form of a human being. Jesus taught that the whole Bible is actually about Him (Luke 24:27). The Old Testament points forwards to His life and death, while the New Testament reflects on the importance of His life and death.

1. From John 3:16 and John 12:46-47, why is it important for human beings to be open to Jesus?

The Holy Spirit is perhaps the most challenging person of the trinity to understand because He is able to be in many places at the same time. But the Bible does not describe Him as a force but a person.

2. Why does Jesus say we should be open to the Holy Spirit in John 16:7-15?
-

The Holy Spirit does not speak for the sake of passing along information, he speaks to get a response. And he knows when our agenda has such a large slice of our attention, it is a waste of time to suggest anything else to the contrary. When that is the case he is often silent. He waits for us to become neutral enough to hear and eventually obey. (Charles Stanley, The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life, 1992.)

The Father can also be challenging to understand as no-one has ever seen Him (John 6:46). But as Jesus said to Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus came to earth to reveal the Father's character, and live on earth as He does in Heaven.

3. Jesus said that the Father is to be worshipped "in Spirit and in truth." Read about this in John 4:21-24. What do you think it means to worship the Father like this?

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we are open to the work of Jesus for us, listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit to us, and consider the Father worthy to be worshipped, we will receive an increasing understanding of what God has done for us, find direction for our lives, and live as joyful citizens in God's Kingdom.

practical application

4. What does it mean for you to be open to the work and presence of the trinity?



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the Trinity in Fundamental Belief 2: Trinity, as well as summaries for each member of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit in Beliefs 3, 4 and 5. These can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read.
2. To study more in depth, read about these Fundamental Beliefs in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

why worship?

worship opens my heart and mind to God

desiring
OPENNESS

24

OVERVIEW

- **worship provides a time, place, and space, to be open to God**
- **regular worship helps me to prevent false gods from ruling my life**

what is worship?

The dictionary defines worship as reverence and respect that is given to a divine being. But how do we do this towards God?

An expert in the law came to Jesus and asked Him what the greatest commandment was. Jesus replied that it was to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30).

Notice two things in this verse. First, that our love for God is with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In other words, **our love for God includes all our feelings, thoughts, and actions**. Secondly, notice the repetition of the word "all". **We are to love God—not with a part of our heart, soul, mind and strength—but with all of it**. In other words, there is no room at all to love anything which isn't focused on God. That's why the ten commandments begin with God saying,

You shall have no other gods before a me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God... (Exodus 20:3-5a)

Therefore, we worship God when we reverence and respect Him—which is to love Him with everything we are, while giving the love of our heart, soul, mind, and strength to no other. Such worship is not something merely performed in a church service. Worship is an attitude and lifestyle.

unpacking worship

Let's unpack this idea of worship so we can see how it works in practice. The Bible notes that worship includes a number of different aspects which are linked to worship, helping us to understand what it means to love and worship God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

1. **Acknowledging that God is our Creator.** "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." (Psalm 95:6-7)
2. **Acknowledging that there is only one true God.** "Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth." (Psalm 96:9)
3. **Praise.** "Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." (Nehemiah 8:6)
4. **Sacrifice.** "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your

bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)

5. **Obedience.** "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." (Daniel 7:27)
6. **Service.** "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" (Luke 4:8)

While I may want to do this, my heart, soul, mind, and strength naturally tends toward putting other things in God's place. Yes, I certainly need to be reminded of God's call to have "no other gods before me"!

dealing with other gods

What about now? Are there other gods that have made their way into our lives and are distracting the attention of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength away from the only true God? This is what we will spend some time to think about now.

A god is anything or anyone who takes our time and energy away from Jesus. What gods are preventing your heart, soul, mind and strength from giving Jesus 100% devotion? What other gods do you, allow to direct your life? Praise? Sacrifice to? Obey? Serve? God's method of dealing with such gods was clear,

Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places. (Deuteronomy 12:2-3)

So how will you destroy your gods?

practice it

Ask the Holy Spirit now to show you the gods in your life that are obscuring the true God. Use your journal to list these gods, and your plans and prayers about how you will deal with them. You can also explore the steps you will take to develop and attitude and lifestyle of worship. You can continue to ask God to expose hidden gods in your life in the coming week.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

desiring God Himself

as I learn more about God I will become increasingly open to Him

desiring
OPENNESS

25

OVERVIEW

- *I desire God because I know Him*
- *the more I know about God, the more I am will open up my mind and heart to Him*

does your heart long for God?

Do you have a longing to go on holiday in Malé? Perhaps you are not too sure? Is it a hot place? Cold? Windy? Who knows?

What if I told you that Malé was a tropical coral island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. The Maldives island chain around Malé has beautiful white beaches with warm water, ideal for snorkeling where you can see all sorts of beautiful fishes. I think it is the definition of paradise on earth.

By now, maybe you're already planning to go there for your next vacation. But as you can see, longing comes as a result of knowing. We don't long for things we don't know anything about, even if they are wonderful.

It is the same with God. **Our hearts will never long to be with Jesus and spend time in His presence if we don't know much about Him.**

the mind-heart link

There is a direct connection between knowing with our minds and the longing of our hearts. So in that sense, **the longing we have for God is not just a feeling that we manufacture inside ourselves. These feelings of longing for God are the consequence of what are seen by the "eyes of your heart"** (Ephesians 1:18).

The Psalmist cried out, "My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." (Psalm 84:2) Why did he say that? Because he saw the beauty of where God "lived"—the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, and so grasped the majesty of the God this temple represented.

So what about you? What do you see in God's word or God's creation that creates a longing within your heart to spend more time with him? This is a challenge for all of us because there are so many other things in our lives competing for our attention. Television, the internet, hobbies, work, the list goes on. So **if our hearts are to truly long to be with God, we must carve out time where we can be alone with God** "to gaze on the beauty of the Lord" (Psalm 27:4).

consequences of desiring God

To see the beauty of God is to see His character. When I see the beauty of God's character, I become increasingly open to desiring Him and desiring to be like Him. Seeing the beauty of God's character provides the motivation for obedience to God's law, because God's law is simply an expression of who God is and how God lives. Ultimately, all my thoughts and actions become rooted in a desire to reflect the beauty of God.

learning to long for God

My heart begins to long for God when I see something wonderful about God...

1. His longing and joy to be with me described in the Bible
2. The Bible's descriptions of His character and seeing how He was always working for good in the lives of His people
3. When I see the promises He has made in the Bible to care for all my needs
4. As He works for good in the lives of people around me
5. As the Holy Spirit assures me of His presence and love when I pray
6. As I remember God's goodness to me in the past
7. As I see His beauty revealed in nature
8. As I see His goodness contrasted by the evil in the world and in my heart, which causes me to long for God Himself and Heaven

If our morning and evening devotions consists of quickly reading a few texts and rushing out of the door or off to sleep, our hearts will never learn to long for God like the writer of Psalm 84. So try to:

1. Set aside time in the morning and evening for devotions where you will not be rushed—so you can have plenty of time to read, pray and think about the goodness of God to you.
2. As you read the Bible, keep an eye out for...
 - i) Descriptions of how valuable God thinks you are
 - ii) God's desire to be with you
 - c) God's desire to care for you
 - d) God's desire to transform you
 - e) God's working for good in the lives of His people
3. Spend time in prayer to thank Him for what you see—don't rush.
4. As you pray, be sensitive to the impressions of the Holy Spirit which affirm the truth of what you have read in the Bible.
5. As you go through the rest of your day, try to remember the things you discovered in your time with God, asking yourself continually, "how can I find satisfaction and joy in what I see in the character of God?"

practice it

Record what you discover about God that increases your desire for, joy, and satisfaction in Him. Remember that we cannot manufacture a longing for God. But as you spend time observing His goodness, your desire, joy and satisfaction in Him will increase. Each day this week, ask the Holy Spirit to show you new things about God that will increase your desire to spend time with Him.



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

living inside the cosmic battle

becoming open to our supernatural reality

desiring
OPENNESS

26

OVERVIEW

□ *I live inside a supernatural battle*

□ *the battle started in Heaven due to Satan's desire to have the power of God, but not the character of God*

□ *I can only survive within this battle if I am connected to the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit*

In one of the introductory chapters, we briefly considered the cosmic battle between God and Satan that frames the larger story of what is happening in our world. Let's look a little more closely at how this battle unfolded.

overview of the battle

Read the following texts that describes the beginning of this cosmic battle and note the main idea:

1. A reason for Satan's attack against God (Isaiah 14:12-14)

2. The consequence for Satan and his angels (Revelation 12:7-9)

3. The consequences for humans (2 Corinthians 4:4 and Ephesians 2:1-3)

Notice how Satan desired to be "like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). However, he wanted the power of God rather than the character of God. This grab for power started in Heaven but spread to the earth. When sin entered our world through Satan in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3), God told Adam and Eve that a saviour would come who would crush the power of Satan and liberate them from the power of sin in their lives (Genesis 3:15). Then as the Bible story unfolds, we learn how much we need the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, for **only through God's supernatural power can we deal with sin within us and the temptations that come from Satan and his angels around us.**

4. From what Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10-20, how are human beings to cope with a supernatural enemy?

5. What advice and encouragement does Peter give in 1 Peter 5:8-10 to those living within the supernatural battle?

summary

There is a lot more around us than what we can experience through our five senses. As we live inside a supernatural battle where Satan and Jesus are at work to gain our allegiance, we may need to think and behave differently than if we were unaware of this reality. Most importantly, we need to be continually connected to the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

practical application

6. What difference does it make to your life knowing you live within a supernatural battle?



desiring openness

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the Great Controversy in Fundamental Belief 8: Great Controversy. This can be found in the appendix where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study about the Great Controversy in depth, read more about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.



download more copies at www.reflectingJesus.org



ONE AMBITION

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED
TO LIVE?

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek,
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the
days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

Psalm 27:4

CHAPTER 3 *deepening*
FAITH

a practical introduction to life with God

G A V I N A N T H O N Y

praying the Bible

my faith grows when my prayers are shaped by God's words

deepening
FAITH

27

OVERVIEW

- **as my faith grows by becoming familiar with what God has said, faith also grows as I pray God's words back to Him**
- **using God's words for our prayers give us certainty that God will do what He has promised**
- **using God's words for my prayers widen and deepen my ideas of what I can pray for**
- **specifically collecting God's promises to pray over give me confidence in what God will do for me**
- **God's promises reveal who He is, and a growing vision of who He is helps me to see what He has designed me to become**

what should I pray about?

Sometimes we want to pray—but our minds go blank.

When this happens, it is really helpful to use the Bible to help us pray. **As we pray this way, we are praying ideas that come from the mind of God. As His thoughts become our thoughts, we reflect his character.** Then we can more easily live out God's purposes for our lives as we grow in understanding how His Kingdom operates.

using prayers in the Bible

It can be very interesting to see what the people in the Bible prayed for, and allow their prayers to shape our prayers. We can use the prayers of:

- David — for forgiveness: Psalm 51.
- Jesus — to teach us how to pray: Matthew 6:9-13
- Solomon — for wisdom: 1 Kings 3:5-9.
- Stephen — when people attacked him: Acts 7:59-60.
- Paul—in praying for others: Ephesians 1:15-20, Ephesians 3:14-21

But we don't have to use just the prayers in the Bible—we can use many passages to shape our praying. And **every time we pray God's words back to Him, our trust in Him grows because we are reminded that He will do what He has said.** Look at an example next.

example: psalm 23:1-3

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."

Thank you Lord for being my shepherd. Help me to remember that you provide everything that I need.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul."

Lord, I don't seem to see any nice quiet place. I feel really stressed right now. Help me to trust you, that I can experience your peace.

"He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Lord, thank you that your ways are always best—that they are designed so that if I follow you, I will reflect your character.

praying God's promises

We can also pray God's promises. **Firstly, there are promises where God says He will act for us.** These often begin with words like, "I will...". Here are some direct promises from God:

Abundant life, John 10:10	Gifts of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12	Rich rewards, Matthew 10:42
A crown of life, Revelation 2:10	God's protection, 1 Peter 5:6-7	Spiritual fullness, John 6:35
A heavenly home, John 14:1-3	Growth, Ephesians 4:11-15	Spiritual healing, Hosea 6:1
A new name, Isaiah 62:1-2	Guidance, Isaiah 42:16	Spiritual light, John 12:46
Answers to prayer, 1 John 5:14	Hope, Hebrews 6:18-19	Spiritual treasures, Matthew 6:19-20
Assurance, 2 Timothy 1:12	Inheritance, 1 Peter 1:3-4	Strength, Philippians 4:13
Cleansing, John 15:3	Joy, Isaiah 35:10	Temporal blessings, Matthew 6:25-33
Clothing, Zechariah 3:4	Knowledge, Jeremiah 24:7	Understanding, Psalm 119:104
Comfort, Isaiah 51:3	Liberty, Romans 8:2	Victory, 1 John 5:4
Companionship, John 15:15	Peace, John 14:27	Wisdom, James 1:5
Deliverance, 2 Timothy 4:18	Power for service, John 14:12	
Divine Sonship, 1 John 3:1-2	Renewal, Titus 3:5	Willmington, H. L. (1987). Willmington's
Everlasting life, John 3:16	Rest, Hebrews 4:9, 11	book of Bible lists. Wheaton, Ill.:
Fellowship of Jesus, Matthew 18:19	Restoration, Isaiah 57:18; 1 John 1:9	Tyndale House.
Fruitfulness, John 15:4-5	Resurrection, Romans 8:11	

Secondly, descriptions of God Himself are also promises. Romans 8:29 tells us that it was God's plan that we become like his Son, "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..." So when we read descriptions of Jesus, these can become promises for our prayers to become like Him. (This does not include descriptions of God that belong to God alone, for example, that He is all powerful, all knowing, or everywhere at the same time etc.)

Characteristics of God alone—that can give us confidence that our prayers will be acted upon	Characteristics of God that we share with Him—as people whom He longs to restore into his image	
Almighty, Isaiah 6:1-3; Isaiah 14:27	Love, Exodus 15:13; 1 John 4:11-17	Wise, Ephesians 1:17; 2 Timothy 3:14-15
Always present, Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 28:19-20	Kind, Isaiah 63:7; Ephesians 2:6-7	Pure and Holy, Exodus 3:2-5; 1 John 3:2-3
Sovereign, 2 Samuel 7:22; Daniel 4:34-35	Compassionate, Psalm 103:13-14; Mark 1:41	Truthful, John 14:6; Psalm 119:160
Creator and Re-Creator, Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 44:2-3	Gracious, John 1:16	Righteous, Psalm 119:75-76; 1 John 2:1
Eternal and Infinite, Isaiah 26:4; Hebrews 1:10-12	Merciful, Ephesians 2:4-5	Protecting, Isaiah 43:1-3; 2; Thessalonians 3:3
Praiseworthy and Glorious, 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Psalm 145:4-5	Patient, 2 Peter 3:9, 15 Long-suffering, Matthew 23:37	Persevering, Judges 2:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:4-5
	Peace, Isaiah 9:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11	Joy, Nehemiah 8:10; Zephaniah 3:17
	Humble, 2 Corinthians 10:1	Gentle, 1 Kings 19:12; Luke 18:15-16
	Meek, John 13:1-5	Self-controlled, Galatians 5:22-23
	Just, Psalm 45:6; Isaiah 5:16	Good, 1 Chronicles 16:34; Nahum 1:7
	Saving and Restoring, 2 Samuel 22:3; 1 Peter 5:10	Faithful, Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 71:22-23
		Sacrificial, John 3:16; 1 John 4:10-11
		Forgiving, Exodus 34:5-7; Psalm 86:5

practice it

Use your journal now to write down Bible texts and promises and your prayer responses. Practice doing this each day in the coming week.

God's plan to deal with sin

a prophecy I can trust that God is dealing with sin

deepening
FAITH

28

OVERVIEW

- *I can trust that God will not permit sin to continue, or remain unjudged*
- *Jesus is judging the world in Heaven just before He returns*
- *I am living in the time of judgement just before Jesus returns*

an amazing prophecy

One of the most astonishing prophecies in the Bible explains how God is dealing with the problem and pain of human sin. This prophecy may seem a little complicated as you begin but don't let that put you off. God is giving us some amazing insights into what He has done, and is doing, about the problem of sin.

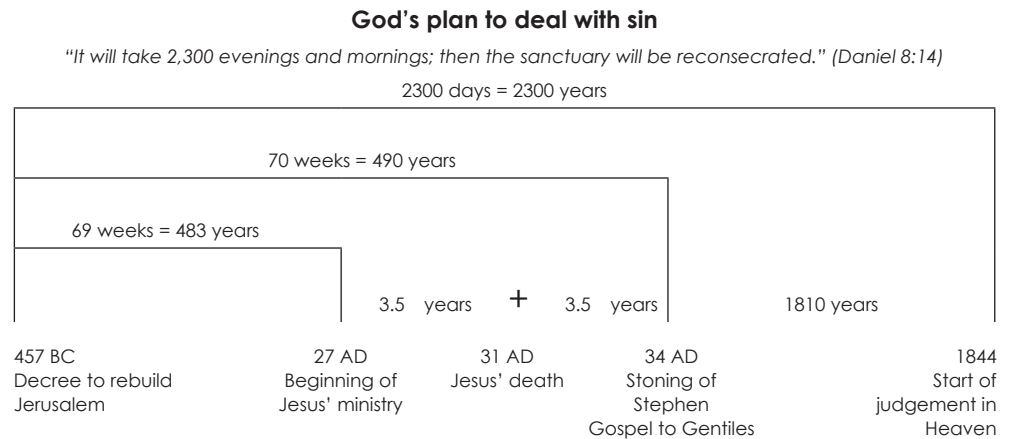
The prophecy can be split into two parts. The first predicts the exact dates of Jesus' ministry and death. Jesus' death in my place is how God deals with sin. Death is always the consequence of sin, but instead of sin killing me, Jesus became a substitute in my place. Jesus' death shows how sin always results in pain and death.

We begin to see that Jesus will come to die in Daniel 9. The prophet Daniel has been praying for God to return His exiled people from captivity in Babylon back to their homeland of Israel. In the table below you will see the angel Gabriel's answer to Daniel and its interpretation.

Daniel 9:23 ...consider the word and understand the vision.	The vision refers to "the vision of the evening and mornings that began in Daniel 8 where Daniel had been told about a prophetic power that would work to obscure the ministry of Jesus in Heaven and through His people on earth (8:9-12). This is a vision of 2300 evening and mornings (8:14, 26) and is the starting point for this prophecy.
24 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city	A "seven" in biblical prophecy symbolises a week of years (see Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). 70 prophetic weeks = $70 \times 7 = 490$ literal years which spans the first part concerning Israel.
to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.	Jesus would come as the fulfilment of the sacrificial offerings. Jesus' sacrifice took everything upon Himself that will enable us to have salvation and enable Him to minister as our High Priest in Heaven.
25 "Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.	The command to provide the Jews with civil and religious government was made by Artaxerxes in 457 BC (Ezra 7:12-13). This date is the starting point of the 2300 day prophecy which enables us to pinpoint the arrival of Jesus and His death. Then follows seven sevens (or 49 literal years) plus sixty-two sevens (or 434 years) = 483 years.
26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.	After the end of the sixty-two sevens, the Messiah—Jesus—will be put to death and Jerusalem will be destroyed. The destruction of Jerusalem happened in 70 AD.
27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."	The covenant of salvation enabled by the death of Jesus would happen in the final week of years following the 483 years. Jesus' ministry would begin at the beginning of this seven year period, and He would die in the middle of this final seven years.

You will notice in the next diagram that the exact date of Jesus' ministry and death

was foretold—around 500 years before He came to earth!



The second part of the prophecy predicts the date when God begins His ultimate judgement of sin. The sin that has been committed throughout history will finally be dealt with by God as He judges the horrendous crimes people and angels have done—crimes against each other and against Him.

1. Where and when does this judgement take place? (Daniel 7:9-10; Daniel 8:14)

Daniel's prophecy uses the language of the Old Testament sanctuary services. There was a yearly cycle that God used to teach Israel how He deals with sin. At the end of the year was the Day of Atonement which illustrated the removal of sin from God's people. If someone chose not to confess their sin by this day, they were, in effect, removing themselves from God's salvation. So it was a sombre day of judgment (Leviticus 23:26-32). **This annual ritual was intended to illustrate how God will deal with sin in history.** There will come a point when God will finish the judgment and say, "Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy" (Revelation 22:11). Then Jesus will return.

2. What is the response that God's angel calls humans to make in response to God's judgement in Heaven?

-
3. How should I respond to the idea that I—and others—are being judged? (Hebrews 4:14-16)
-

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about Jesus' work for us today in Fundamental Belief 24: Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

what Jesus has done for me

deepening
FAITH

29

I am justified—forgiven—by faith alone in what Jesus has done for me

Jesus is not an idea or a philosophy. Jesus is God who came to earth in human form and acted in human history. What He did was recorded by different authors. Today, our task is to read what they wrote in order to understand what His life, death, and resurrection means, and why it was so necessary for Jesus leave Heaven and come here to earth.

why Jesus?

1. What does John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:16 suggest as to why Jesus has a personal interest in what happens to human beings?

2. Read John 1:4-18 and Colossians 1:17-23. What do you learn here about the purpose of Jesus coming to earth?

the necessity of death

If you look again at Colossians 1:19-20, Paul writes that we were reconciled to God and have peace with God, because of the death of Jesus on the cross. In other words, Jesus' death was required for us to regain a relationship with God. But why is Jesus' death necessary to accomplish this?

3. Read Genesis 2:15-17 and Romans 6:23. What is the consequence of disobedience?

If God states that the consequence of rebellion against Him is eternal death, and then I sin against Him but God does not allow me to die, Satan could rightly claim that God is not just or righteous. But if Jesus lived a perfect life, and chose to die as a substitute for me, I can still live and God can remain just and fair. All I have to do is to accept that Jesus has died in my place for my sin.

OVERVIEW

- *Jesus came to earth to help me because He was the one who created me*
- *because disobedience always leads to death, and we have all been disobedient, Jesus' perfect life enables God to provide Jesus as a substitute for my death*
- *my forgiveness is based completely on the perfect obedience and righteousness of Jesus*
- *because my forgiveness is based completely on Jesus, my salvation is by faith in Him*

4. According to Romans 3:9-26, what is the only thing you can do to be forgiven?

Because we are sinful, we cannot do anything to earn our salvation. Therefore we are justified or forgiven by faith in Jesus alone. And as you will learn in other chapters, **salvation is not only about escaping this earth to get to Heaven, but focuses on how Jesus transforms you to be like Him.** This happens by faith in Jesus as well.

practical application

5. What may tempt you to worry about being forgiven? From what you have read, and from what Paul writes in Ephesians 1:13-14, how certain can you be that your sin is forgiven by God?



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about Jesus and salvation in Fundamental Beliefs 4: the Son, 9: Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, and 10: The Experience of Salvation. These can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read.
2. To study more in depth, read about these Fundamental Beliefs in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

handling difficulties

God uses problems in my life to deepen my faith

deepening
FAITH

30

OVERVIEW

- **trials are opportunities for God to refine a deeper and purer faith**
- **trials may come for different reasons— (a) Satan is at work in the world, (b) we reap the consequences of our sins, (c) God is disciplining us, (d) God is pruning us for greater fruitfulness**
- **trials will shape my faith depending on my attitude towards the trials and God when I am in the middle of the trails**

why difficult things happen

A goldsmith was purifying gold in the white-hot fire. “How do you know when the gold is pure?” someone asked him. He replied, “When I can see my face in it.” (Amy Carmichael, *Learning Of God*, (London: SPCK, 1983), 50.)

Sometimes God does the same with us. **God allows trials in our lives so that our sin can be burned away, enabling us to reflect His character more clearly.** So it is important to know that experiencing difficulties does not mean that God has abandoned you. Rather as Peter writes to a suffering church,

These [trials] have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:7)

Ellen White agrees,

Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness, and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness. (Christ's Object Lessons, 61)

We suffer in this world for different reasons. Firstly, we experience the impact of Satan causing pain and chaos in the world (Revelation 12:12). Secondly, we reap the consequences of our own sinful actions (Romans 6:23). Thirdly, we may suffer due to the process of God removing our sin because the sin is so deeply entwined inside us (Jeremiah 9:7). Fourthly, we may suffer due to God's “pruning” of our lives.

pruning

Jesus says that His Father “cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” (John 15:2) I may not have sinned in a specific way I can think of, but as a sinner, I know that I am still weak in faith and trust and all the other qualities that God wants to strengthen inside me. Consequently, Bruce Wilkinson writes,

Are you praying for God's superabundant blessings and pleading that He will make you more like His Son? If so, then you are asking for the shears.

Think about the pain from Paul's thorn. Paul writes, “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) Notice that Paul considers that he was “given” this painful “thorn”. He considers it “a messenger of Satan” yet

he sees that it is intended to carry a holy purpose, for God permits the thorn to keep him humble.

But what was this thorn? Ellen White writes that it was his bad eyesight. She notes that "He was ever to carry about with him in the body the marks of Christ's glory, in his eyes, which had been blinded by the heavenly light, and he desired also to bear with him constantly the assurance of Christ's sustaining grace." (Sketches from the Life of Paul, 34) So **God permitted a physical problem to remain in Paul for a spiritual benefit—that he could grow increasingly to be like Him, and be useful in His service.**

It is important to remember that we don't suffer alone. God has suffered since sin came into the world because His children hurt so much. And of course no-one has suffered as much as Jesus. Consequently, the book of Hebrews encourages,

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

practice it

Use your journal now to write about the things you struggle with and your questions for God concerning the trials in your life, then practice this each day in the coming week. As you make choices to remain loyal to God under pressure, remember that trials come for different reasons. So as you go through difficult periods, pray for the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom to understand the cause of the problem, and if the reason is not made clear to you, the tenacity to say with Job, "when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10)

1. Is this situation difficult, not because of anything I have done, but because Satan is at work in the world? If so, then persevere, knowing "that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)
2. Do I hurt because I am reaping the consequences of my sin. If yes, repent immediately, trust "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)
3. Could it be that God is working now to remove the sin from me? If yes, then hang on! For "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11) Read the full context of this statement in Hebrews 12:7-13.
4. Is this situation difficult because God is pruning me? If this is the case, keep your ears open to the voice of the Holy Spirit. God may not explain everything to you today. Be patient and hold on to him, remembering his promise to you, "For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13)

F

deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

living inside God's Providence

faith grows as I keep choosing to trust God, even when I don't understand His purposes

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

- ***when I trust God with everything, He shapes events according to His good purposes (Romans 8:28)***
- ***God may sometimes remain hidden in my life in order to test me, mature me, or equip me through varying experiences to encourage and help others***

God's invisible hand

The Bible says that God's word (Psalm 119:105) and the Holy Spirit (John 16:13) guide us. But there is something else that God uses—Providence. The term *Providence* is not used much today, but understanding it will help us to learn how God is involved in directing our lives.

Providence has been called "God's invisible hand". Providence is God guiding—but we don't necessarily see any evidence of God's involvement or presence at all. So while the Bible confidently declares that "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28), we may struggle to agree.

This is particularly challenging if I pray for God to guide my life, but then everything seems to fall apart. Is God still with me? Is He still guiding? Perhaps, as deists suggest, God did create the world, but has left me to get on by myself. How do I know? How should I think about the apparent absence of God? To help you think about God's guidance when He doesn't appear present, consider the following examples.

God at work—when it doesn't look like it

1. While Job never received any warning or explanation from God, what does he conclude God is doing after he lost all his wealth, his children are killed, and he is stricken by disease? (Job 23:10. The story can be read in Job 1-2.)

2. Joseph was sold by his brothers (Genesis 37), made a slave in a foreign country and falsely accused of rape (Genesis 39), and left forgotten in prison (Genesis 40). But suddenly he is catapulted to a position of great power as the second ruler in the land of Egypt (Genesis 41). When he looked back on these events, what might he have concluded was the reason for God to have allowed these three life experiences? Also, read his general conclusion in Genesis 50:20.

3. What did Paul conclude God was doing after believing he was going to die? (2 Corinthians 1:8-10) What was the result of Paul's sufferings? (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

4. God's name is not mentioned once in the book of Esther. Why do you think God inspired this book to be written without a reference to Him?

living inside God's Providence

When events do not appear to reveal God's presence, try the following:

1. **Continually praying for understanding.** Pray that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit a of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." (Ephesians 1:17) Only the Holy Spirit can teach you the meaning events—if He chooses to.
2. **Trust that God is working for your very best, even though your life may be difficult or confusing** (Romans 8:28-29). Avoid the temptation to avoid God when things are difficult and stay in communion with Him, no matter what. Be prepared for God to surprise you in the methods He uses.
3. **Consider your circumstances as God's will for you, and submit your will to His.** God is sovereign over everything in our Universe, including everything happening in our lives (Matthew 10:29). This does not mean that everything is from God, but God is ultimately overseeing everything in your life.
4. **Learn to see life as a school.** God uses our experiences as opportunities to mature us in His image. For example, if you pray to learn meekness, you may well find yourself in a situation where you are being unjustly or falsely accused.
5. **In the school of life, going to the next grade may depend on passing the current test.** If God wants to teach you about honesty, He may bring you into a situation which tests your honesty. If you fail, He will bring other things into your life to test your honesty until you pass. Obey God's directions immediately according to what the Bible and the Holy Spirit says.
6. **Consider opportunities to work for God as personal invitations from Him to join with Him in His work.** We don't need to be confused if this or that is from God. Like the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, God always clearly leads from the front. As long as our eyes and ears are open, we just have to follow Him promptly wherever He leads.
7. **Don't try and force open doors that are closed—or remain miserable because they are closed.** When God knows when the time is right for the next part of His plan to unfold, He will open the previously closed doors for you Himself.

practice it

Use your journal now to draw a timeline of your life. On the timeline, mark some of the significant events that have happened to you. Then think about the spiritual impact each of these events had. What did God teach you at these times? Were there any lessons that you didn't notice at the time that you can see now? What lessons can you learn from your past to guide your future? Can you see times when God was present, when previously you were not aware He was? Come back to your timeline during the week to see what you can add.



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

believing in creation

I believe that God created—and re-creates—by faith

deepening
FAITH

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i was not there

I wasn't there when God created the world. None of us were. So how are we to understand what happened at the beginning of the world? Did God create the world by speaking? Did it evolve over millions of years, initiated by a "big bang"?

Because none of us were there, all our beliefs are based on faith. Some people would like to think that their understanding of our origins is based on science, but there is no evidence that can prove what happened. Even for evolutionists, beliefs about the beginning of the world are philosophical ideas that are prone to change over time.

Christians cannot prove from evidence what happened at creation either. **Any proof we may point to is based on the evidence that the Bible itself is God's inspired word to us.** Therefore, we accept the Bible as making clear what we cannot know for ourselves—just as we take the Bible's instruction on the meaning of the death of Jesus.

God inspired the author of Hebrews to write, "*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*" (Hebrews 11:3) Interestingly, **the Bible does not point to evidence to prove the creation of the world, but to faith in God's words.** When we read the story of creation in Genesis 1, each day of the week begins with the words "And God said..." Therefore, we choose to put our faith in the inspiration of the Biblical record, and after that, we look to see how God's revelation in science may support biblical inspiration.

OVERVIEW

- **because I was not there, I use faith in God's words to understand how the world was created**
- **all beliefs about the origin of the world require faith, because there is no conclusive proof that anyone can point to**
- **the Bible uses the creation of the world to illustrate the type of re-creation Jesus can do in my life**

Jesus speaks a word of re-creation

The Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (John 1:1-3)

To introduce Jesus, John points his readers back to Genesis when God spoke and created the world. He wants us to understand that the same God who spoke and created a beautiful world out of darkness and chaos is going to speak again through Jesus. Jesus can make your life beautiful. Colossians 1:15 makes it clear that it was Jesus who created the world, and so it is most appropriate that it is Jesus who will now re-create our lives.

exercise

1. Read Genesis 1. What words would you use to describe the type of world that God created and the way in which He created it?

words to describe the creation of the world	
e.g. beautiful	

Look back at your list. Many of these same words are descriptions of the re-creative work that Jesus does in our lives. And just as the world was described as "formless and empty" and that "darkness was over the surface of the deep" (Genesis 1:2), so our lives that are dark in sin can be re-created.

Most importantly, **our understanding of the creation our world, and our desire to be re-formed into the image of God, is based on faith.**

practical application

2. How would you explain the relationship between faith and evidence in explaining the Bible's teaching on the origins of the earth? Is there a role for evidence, and if so, how would you describe it?



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about creation in Fundamental Belief 6: Creation. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on the subject.
1. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

what happens when I die?

by faith I trust what God says about life after death

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

- **the Bible defines a soul as body plus breath—everything I am**
- **the Bible teaches that I don't have consciousness after death**
- **satan has lied from the beginning that I don't actually die**
- **lazarus is an example to understand what happens when I die**

what am I made of?

The author of Genesis writes:

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7, NIV)

Written out as a formula, we could write that a "living being", (in many other versions referred to as a "soul" e.g. KJV) is a combination of dust plus God's breath (life). So as many Christian theologians have recently noted (both Protestant and Catholic), **man does not have a soul, he is a soul**. We are an intricate combination of dust and breath which cannot be separated.

what happens when I die?

Consequently, when Jesus died, there was no part of Him that floated immediately up to Heaven as a separate "soul". As Jesus said to Mary at the tomb, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (John 20:17).

What do these texts say about what happens when we die?

1. Ecclesiastes 9:5 _____
2. Psalm 115:17 _____

Because we cease to exist at death, except in the mind of God, in John 11 Jesus refers to waking Lazarus from sleep after he had been dead for four days. Lazarus had not ascended immediately to the perfection of Heaven only to be pulled back to this sinful world. Lazarus had died—ceased to exist—then resurrected by Jesus. So **sleep is a biblical term for someone who is dead**, meaning that a) they are not conscious of what is happening, and b) there will come a time when they will be woken up to new life.

3. What can you learn about death from the story of Lazarus in John 11:17-43?

the big lie

So why do many people believe that when we die, we immediately go to either

Heaven or Hell? The answer to this begins when Satan first tempted Eve in the garden of Eden. After Eve had told Satan of God's command to not even touch the tree of good and evil, Satan replied,

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:2-5)

Even though God had told Eve that sin would result in death, Satan claimed that she would not die if she disobeyed. **Satan does not want anyone to believe that "the wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23). He does not want us to believe there are consequences for our actions but that we can continue living however we please.

an issue of trust

There are a few examples in the Bible of people who were resurrected, Jesus being the obvious one. But others include Moses (c.f. Jude 9) and Lazarus. However, we have not died and returned to explain what happens. So we are called to trust the words of Jesus about life and death when He declared to Mary and Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" (John 11:25).

practical application

4. If we do not exist after death, how would you explain the experience of ghosts and spirits who look like dead relatives? What would Satan gain by convincing us we continue living immediately after death?



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about what happens when we die in Fundamental Belief 7: Nature of Man, and 26: Death and Resurrection. These can be found in Appendix A where you will also find other Bible texts to read.
2. To study more in depth, read about these Fundamental Beliefs in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

putting God first

my faith is challenged as I learn to put God before everything else

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

- **Jesus came to reveal the character of the Father**
- **the first goal of my life is to put God and His Kingdom before everything else**
- **God's priority for me is the reflection of His own character**
- **I can only reveal the character of the Father once my first priority has become the Kingdom of God**

why Jesus came

Jesus had one very clear goal in His life, "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). He also made it clear that those who choose to be His disciples have the very same goal also,

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

what was the Father's will?

Jesus' purpose was to reveal the true character of the Father. For thousands of years, Satan had been suggesting that God the Father was harsh and uncaring. By contrast, Jesus showed only love, and sacrificed everything He had for the world. In this way, He was reflecting His Father's character, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known." (John 1:18).

As Jesus' primary ambition was focused on His Father and the Kingdom of Heaven, so my primary ambition is to focus on God's Kingdom. As Jesus declared, "seek first [God's] kingdom" (Matthew 6:33).

To seek God's kingdom first is to consider God's plans for my life as more important than my own. Life is about living out my heavenly Father's will rather than simply my own ambitions. This takes faith. I have to be completely certain that as I focus on God, He is intimately involved in the purpose, direction and events in my life.

Jesus added, "seek first... his righteousness". God's righteousness is everything that is good and right about God—in other words, His character. Jesus encourages us to reflect the goodness and right doing of God. That was what Jesus was doing on the earth.

Read Matthew 6:25-31.

1. What is the basis for not worrying about your life? (verse 26)

2. What problem does Jesus highlight that will prevent you from completely focusing on God?

3. Why is faith essential to putting God first? (verse 30)

Putting God first is essential for disciples of Jesus, because it is only when we are living a life totally absorbed in God that we are able to see Jesus clearly, and thus be able to reveal who He is.

Ellen White highlights this priority of revealing the character of the Father to others:

The greatest work that can be done in our world is to glorify God by living the character of Christ. (6BC 1109)

Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. (Education, 225)

practice it

Spend some time now to think and pray about God's priorities for your life, and think about the following questions:

- What are God's priorities for you today?
- What can you learn about these priorities from the Bible?
- Do you see anything happening in your life that would indicate that God is trying to get you to focus on different priorities than you are now?
- Are there any priorities you are struggling with, and need to pray more about?

Make a list of your priorities for the next week/month/year/life. For each priority, write down specific steps to integrate them into your life.

During this next week, check your list each day to evaluate if these priorities are actually guiding your life. You will also want to update the list from time to time.



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

why be baptised?

baptism symbolises my trust in Jesus for absolutely everything

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

- **baptism symbolises freedom from sin**
- **baptism symbolises my death to the sinful self, new life in the Holy Spirit, and entry into mission**
- **to be baptised is to become a member of Christ's body—the Church**

freedom from slavery

When the children of Israel escaped from Egypt after four hundred years of slavery, part of their escape was through the Red Sea. God parted the water so they could pass through on the seabed, and once they had reached land on the other side and Pharaoh's pursuing soldiers had entered the sea, the parted waters fell back and the soldiers were destroyed. God's people were now truly free.

This story highlights the central idea behind baptism as freedom from slavery. As God's people were literal slaves in Egypt, so we are literal slaves to sin. But due to the miraculous power of God, His people were saved by going through the sea. In a similar way, we are saved from sin as we go into the symbolic waters of baptism because we are demonstrating our complete trust in what Jesus has done for us as our Saviour.

Jesus baptism

Jesus' own baptism provides both an example and an explanation as to what baptism symbolises. Here is Luke's account of what happened.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. (Luke 3:21-23)

Notice three parts of this story. **Firstly**, Jesus went down into the water, which symbolises the grave. **Secondly**, Jesus prayed for, and received, the Holy Spirit who brings divine power and wisdom. **Thirdly**, as a consequence, Jesus entered into ministry with the power of the Holy Spirit. We'll now look at this a little further.

baptism as death to my old life

1. What do you learn about baptism in Romans 6:3-7?

baptism into my new life in the Holy Spirit

2. What does baptism symbolise in Galatians 3:26-27?

baptism as my entry into ministry

3. What was Jesus able to do once He was filled with the divine power of the Holy Spirit?

i) Luke 4:1-13 _____

ii) Luke 4:14-19 _____

baptised into the body of Christ

4. What is the consequence of the baptism of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:13?

As we saw with Jesus in Luke 4, baptism leads to participating in mission. In the New Testament, the Church is called the body of Christ and it is through the Church that Jesus directs His Mission on earth. Consequently, **when we are baptised, we are baptised into Christ and automatically become members of His body, the Church.**

practical application

5. **If you have not yet decided to be baptised:** What is preventing you from following the example of Jesus and being baptised?

6. **If you are already baptised:** Was your own baptism a door into mission? What can you do to deepen your participation in the work of the body of Christ?



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about baptism in Fundamental Belief 15: Baptism. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

will hell torture people forever?

by faith I trust what God says about hell

* Some of the information in this section comes from the book *Adventists Believe*.

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

□ **God wants me to choose Him based on love**

□ **the idea of eternal punishing is based on the Greek idea that we never die, which has been falsely imported into Christianity**

□ **the duration of hellfire is based on the nature of what is being burned**

□ **hellfire occurs at one point in time after the judgement of the world**

the problem of greek ideas

It has been said that more people have become disillusioned with Christianity because of the doctrine of a continually burning hell than for any other reason. One of the problems with this idea is that people will tend to follow God out of fear of the flames rather than for His love. But God is only interested in a relationship with us based on love, for "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

The idea that those who reject God will continually burn in flames for millions of years is based on the false idea that humans have an immortal soul that cannot die.

This idea was imported into Christianity from Greek philosophy and then read back into the Bible. Archbishop William Temple comments,

One thing we can say with confidence: Everlasting torment is to be ruled out. If men had not imported the Greek and unbiblical notion of the natural indestructibility of the individual soul, and then read the New Testament with that already in their minds, they would have drawn from it [the New Testament] a belief, not in everlasting torment, but in annihilation. It is the fire that is called aeonian [everlasting], not the life cast into it. (Christian Faith and Life, 81.)

As we have considered in another chapter, the idea of never dying is a lie that Satan began in the garden of Eden where Satan claimed to Eve that God was not telling the truth when He said that disobedience would result in death (Genesis 3:2-5).

hell and judgement

In English versions of the Bible, the word "hell" is used to translate the Hebrew word "sheol" and the Greek word "Hades". These words generally refer to the grave where both the righteous and wicked wait for resurrection and judgement. However, the Greek word "gehenna" is also translated hell in English versions, but the meaning relates to punishment by fire as a consequence of God's last judgement for those who have rejected Him in this life. Gehenna comes from the Hebrew Ge Hinnom "Valley of Hinnom", a gorge south of Jerusalem. Here in the past, Israel burned their children to the god Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3). Jeremiah predicted that because of this sin, the Lord would make this valley a "Valley of Slaughter" where the corpses of the Israelites would be buried (Jeremiah 7:32-33). This led Israel to view this location as a place of judgement, punishment, and shame. Jewish tradition later considered it a place for the burning of rubbish. Jesus uses the fires of Hinnom to symbolise hell (Matthew 5:22; 18:9). So the fires of Hinnom symbolise the fires of the last judgement.

1. What does Jesus say is destroyed in hell in Matthew 10:28?

The Bible promises eternal life to the righteous, but eternal death to the wicked—not continual punishing in hell (Romans 6:23). The Bible teaches that the wicked will be destroyed (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Hebrews 2:14), consumed (Psalm 104:35), that they will not live in a state of consciousness but will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10).

how long does hell burn?

2. Read 2 Peter 2:6 and Jude 7. How long did the “eternal fire” burn that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and what are we supposed to learn about the meaning of “eternal”?

The fire burned until there was nothing left to burn and then went out. So when Jesus spoke of everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46) He did not mean everlasting *punishing*. **The punishment is permanent—eternal—but not continuously and consciously experienced, because the person is dead and knows nothing.**

The Bible also uses the phrase “forever and ever” with regard to the torment of the wicked (Revelation 14:11; 19:3; 20:10) and many have concluded that this means that Satan and the wicked will be tortured into eternity. However, **the definition of “forever and ever” is determined by the substance of what is being referred to**—as with “eternal” and “everlasting”.

3. Read Isaiah 34:9-10. What do we learn about the length and limits of God’s fires from the example of when God judged Edom?

practical application

4. How would you explain hell to a friend who is scared of God?



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about hell in Fundamental Belief 27: Millennium and the end of Sin. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

learning to praise

praise is faith expressed in thanksgiving and song

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

- *praise is a habit that does not happen by accident*
- *praise is based on practicing (1) observing what God is doing around me, (2) remembering what I have seen, (3) talking about what I have seen*
- *praise is linked directly to the goodness and greatness of God*
- *praise is faith articulated in thanksgiving and song*

for learning to praise

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a British pastor living in the 1800's, is considered to be one of the greatest preachers of all time. His weekly sermons literally sold by the ton. Among his writings is a book called "The Practice of Praise: How to develop the habit of abundant, continual praise in your daily life". There he outlines **three steps to practice praise** from Psalm 145:7, "They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness, And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness." (NASV)

three steps

1. **Practice looking around me**, "They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness". To remember God's great goodness means that I first have to notice it. If I do not look around me to see God's goodness, then I will have nothing to praise Him about.

What can I see in the physical world that reminds me of His goodness? Have I taken time to observe the beauty and intricacy of His creation? Or have I noted the harmony of nature? But perhaps more importantly, what can I see in the spiritual world which makes me want to rejoice in Him? Have I observed the many blessings that my salvation has brought me or the steady development of the importance of prayer and grace among others? The more time I take to observe, the more I will see, and the more fuel I will have to praise my Father.

2. **Practice remembering what I have seen**. Can I remember what God has done in the Bible? Can I remember when God has intervened throughout my life with His goodness—times spent with Him in nature, religious events, providential meetings with people? Do I hold these things in my mind so that they become permanent markers on the path to remind me of His purposes for my life?
3. **Practice talking about it**, "They shall eagerly utter". Like a bubbling stream or a fountain, I am called to let praise for the goodness of God flow unrestricted from my mouth. As I do so, I am encouraged, and so is everyone around me.

reasons to share God's goodness

Spurgeon adds five reasons why we should talk of God's goodness:

Firstly, we should continually praise God because we cannot help it, for the truth of God's goodness compels us to speak out.

Secondly, we should continually praise God because within our culture there are a myriad voices trying to drown out the praises of God. Therefore, the more society

cries against God, the more we should speak out for Him.

Thirdly, we should continually praise God as witness to those who don't know God. Praise is not primarily a private matter, it demands that someone is listening—both God, to whom the praise is directed, and our neighbours, who need to know that our God is real and that the Christian life is worth embracing.

Fourthly, we should continually praise God to encourage fellow Christians. Often, those who are struggling feel so alone and that there is no way out of their predicament. Praise helps to encourage them.

Fifthly, we should continually praise God to glorify God—for God is worthy of our honour and praise. Praise to God is an activity that the whole universe is involved in constantly. So how can we praise Him any less if we have been redeemed from eternal condemnation?

Another author encourages this practice of praise,

Then let us educate our hearts and lips to speak the praise of God for His matchless love. Let us educate our souls to be hopeful and to abide in the light shining from the cross of Calvary. Never should we forget that we are children of the heavenly King, sons and daughters of the Lord of hosts. It is our privilege to maintain a calm repose in God. (Ministry of Healing, 253)

practice it

Spend a few minutes to follow Spurgeon's steps:

1. Reasons for praise by looking around me:

2. Reasons for praise by remembering what God has done for me:

3. People I can encourage by praising God in their presence:

Each day in the coming week, use your journal to list more reasons for praising God.

F

deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

the return of Jesus

by faith I trust Jesus' promise to return and take me to be with Him

deepening
FAITH

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Jesus' promise

Jesus came to earth as a baby, but He told His disciples that He will return a second time at some point in the future,

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14:1-3)

While we cannot predict the future, we can be certain that what Jesus has said about His return is true. This certainty about the end of sin and pain can give us great relief and peace. At the same time, the return of Jesus indicates that the judgement of the world has been completed. So **being prepared for Jesus' coming is critical if we want to be ready to spend eternity with Him**. Jesus gives us lots of information about His return in Matthew 24.

1. What is the most important sign that will indicate the return of Jesus in Matthew 24:3-14?

2. What is it about the second coming that Jesus says will guard us from anyone impersonating His return in Matthew 24:22-27?

3. How will Jesus appear in Matthew 24:30-31?

4. What does Jesus want us to know about being prepared for His second coming in Matthew 24:32-33?

5. What do we know about when Jesus will return in Matthew 24:36-44?

how to live as we wait

Jesus continued to explain to His disciples how they should prepare for His coming

OVERVIEW

- **Jesus promised that He will return to earth to take His people to be with Him**
- **Jesus' return will not be in secret but a worldwide public event**
- **no-one knows when Jesus will return, only God the Father**
- **I can prepare for Jesus' return by (1) keeping connected to the Holy Spirit, (2) using the gifts God has given me to use for Him, (3) and serving others**

by telling them three parables in Matthew 25. Read the whole chapter and write down the main lesson from each story:

6. Parable of the 10 women

7. Parable of the 3 servants

8. Parable of the sheep and the goats

practical application

9. Which of the three parables most speaks to you? What action may you need to take because of what you have learned?



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the return of Jesus in Fundamental Belief 25: Second Coming of Christ. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

my identity as a Christian

I believe that my identity is shaped by the identity of Jesus

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

□ *my identity as a Christian is shaped entirely by the character, life, and purposes of Jesus*

where do you get your identity from?

What makes you "you"? Is it what you have? What you know? Who you know? What others think of you?

When we become Christians and are "born again" we take on a new identity. No longer are we identified by what people think of us, but how God views us.

Because it is easy to forget our identity in Christ, here is a survey to help you understand how you really look at yourself. This is helpful because understanding how we think and feel about life helps us focus in the right places in the future.

For each question below, place a X on the line that is closest to what you really think. Be as honest as you can. Don't try and answer what you think should be the right answer because you want to gain an accurate understanding of how you think about your own identity today.

1	I feel most loved when...	I know I am loved by friends or family	I know God loves me
2	I feel most secure when...	I know I am accepted unconditionally by God	Other people like me
3	I feel valued when...	Other people think I am special	God thinks I am special
4	I feel most confident when I rely on...	God's power	Myself
5	The one who is going to take care of me is...	Me	God
6	The purpose of life is to...	Honour God	Enjoy myself
7	The family that is most important to me is...	The family of God	My earthly family
8	The most important responsibilities in life are...	Those that have to do with God's kingdom	Looking after my own needs
9	When I think about the future...	I know God is working everything out for my good at all times	I feel scared
10	I live mostly by...		
a	Faith		What I can see
b	An experience of God		The theory of God
c	Sacrificing for God		Getting things for me
d	Obedience to God		Knowing about God
e	Relying on what Jesus has done for me		Doing things myself
f	Serving others		Serving myself
g	A relationship with God		Following rules

becoming a new creation

Paul says, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). In other words, when we are connected to Jesus, we gain a whole new identity—Him. Then we are no longer identified with the things and attitudes of Satan's kingdom here on this sinful earth. This is a totally different way of looking at ourselves and our lives.

Read through the list below. Then look up the texts, beginning in the areas that most interest you. What is the most important idea about your identity in Jesus?

i am

1. LOVED

- Nothing can separate me from God's love (Romans 8:37-39)
- I am loved and chosen by God (1 Thessalonians 1:4)

2. SECURE

- I am forgiven because of the riches of God's grace (Ephesians 1:7-8)
- I am not condemned for my past sins (Romans 8:1-2)
- I am sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13)

3. VALUED

- I am God's treasured possession (Deuteronomy 14:2)
- I am being transformed into the likeness of God (2 Corinthians 3:18)

4. EMPOWERED

- God lives in me as Jesus lives in the Father and the Father in Jesus (John 17:20-22)
- I can do everything that God wills because He gives me strength (Philippians 4:13)

5. PROVIDED FOR

- I have direct access to God's throne for all my needs (Hebrews 4:14-16)
- The God who died to save me will certainly give me everything I will ever need (Romans 8:31-32)

i have

1. A NEW PURPOSE

- To glorify God by revealing God's character to others (John 15:8)
- To do good works for God (Ephesians 2:10)

2. A NEW FAMILY

- I am a member of Heaven's family—a child of God (John 1:12)
- I am a member of God's family on earth—His Church (Romans 12:5)

3. NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

- I have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- I am an ambassador for God's kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- I am a royal priest for God (1 Peter 2:9)
- I am a worker with God (1 Corinthians 3:9)

4. A NEW FUTURE

- Where everything works for good (Romans 8:28)
- I have an inheritance in Heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4)

i live by

1. FAITH

- I live by faith not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- Faith leads to salvation (Romans 1:17)

2. EXPERIENCE

- I can have strength within (Ephesians 3:16-19)
- I am being renewed daily (2 Corinthians 4:16)

3. SACRIFICE

- I am to be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2)
- I gain everything by depending completely on Jesus (Philippians 1:21)

4. OBEDIENCE

- Obedience leads to God's love made complete in me (1 John 2:5-6)

5. RELATIONSHIP

- I can't do anything without God (John 15:1-4)

6. SERVING

- Serving others is the priority of God Himself (Philippians 2:1-8)

practice it

You can use your journal now to reflect on your journey from basing your identity on yourself to basing your identity on Christ. Continue this in the coming week.

sex & marriage

learning to trust God's plans to reveal His glory through godly love

deepening
FAITH

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OVERVIEW

- *love turned inwards becomes lust and therefore distorts God's character of love revealed through me*
- *if I practice love outside of God's design, I am unable to fulfil God's purposes to reveal His glory as His image bearer*
- *sexual behaviour has been designed by my Creator*
- *marriage is designed for two people to join together in doing God's work*
- *I am called to be sexually pure, before and during marriage*
- *I am to show grace and love to others when they make mistakes*
- *God can use some people more effectively if they are single than if they are married*

designed to reveal God's character of love

God is love (1 John 4:8). Biblical descriptions of godly love focus on caring for, sacrificing for, and serving, others (1 Corinthians 13). So **godly love looks outwards**. Everything that God created was designed by His loving heart and designed to reflect His love. So since God created me as a sexual being, the focus of sex should always be a love that takes delight in another—my spouse. But **if at any time love turns inwards to satisfy my own feelings and desires, it becomes lust**. Pornography and masturbation are to be avoided because they are only for my own pleasure. As a consequence, **these sexual habits distort the biblical concept of love, thus perverting God's design for me as a sexual being, and ultimately distorting how God's character of love is revealed through me in the eyes of the watching universe**.

God also designed men and women in His own image and through marriage were told to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). By obeying this, God's glory—through image bearers revealing His character and purposes—would be spread across the earth. So if at any time we choose to redefine love or marriage in a way which goes against God's design for love, God's image and purposes to reveal His own glory in the world are distorted and damaged. On a personal level, living outside of God's design for love can ruin our relationships and leave deep and profound scars in our hearts. This is obviously a broad area to explore, but what follows are some key concepts to help us understand sexuality as God designed it and guards us against the widespread myths about sexual freedom in contemporary culture.

defining marriage

1. The concept of marriage originated when God created the world. What is the reason given for the purpose of Eve's creation in Genesis 2:15-20?

In Genesis it is not immediately obvious why God created Eve after Adam, except to emphasise that Eve was a partner in the work that God had given to Adam. Eve is not created out of dirt like Adam but is made from one of Adam's ribs. It has been suggested that Eve's creation from Adam's rib emphasises that Eve and Adam are equals and are intimately connected. However, in the New Testament, we also see parallels between Jesus and the Church. For **just as Eve's existence is entirely dependent on the existence of Adam, so the Church originates, and is entirely dependent, on the presence of Jesus**. In this way, marriage becomes an important symbol to understanding how God views and treats His people.

2. What more can you learn about God's design for marriage in Genesis 2:21-25?

3. Why does God warn us not to marry people who do not believe the same as we do in 2 Corinthians 6:11-18 and Malachi 2:15?
-

sex & marriage

4. What does the Bible say about sex before marriage in Hebrews 13:4?
-

5. What reasons are given for Christians to remain sexually pure, both inside and outside of marriage in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20?
-

6. What does the Bible say will happen if we have sexual relationships that are outside of God's design for humans in Romans 1:18-27?
-

7. What does Jesus teach about how we think about adultery? (Matthew 5:27-30)
-

singleness

Not everyone is married or wants to be married. But for those who are single and considering the possibility of marriage, it may be helpful to read Paul's thoughts on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:25-40. In the wider context of what Paul is writing, he suggests that due to the times in which we live, marriage does not have to be the default status. So **before getting married, it is good to thoughtfully think through the possibility of singleness and how singleness could be used by God for His Kingdom more effectively than if I was married.**

what is appropriate?

Sometimes it can seem challenging to know what is appropriate sexual behaviour, both before and after marriage. Here are some helpful questions to consider as you work through various issues:

- Am I following the natural laws of how God designed my body to function?
- Is my focus on loving another or pleasing myself? ie is this love or lust?
- Does this behaviour reflect the character of God in my life?
- Am I following God's leading or putting my own desires first?

the challenge of our sinful natures

One of the great challenges we face is that we are all broken sinful people living in a broken sinful world. What we think and feel today is not how the Bible describes that God designed us to think and feel. Consequently, we may feel we want to live differently to God's design, so **our challenge is to place biblical teaching above our own feelings—to allow God's Holy Spirit to re-form our lives according to God's**

words. And God promises to do this for us. And because we all experience this challenge in different areas of our lives, we are called to be gracious and loving to each other as we struggle to honour God in the middle of human weakness.

practical application

8. What is the most important thing you need to do now concerning your beliefs and practice?



deepening faith

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about sex and marriage in Fundamental Belief 23: Marriage and the Family. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

note: on choosing a spouse

For those considering marriage, here are six biblical principles from the story of God's leading in the choice of a wife for Isaac in Genesis 24. While the original circumstances were different from the way things are today, these biblical principles remain helpful.

1. **God guides the way ahead (verses 6, 7).** As Abraham's servant is about to set out, Abraham tells him, "[God] will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son" (verse 7).^{*} Abraham was confident not simply that the mission would be successful, but that God would send a messenger from heaven to prepare the way to make it successful. The servant did not have to worry about blazing his own trail. He started his journey confident that God was leading. God leads because it is a mine field out there. We have to struggle with our own hearts, which are unbelievably deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). We also have to evade Satan, who, "is busily engaged in influencing those who are wholly unsuited to each other to unite their interests." (Ellen G. White, Testimonies for

the Church, vol. 2, p248.)

2. **Entrust the choosing to God (verse 12).** The servant prayed, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today." The servant acknowledged that God was the source of his success. This is hard for us, because we really want to believe we are good at choosing for ourselves. But, as we cannot see the future as God does, it is critical to pin our hopes on His wisdom, for "a sincere Christian will not advance his plans in this direction without the knowledge that God approves his course. He will not want to choose for himself, but will feel that God must choose for him." (Ellen White, *The Adventist Home*, p43.) The wonderful truth is that God's choices always work for our very best. We do not have to worry that He will make a mistake.
3. **Wait until you see the "harmonization principle" (verses 13, 14).** Abraham's servant now requests a sign to confirm he has found the right girl. Not only should the girl offer to give him, a stranger, a drink, but also to water his camels. However, the servant did not just randomly ask for this strange sign. One writer makes a short observation that is perhaps the most significant in this story: "In the family of his master he was accustomed to the constant exercise of kindness and hospitality, and he now asked that an act of courtesy might indicate the maiden whom God had chosen." (Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p172.) The servant requested a sign that would show if Rebekah's character would harmonize with the character of Isaac's family. Even more significant, she would also be harmonizing with the greater purposes that God had in mind concerning the covenant between Himself and Abraham. This harmonization principle works in two ways. First, it looks for harmonization of character and personality. Second, and perhaps more important, it looks for harmonization of purpose. Are our values, our ambitions, our spiritual journeys, moving in the same direction? Does this person share in the same purposes for my life that God has already begun to show me? At the beginning, Eve was created as a "helper" in God's purposes, not just a foot warmer for Adam. Before making any sort of commitment to a relationship, we need to see this harmonization principle working, particularly regarding God's purpose for our lives.
4. **You will recognize that God has chosen (verses 26, 27).** Before Rebekah rushes home to share her story, the servant "bowed down and worshiped the Lord" (verse 26). While he had not yet met Rebekah's family, he was already confident that God had chosen. But it was not just the servant who was convinced as "[Rebekah] believed, from what had taken place, that God had selected her to be Isaac's wife." (Ibid., p173.) Both could see God at work.
5. **Handle signs carefully—watch for God's guidance to be confirmed (verses 33-49).** While the servant had asked for the fulfillment of a specific sign, he did not automatically assume the family would see it his way. Before eating, he insisted on describing to the whole family what had happened, and then asked for permission to take Rebekah home. This was quite unlike what happened at my college. A friend was approached by someone who was convinced that "God has told me we should be together." But God had not let anyone else know. However God's direction comes, it must be continually confirmed.
6. **Others will confirm that God has chosen (verses 28-31, 50, 51).** After Rebekah's brother Laban hears her story, he goes out to meet the servant, declaring, "Come, you who are blessed by the Lord" (verse 31). But how did Laban know that the servant wasn't planning an elaborate con? Somehow Laban discerned that God was at work. A short time later Rebekah's father, Bethuel, was told the story. Again, when the servant asked for their opinion, both Bethuel and Laban replied, "This is from the Lord; we can say nothing to you one way or the other" (verse 50). God was obviously working in a way that was evident to those around. When God is at work, godly people who are close to you will be able to discern it.



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ONE AMBITION

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED
TO LIVE?

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek,
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the
days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

Psalms 27:4

CHAPTER 4 *depending on*
DIVINE POWER

a practical introduction to life with God

G A V I N A N T H O N Y

step 1—dying to my sinful nature

divine power comes after the death of my sinful nature

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- **the first stage in obtaining the divine power that can transform my life is the death of my sinful nature**
- **the sinful nature has to die because it constantly generates sins**
- **the primary way my sinful nature dies is by yielding myself completely to God**
- **the death of my sinful self is the doorway into discipleship to Jesus**

the goal

Paul writes that God's purpose for us is that we can be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:28). Andrew Murray notes the role of the Holy Spirit in this work:

When God gives the Holy Spirit, His great object is the formation of a holy character. It is a gift of a holy mind and spiritual disposition, and what we need above everything else, is to say: "I must have the Holy Spirit sanctifying my whole inner life if I am really to live for God's glory (Absolute Surrender, 9).

As we will see, the Bible teaches that **the reflection of the image of God does not come from a modification of who I am but from a replacement of my nature—where my sinful nature is exchanged for the nature of Jesus.**

the root of the problem

1. How we are like without God in Romans 3:10-11 and Ephesians 2:3?

Murray explains the challenge we face and points to the solution:

Why is a lamb always gentle? Because that is its nature. Does it cost the lamb any trouble to be gentle? No. Why not? It is so beautiful and gentle. Has a lamb to study to be gentle? No. Why does that come so easy? It is its nature. And a wolf—why does it cost a wolf no trouble to be cruel, and to put its fangs into the poor lamb or sheep? Because that is its nature. It has not to summon up its courage; the wolf-nature is there (Absolute Surrender, 16).

2. How is our sinful nature to be dealt with in Romans 8:1-14?

When we understand that our problem is the problem of a sinful nature, we can avoid the mistake of trying to address individual sins rather than the factory that generates those sins.

3. What does Jesus say is the doorway into discipleship to Jesus in Luke 9:23 that is also the solution to dealing with the sinful nature?
-

4. What does Paul describe as the consequence of life as a "living sacrifice" in Romans 12:1-2?

how does the sinful nature die?

Dealing successfully with my sinful nature is not done by focusing on my sins, but on Jesus. When I spend time facing my sin, Satan brings discouragement and I can become frustrated. But when I face Jesus, I see the source of my help as realise I cannot fix my problems myself. I know **I can't do much about my sin except offer it to Him. And so I yield everything I am to Him.**

Notice how Paul emphasises this idea of yielding or offering in Romans, "Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness." (Romans 6:13) And then as we just saw, "to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).

While Paul uses the word "offer", Christian writers have also used the terms surrender, abandonment, and yielding. We stand in front of God with our palms up, ready and willing to offer Him everything. Theoretically this is easy. But when I am forced to look at the things I need to offer God, I feel uneasy and resistant. When I look at my ambitions, my desire to do things my own way, my own dreams of happiness, and realise they all have to be offered to God, I am tempted to think this is a gamble. Sometimes I yield through clenched teeth, at other times it is just a relief to drop the idea that I am somehow responsible for being successful. And **because my sin sticks so tenaciously to me, I have to move to the place where God is. I can't "offer" at a distance.** As I learn to yield continually, I am learning to abide (John 15:1-5).

5. How often does Jesus say I must die to my sinful nature in Luke 9:23 (ie to yield or offer God everything)?

practice it

Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously wrote that "when Christ calls a man he bids him come and die." Spend some time now to ask God what areas of your life need to be yielded to Him. Make a note of these so you can use it as a prayer list in the coming days. Continue this prayer each day in the coming week.

P

depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

step 2—filled by the Holy Spirit

divine power comes as the nature of Jesus replaces my sinful nature

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- *the Holy Spirit fills the vacuum created by the death of my sinful nature*
- *the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit comes as I pray daily to be filled with God's presence*

The second stage of experiencing divine power so that I can reflect the image of Christ, is the consequence of daily putting my sinful nature to death (see previous lesson). This consequence is often called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the same way that dying to self is a daily, continual process, so the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to be a daily, continual experience.

It is important to remember that I am not setting out to modify myself. I am designed to be filled with the nature of God, which can only happen to the degree I have been emptied of my own sinful nature.

1. What is the evidence that God's nature is within us in Galatians 5:22-23?

2. Read Matthew 3:16. When does the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus?

3. Once Jesus came up out of the water, what prompted the coming of the Holy Spirit on Him in Luke 3:21-22?

Baptism symbolises death to the old life. When someone is baptised, they go completely under the water to show that their old life has been put in the grave. However, they then rise to a new life. This is a life which is empowered by the Holy Spirit. **It was after Jesus had come up from the watery grave of the Jordan river that the divine fire of the Holy Spirit came down out of Heaven and rested on Him.**

Paul uses the language of the sanctuary services when he urges his readers to offer themselves as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1), which were to be consumed with divine fire.

4. What was the source of the fire used in the sanctuary services in Leviticus 9:24 & 2 Chronicles 7:1?

5. What does the Bible say about the fire on the altar of the sanctuary during the time of Israelites in Leviticus 6:8-9, 12-13?

6. What does Paul advise his co-worker and new Thessalonian Christians in 2 Timothy 1:6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19?

Becoming a sacrifice and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit are two sides of the same discipleship coin. **The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a consequence of becoming a sacrifice but comes when I ask God.** As Jesus says that a disciple must go to death daily (Luke 9:23), so being baptised by the Holy Spirit happens each day when I ask. In this way, I serve with divine power rather than my own power.

practical application

7. What will you need to do to live a life where you can daily experience the power of the Holy Spirit?



depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about this subject in Fundamental Belief 4: Holy Spirit, 7: Nature of Man, and 11: Growing in Christ. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on the subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about these Fundamental Beliefs in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

submitting to God's will

God's will is known and lived after I totally surrender to Him

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- **living God's will is found as I learn to live as a living sacrifice**
- **knowing comes after dying**
- **knowing God is more important than knowing what to do next—for knowing God Himself brings peace**

knowing God's will: the secret

To live at the centre of God's will is to live in a safe place. Therefore most Christians long to know what God's will is for their lives so they can have peace. The apostle Paul reveals the secret of knowing God's will:

(A) Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but (B) be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (C) Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)

Notice the order of this text by looking at it backwards. The conclusion is knowing God's will (C). The way to know this is by having a transformed mind (B). But how do we get a transformed mind? It is by offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice (A).

In other words, **God's will is known once I abandon myself to Him with all my heart.** As Solomon wrote,

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. (Proverbs 3:5-8)

However, the reality is that **once I am prepared to give God everything I have, and are, and desire to be—the very essence of being a living sacrifice—then I won't be concerned about the future.** When I trust myself completely to God, I will be ready for anything because I know God is working out His good purposes for me.

dying like a seed

Elizabeth Elliot describes living like this as dying like a seed.

The growth of all living green things wonderfully represents the process of receiving and relinquishing, gaining and losing, living and dying. The seed falls into the ground, dies as the new shoot springs up. There must be a splitting and a breaking in order for a bud to form. The bud "lets go" when the flower forms. The calyx lets go of the flower. The petals curl up and die in order for the fruit to form. The fruit falls, splits, relinquishes the seed. The seed falls to the ground. There is no ongoing spiritual life without this process of letting go. At the precise point where we refuse, growth stops. If we hold tightly to anything given to us, unwilling to let it go when the time comes to let it go or unwilling to allow it to be used as the Giver means it to be used, we stunt the growth

of the soul. The seed does not “know” what will happen. It only knows what is happening – the falling, the darkness, the dying.... God’s ultimate plan [is] as far beyond our imaginings as the oak tree is from the acorn’s imaginings. The acorn does what it is meant to do, without pestering its Maker with questions about when and how and why. We who have been given an intelligence and a will and a whole range of wants that can be set against the divine Pattern for Good are asked to believe Him. (Elisabeth Elliot, *Passion and Purity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 162-165.)

Again, **knowing comes after dying**. Knowing what to do emerges once we have yielded completely to God. Ellen White comments on the application of this to the life of Jesus,

Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God’s plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will. As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps. (Ministry of Healing, 479)

God Himself is what matters

In this sense, God’s will is not so much about knowing the right person to marry, or job to choose, or house to buy—although God is interested in every part of our lives. Rather, God is most interested in us being in continuous communion with Him—so completely devoted to Him—because this is the environment in which we can become like Him. So living God’s will is not so much about a place or thing so much as it is about a state of being or attitude towards God Himself. It’s about being continually open and available to Him, no matter what. When we live like this, no matter if we make mistakes, or choose the wrong thing, or feel confused about what to do next, we will find contentment in God Himself as we are open to His guidance.

practice it

Spend some time now make a list of what it will take for you to value knowing God Himself more than knowing what to do next. What do you need to do now in order to become “a living sacrifice”? Repeat this exercise each day in the coming week.

P

depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

humble confession

humble confession restores my broken relationship with God

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- *sin breaks my relationship with God*
- *highlighting sin in my life is a major work of the Holy Spirit*
- *I will only respond in confession to the Holy Spirit if I have a humble heart*
- *while the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin, only I can confess sin*

the problem with sin

Sin breaks our relationship with God. The Psalmist wrote, "If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18). Imagine God not listening to us! **The Psalmist understood that it is difficult for God to help him if he was living in opposition to God's design and plans.**

Sometimes we know what we have done wrong. At other times, we are not exactly sure what the problem is—we just feel bad inside. When this happens, it is critical to ask the Holy Spirit what is wrong, and wait for His reply.

how the Spirit works

Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to "convince the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment" (John 16:8, NLT). **If we ask Him, the Spirit will also reveal our sin to us.** However, if the Spirit shows us our sin but we choose to ignore Him, we prevent God from making us pure like He is pure. Changing is our choice. But when we are open to God and confess our sin, He is able to purify us and we will reflect His holiness.

the key to restoration

Charles Finney spent a lot of time preaching and writing on the subject of a transformed life and how confession and repentance are the door to this life. He believed that Hosea's call was key to understanding what we need to do, "... break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you." (Hosea 10:12) In other words, **we need to break up the hardness of our hearts by confession because only then can the rain of the Holy Spirit penetrate into our hearts and change us.**

Finney has been described as a man "who probably influenced more conversions and saw the ushering in of more revivals than any other modern man." Indeed, he has been credited with the conversion of over 250,000 people. His key to a renewed life is seen in the opening statement of *How to Experience Revival*, "Revival is renewed conviction of sin and repentance."

This conclusion regarding the necessity of conviction of sin has been shared by all other leaders of revivals. Indeed it was this message that was the cornerstone of John the Baptist's ministry as he preached "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". Jesus Himself declared, "the time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15, NIV)

Such **confession of sin involves identifying everything that is blocking our**

communion with God. This may be a painful and humbling process, but a necessary one. But as we reject the sin in our lives and appeal to God for His forgiveness, we will provide room for His healing love and peace to saturate our minds. His promise of being made clean is always before us, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9, NIV)

practice it

Spend some time now in confession. Go to a place where you can be by yourself.

1. Thank God for His promise to forgive you so that you can have a new start. John says that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NIV) This means that if we are truly sorry for going against God's design for our lives, God will forgive us and re-create us like new inside — no matter what we have done.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you a humble and discerning heart so you can see if there is anything that you need to confess and change. As Finney points out, these will include sins of omission—things I have not done that I should have, and sins of commission—things I have done, that I should not have.
3. Write down a list of these things. Keep praying and writing until you are sure that there is nothing more for the Holy Spirit wants to show you. Then put a line at the bottom of your list. For example:

1. *For getting angry at John this morning.*
 2. *For looking at things on the web that I shouldn't.*
 3. *For not wanting to help those in need.*
-

4. Ask for God's forgiveness and for help to change the way you have been thinking and acting. Look at the first item on your list (Getting angry). Then pray and ask God to forgive you for getting angry and saying unkind words. When you are confident that God has forgiven you (Remember the text in 1 John 1:9), cross out that point. Then pray specifically about number 2 and do the same thing. Pray for everything on your list individually. When you have reached the line, you know that today you are ready to live in harmony with God.

Don't think there is anything you have done that God cannot forgive. Like David who confessed his sin in Psalm 51, God is eager to restore everyone who asks.

Spend some time to practice this each day in the coming week.



depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

communion: Jesus' yielded life

a regular reminder to imitate Jesus' complete surrender to God

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

45

OVERVIEW

□ *the communion service points back to the salvation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery and their hope in a coming Messiah*

□ *the communion service provides a regular opportunity to reorientate my heart back to God*

□ *the communion service begins with foot-washing which symbolises the humility of heart necessary to take advantage of what Jesus has done for me*

□ *the communion service is open to everyone of any age with faith in Jesus*

the problem of our wandering hearts

There are two important Christian rituals that symbolise and illustrate the total commitment of ourselves to God. The first is baptism. Baptism is normally done once in our lives as a public statement when entering into life with God.

The second is the communion service, or Lord's supper. This ritual is performed a number of times every year. Communion symbolises similar ideas as baptism, for it functions as a regular reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus, and therefore reminds us of our continual commitment to be living sacrifices for God.

Because our hearts regularly wander away from God, **the communion service is regular opportunity to reorientate our hearts back to Him and receive an affirmation of His forgiveness.** When we recommit ourselves to imitate Jesus' sacrifice, we reopen ourselves to receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

background

The communion service is based on the last meal Jesus had with His disciples before the crucifixion. Jesus was celebrating the Jewish festival of Passover which remembered the time the angel passed over the homes in Egypt when those with the blood of a lamb daubed on their door posts were saved (see Exodus 12:21-28). This pointed forward to the salvation the Messiah would bring. Before His crucifixion Jesus gave the symbols of bread (His body) and wine (His blood), fresh meaning.

foot-washing

The communion service today is split into two parts. The first is foot-washing.

1. Read John 13:1-17. Foot washing was a common cultural courtesy at the time of Jesus. What is the central idea Jesus wants to teach us today by continuing the practice of foot-washing?

taking bread and wine

The second part of the communion service is taking pieces of unleavened bread and unfermented grape juice. (Unleavened bread is bread without yeast, and was what the Israelites were told to prepare before they were rescued by God from Egyptian slavery. They had to leave Egypt quickly, and did not have time to wait for yeast to rise in the bread.)

2. Read Matthew 26:17-30. What does Jesus say is the meaning of the

Bread _____

Wine _____

3. Read John 6:48-58. What more do you learn from Jesus' teaching about the meaning of bread and wine?

4. What does Paul say is the purpose of commemorating Jesus' last supper? (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

open to all

The communion service is open to any Christian who has put their faith in Jesus. Also, as the original passover supper was for whole families, so people of any age are welcome to participate. The only prerequisite to participating is faith in the death, life and resurrection of Jesus.

practical application

5. Is there anything to prevent you from participating in the next communion service?



depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the communion service in Fundamental Belief 16: The Lord's Supper. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

submitting to obey God's law

obedience is an act of submission to God's love

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- **God's law is shaped by His character of love**
- **to obey is to reject my own independence and choose to live my life around God's goodness and purposes**
- **God's laws are simply the rules that govern how I was designed by God to live when I was created**
- **law is designed to live within my heart—otherwise I will become a legalist**

what is God's law?

I often think of God's law as how Heaven lives without thinking about it. **God's law is the way our Creator designed His creatures to function.** The Bible tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). So everything He designs, including us, and including the way He has designed us to operate, is infused and shaped by His love. Put another way, **God's law is simply a reflection of His own character—a character based on goodness and love.** So when I submit and obey God's laws, I am choosing to reject my independence, and instead be shaped by God's love and purposes for my life. **God's law, that shapes who God is, has the power to re-shape my brokenness so I can reflect His character of love—just as God originally designed me to be.**

1. Read Psalm 19:7-13. What does the Psalmist say are the benefits of God's law?

written down

This love-shaped law has been written down because sin has a tendency of making me forgetful. Consequently I lose sight of the principles by which God designed me to live. **God's law is also written down because my sinful nature has a tendency to confuse good and evil.**

2. When God gave the ten commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, what did He use to write the law, and why do you think this is significant? (Exodus 24:12; 34:1)

into the heart

Sin is not present in Heaven, so Heavenly beings are not forgetful and need God's law written down. God's law is written on their hearts just as God has always wanted for us. God ties the heart, law and Holy Spirit together when He promised through Ezekiel, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezekiel 36:26-27) As created beings, **our hearts were designed as the place to hold God's law.**

3. Why do you think the Psalmist sees the heart as the home of God's law? (Psalm 40:8)

One of the dangers with law keeping is when law does not come into our hearts

but remains external to us. This results in legalism. **The problem of legalism is that it breeds harshness and gracelessness because the law keeping is not being shaped by God's love within the heart.** This was the problem Jesus faced when He came to earth. So when He tried to explain the foundations of God's law He emphasised the application of God's law to our inner lives.

4. In the sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus begins a number of sentences with "You have heard it said... But I tell you..." What is Jesus trying to explain about God's law? Look at two examples in Matthew 5:21-22 and 5:27-28.
-

God's law continues

God's law keeps us in harmony with His intended design for our lives. **As beings created in the image of God, God's law includes guidance for our moral, spiritual, and physical development.** Consequently, such law remains valid throughout all time. While some laws were only for the nation of Israel, the rest are designed to show how God's image can be restored in us, which results in joy and love in service to others.

practical application

5. Which of God's laws do you struggle most to accept, and why? How will you address this in your own life?
-

6. What do you need to do to guard against becoming a Christian legalist?
-

P

depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the law in Fundamental Belief 19: Law of God. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

yielding my body to God 1

my body is the temple where the Holy Spirit lives

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- **my body is very important to God as the place where His Spirit lives**
- **God has designed that my mind and body are intimately interconnected**
- **the health of my spiritual life is directly impacted by the health of my body**
- **all of us are addicts in some way**
- **addictions are overcome as I learn to yield my body and mind to God's direction and power**
- **the power to use my mind and choose for God is at the heart of the great controversy between God and Satan**

my body is important to God

God is clear about the importance of our physical bodies,

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Our goal is clear: our bodies are to be in the best possible condition for the Spirit of God to live in. Indeed, **because Jesus died for me, my life has the sole focus of honouring God with everything I am.** In Genesis 1:26-27, God made us "in his image". **While God's image may be understood as His character, our bodies and minds are also a vital part of that image.** Most importantly, God cannot communicate to us without going through the physical brain that sits in our heads. Our minds have the power to choose and discern, and **that power to choose is at the heart of the battle between God and Satan.** But when our minds are broken by depression, addictions, or physical disease, the ability for our minds to function as God designed—and therefore our ability for communion with God—becomes more challenging, or impossible.

8 steps to overcoming addictions

Someone said that we are all addicts. It may be something physical like alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs, but it could also be sugar, porn, work, computer games, trying to please others, or looking good. Below are 8 steps to address such addictions adapted from material by Mark Finley. Circle the number at the start of each step when you are able to accept what the Bible teaches on that point.

1. **Be open to the reality that _____YOUR ADDICTION_____ is a sin against God and the laws He designed your body and mind to live by.** What does Romans 12:1-2 teach you about your body?

2. **Be open to the weakness of your sinful nature and your inability to change on your own.** You may have been frustrated by your addiction for years, like many of the people Jesus met (eg John 5:5-8). To move forwards, you need God's Holy Spirit to fill your life to break the addiction. What does Jesus teach you about your own power in John 15:5?

3. **By faith, believe that although you are weak, the power of the Holy Spirit living in you is strong enough to overcome your addiction.** What do you learn from

4. **Yield, surrender, offer, yourself and your addiction to God.** What does Paul teach you about surrender in Romans 6:3-15?

5. **Trust God that His promises to help you are true, and give thanks to Him right now.** What does the psalmist teach about what God can do for you today in Psalms 103:1-5?

6. **If you have any cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, pornographic images or TV / internet subscriptions—anything that is damaging your body or mind, destroy / cancel them all immediately.** Don't leave anything around that can tempt you later. What does James call you to do now in James 4:7?

7. **Find practical support from other sources.** Find a friend to whom you can talk about your decision to quit this addiction. Ask them to hold you accountable for the decision you have made. You may also find it important to start regular habits of daily exercise, eating plenty of fruit and vegetables, drinking plenty of water, sleeping at least 8 hours a night, and avoiding any addictive substances like coffee and alcohol. Remember that while God will rescue you from your addiction, the practical habits you develop now continues to keep you safe. Who can hold you accountable as you work through your addiction?

8. **Continue to believe that God is delivering you from your addiction.** Practice thanking Him for His work in your life, remembering that thanks and praise are ways to demonstrate your faith in Him. What is the reason to thank God in 1 Corinthians 15:57?

depending on divine power

P

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about how God designed our bodies to be used in Fundamental Belief 22: Christian Behaviour. This can be found in the Appendix where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

yielding my body to God 2

living as God designed—for the body God designed

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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divine design

God designed us “in his image” (Genesis 1:26-27). As such, **we are an intricate, interconnected combination of mind, body and spirit that cannot be separated from each other.** Indeed, the health of one will influence the others. Everything together is made “in his image”.

At the centre of the battle between God and Satan is the battle for our wills, and our choices to follow one or the other. In this context, the health of my body directly impacts the health of my mind and therefore the quality of the choices I make. So **how I eat is not simply a matter of personal preference. How I eat impacts the ability of my body to function as God designed and therefore my ability to make the best choices possible.** Some of these choices will have eternal implications.

healthy eating

Let's look a little closer at how God designed us to eat.

1. What food did God design for people to eat in Eden? (Genesis 1:29-30)

2. Before the flood, how many pairs of animals entered Noah's ark? (Genesis 7:2-3)

3. What type of animals did Noah sacrifice to God when they came out of the ark? (Genesis 8:20)

4. What did God add to the diet originally established in Eden—after the flood? (Genesis 9:3)

5. What clarification does God make concerning the eating of animal food? (Genesis 9:4) which is repeated by Paul in the New Testament? (Acts 15:20)

After the Israelites left Egypt, God added more detail to what had previously been said about clean and unclean food. **In the same way that the giving of the law to Israel was not something new but an affirmation of what was often forgotten, so it**

OVERVIEW

- **God has designed the food that our bodies require for good health**
 - *the principles for eating established by God in Eden and soon after, are still effective today*
- **we are an inseparable combination of mind, body and spirit where each part influences the others**
 - *the laws for health focus on keeping our bodies in the best condition in the place we live*
- *to follow God's design for a healthy body may mean that I need to yield some of my own desires and preferences for food to God*

appears that the laws concerning clean and unclean food were also written down so people would not forget.

6. How does God define clean & unclean food? (Leviticus 11:1-47 & Deuteronomy 14:3-21)

The Bible does not explain why God made a division between clean and unclean. We know that many of the unclean foods are designed as nature's rubbish collectors, such as pigs and crabs, and so carry a high risk of disease. But for some reason, animals were split into clean and unclean food from the beginning—even before Noah. Interestingly, **God does not explain these food laws in terms of making people healthy or sick, but rather in the context of obedience and holiness. It is in the middle of the food laws that God declares, "I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy because I am holy"** (Leviticus 11:44-45), with the command to make sure His people could tell the difference between the two types of food (Leviticus 11:47).

diet summary

As people designed in God's image, God wants us to live in the best physical shape possible. Originally God designed a whole foods diet for us to eat. After the flood, at a time when there was little vegetation around, He gave guidance for eating clean animals with the blood drained out. Clean animals were already known by Noah and were used for sacrifice and then for eating. While God has not forbidden the eating of clean animals, the Seventh-day Adventist Church recommends a vegetarian diet which has been shown scientifically to lead to longer life and a better quality of life as God designed in Eden.

Changing your diet can be challenging because it is about changing the appetites that have shaped your mind, feelings and palate for many years. Consequently, to eat as God designed may require some tough choices and hard battles. However, as you learn to yield your choices and body to God, His power will enable you to develop a diet that will bring your body to the best possible health.

practical application

7. How will my decision about the biblical laws on food change the way I eat and prepare food for my family?

8. What challenges are there for me to follow God's food laws and stay in the best possible physical condition? How do these principles relate to what I drink, including the use of alcohol?

9. This lesson has concentrated on diet, but exercise, sleep, environment, and stress are also important components of keeping your body healthy. What choices do you need to make today concerning things to do, or stop doing, in order to maintain good physical health?

depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?



who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about our health in Fundamental Belief 22: Christian Behaviour. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

note: challenging texts about diet

In the context of God declaring food clean and unclean, some Bible passages appear to say this distinction is no longer valid. Here are some of these texts with explanations.

Genesis 9:3 Before the flood there was a clear distinction between clean and unclean foods. Later on, God repeats this distinction to Israel about clean and unclean foods. However, between the flood and before the food laws at Sinai, God appears to say that people can eat anything they want—"everything that lives and moves about is food for you" (Genesis 9:3). However, as God made a distinction to Noah about clean and unclean food—and will soon repeat the distinction to the Israelites—it is most probable that God means eating anything within the sphere of the clean foods, rather than Him repeatedly changing His mind about what people can eat.

Acts 10:9-28 In this text it appears that Peter is being told he can eat anything he

likes. However, Peter states clearly that all his life, including his time with Jesus, “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean (Acts 10:13). In this passage, God is not declaring all foods clean, but teaching Peter that the Gentiles are also His people and Peter should share the gospel with them.

Romans 14:14 In this text Paul writes, “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” However, the context of the passage is not the food laws that God set up before the flood, but whether meat could be eaten by Christians which had previously been sacrificed to pagan idols, a typical issue in that culture. Paul is saying that a Christian can go ahead and eat such meat in good conscience.

Mark 7:14-23 It is in this context that we look at another challenging passage in Mark. Mark writes that Jesus “declared all foods clean” (v19). However, this statement does not mean that Jesus abolished the distinction between clean and unclean foods. Jesus and the Pharisees were not discussing types of food, but the way food was eaten. For example, was the ritual washing of hands before a meal necessary? Jesus is making the point that defilement is not about whether the food has touched unwashed hands, but whether the heart is wicked or pure (Mark 7:20-23). In this sense, all food eaten with unwashed hands can be considered “clean”.

restoration through humility

God's power to restore broken relationships requires a humble heart

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- **my sin breaks my relationships with others**
- **God initiated restoring me to Himself even though I rebelled against Him first**
- **restoring broken relationships with others requires a humble heart**
- **unconditional love has astonishing power to restore broken relationships**

sin breaks relationships

Sin breaks relationships. When Satan sinned, it broke his relationship with God and the whole of Heaven. **When Adam and Eve sinned, it broke their relationship with God, and the relationship between each other.** This is how it has been throughout the whole of human history. Sin comes into our lives and it breaks our relationship with God, our friends and family, and relationships within churches. Sin breaks things.

Jesus' model for restoring relationships

So how do we begin to rebuild broken relationships? Jesus gives us the model to use based on John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

1. **God begins with grace towards those who are broken and rebellious**, *"God so loved the world"*. While the world was still in rebellion and uninterested in Him, God so loved. This is an act of grace because God's love was undeserved. God began by viewing the guilty party with grace.
2. **God sacrifices Himself for those who are broken and rebellious**, *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son"*. When people are doing what I think is wrong, I generally want to fight for justice and get people to start doing what is right. But God offered Himself as a sacrifice before He mentions anything about justice or behaving properly.
3. **God offers the broken and rebellious a chance to be together again**, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* God desires to give the broken and rebellious eternal life. In other words, God wants to bring them to where He is. God's desire is not simply to forgive people at a distance but to bring them back into intimate fellowship with Himself.

Living like this is hard, and cannot be accomplished without a humble heart (Philippians 2:3-11). This is because reaching out to those who hurt us goes against everything we are feeling inside. We think that if someone has hurt us then they should come and apologise. That's right and just! And anyway, we feel so hurt, we don't feel like restoring any sort of relationship with them. But as Paul encourages us, *"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law"* (Romans 13:8).

So here are five things to remember when we face a breakdown in our relationships:

1. **Everyone is a child of God—God still loves the one who has hurt me, no matter what they have done to me.** Indeed, God probably feels the pain more than I do because He made them and has been caring for them since the day they were born.

2. **Satan is behind every breakdown in relationships—he is the real enemy, not the person who has hurt me.** This is hard to remember, but if I forget this I will only feel worse inside about the other person.
3. **The one who has hurt me, is probably in a worse situation than I am.** Sure, I am hurt, but how deep is the hurt in the one who hurt me? It is quite possible that when I offer grace to the one who hurt me, this will be exactly the medication they need for their own hurts. I may be their only opportunity for healing.
4. **Make a commitment to act from biblical principles rather than how I feel.** Like the parting of the River Jordan before the children of Israel went into Canaan, God may wait to change our situation until after I begin to take the first step. Miracles begin when I act on faith—according to the promises that God has given me.
5. **I cannot give to others what I have not first received from God.** If I am empty of grace and love, I won't be able to pass anything on to others except my frustrations. Sometimes I get very tired trying hard to do the right thing towards others. I am often surprised that the harder I try, the more tired I become. This is because the power to overcome my feelings and the attacks of Satan on my broken relationships will only be received when I am on my knees. The more broken the relationship, the longer I may need to spend in God's presence in order to act with God's power within me.

practice it

When you have to face a broken relationship, you can record your thoughts, prayers and feelings in your journal. But ultimately we have to live our faith. We can pray, and write, and think, but when it comes to relationships we have to take bold action. When we do this we won't be alone—for the God who offered His grace to us will walk with us and offer His grace through us to those in need.

You could use your journal as a "battle plan". What relationships do you have that are broken? Are there any spiritual leaders that God has placed over you to whom you have refused to submit (Hebrews 13:17) because you want to do things your own way? Who could God reach with His grace through you? What will be your first step to restore a relationship that Satan has been working to destroy?

Spend some time now to think and pray about a broken relationship in your life. Keep praying about this issue in the coming week, noting how God may want you to begin finding a resolution.

P

depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

shaped by biblical principles

yielding to God's principles for living when the Bible seems unclear

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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OVERVIEW

- **seven principles for making good moral choices when the Bible appears unclear on specific issues**
- **yielding to biblical principles can be challenging because my sinful nature does not naturally want to submit to the authority of God**

how do I know?

Dick Duerksen describes how we can know if we are making godly decisions when the Bible doesn't seem to be clear. He says that when the Bible appears not to give specific direction for the issue we face, we have to act by yielding our lives to the principles God has laid out in the Bible. This is generally difficult, because our sinful natures do not naturally want to submit to the authority of God!

We want to live safely inside God's kingdom, so we are going to look at 7 biblical principles that will help us to make good, God-directed, moral choices. You can use these principles to help you answer any question that you have about these so-called grey areas. We must be clear: we don't apply these principles if the Bible already tells us what to do. They are only used when the Bible appears is unclear.

seven principles for building a safe house

Here are Duerksen's 7 principles to help us choose wisely. Think about each principle as part of a building that creates a safe-house to live in communion with God.

the foundation

1. **The Principle of a God-focused Life:** Because I choose to die to my own desires and ambitions, I will set both my heart and mind—my emotions and thoughts—on God alone.
Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

the two-sided roof

2. **The Principle of Judgement:** My responsibility is not to judge others but to judge how I am following God's radical lifestyle myself.
You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Romans 2:1-4)

3. **The Principle of Freedom:** My freedom is to be used to live for God, rather than only what I feel like doing.

Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. (1 Peter 2:16)

the four pillars

4. **The Principle of Running Lightly:** I will not do anything that will slow me down spiritually.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

5. **The Principle of Usefulness:** I will only do what benefits myself, others, and God.

"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. (1 Corinthians 6:12a)

6. **The Principle of Slavery:** I will only do what the Holy Spirit is able to control.

"Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. (1 Corinthians 6:12b)

7. **The Principle of Example:** I will only do what can set a Christ-like example for others to follow.

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. (Romans 14:13)

practice it

Think about a question you have where you are not sure the Bible gives a clear answer. Now ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thinking and go through each of these 7 principles. You can use your journal to work through any moral grey areas you face and the biblical principles that will help you decide how to deal with them.

P

depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

- This material is based on material created by Dick Duerksen and is adapted with his permission.

surrendered for purity

the power to be pure comes as I give up sinful habits

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

51

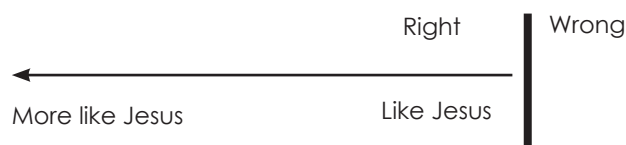
Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) So **when I am thinking about living a life of purity before God, it is not my actions that I should think about first, but my heart.** That's where the problem lies. But when my heart is right with God—as I "gaze on the beauty of the Lord"—then my actions will be right towards Him and others.

the line

Joshua Harris suggests that we often think of purity as being on the right side of a line. "Right" is on one side, and "wrong" is on the other. But this can be dangerous thinking because we think that as long our feet are on the correct side of the line we are ok. But our hearts can still be on the wrong side.

Right	Wrong
Feet	Heart

It is more helpful to think about our hearts, not as being in the right place, but as heading in the right direction—further and deeper towards becoming like Jesus, for that is a direction we will continue to pursue in Heaven.



Remember that Satan and Adam and Eve were living in perfect places—Heaven and Eden—when they sinned. They were in the "right" places, but their hearts were heading in the wrong direction. Their hearts were not surrendered to God.

Now think about yourself. What areas do you need to think about more carefully when it comes to reflecting the purity of Jesus in your heart? Has your heart been struggling with sexually impure thoughts? Impurity when dealing with money issues? Anger or revenge? Anything else?

dealing with our impure hearts

One day, a man came to Jesus and asked, 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

OVERVIEW

- **my heart is naturally deceitful**
- **purity is a direction, not just a place**
- **purity cannot be gained without God's own purity within me**
- **we become pure as we become surrendered to God's love—which displaces our impurity**

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. (Matthew 22:36-40)

We have been noting that the breaking of the law within our hearts covers many different areas. But Jesus says that these laws fall into just two areas, love for God and love for each other. So **if we are to live lives of purity towards God and our neighbour, we must learn what it means to truly love God and our neighbour.** Our hearts must learn to surrender themselves to love. This is probably why Jesus includes in the Sermon on the Mount,

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

To have a heart that is perfectly pure is to have a heart that perfectly loves—even our enemies. So to remove impurity within, we must be yielded to God's love—a love which comes from outside of ourselves—must displace our impurity.

4 steps to loving more perfectly

To love more perfectly is a quest we shall be on for the rest of our lives. But here are 4 steps to loving more perfectly.

1. **Ask the Holy Spirit:** to guide your thoughts as you think about purity in your own life.
2. **Ask yourself:** is my struggle related to impurity towards God or a person? If it is towards a person, then begin to pray regularly for God to give you His love for that person. If it is towards Him, begin to pray regularly for God to give you His love, so you can love Him more perfectly.
3. **Remember: loving is not a feeling but a principle:** determine to create new habits with the power the Holy Spirit.
4. **Remember the line:** you are on a life-long quest away from evil towards an ever deeper commitment to reflecting the image of Jesus.

Spend some time to do this now, and repeat each day in the coming week.

P

depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

dying to self—habits & hard work

godliness requires new habits, surrender, guts and hard work

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

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character is destiny

Around 2500 years ago, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus wrote that “character is destiny”. Another Greek philosopher, Aristotle, wrote that “ethical excellence comes about as a result of habit.” So as many have observed throughout history, “actions repeated form habits, habits form character, and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided.” (Christ Object Lessons, 356).

not by accident

So **I do not desire Christ more than all other things by accident.** I do not reflect Jesus merely because I am sincere. To be spiritually healthy and grow increasingly in the image of God, I must be planted in good soil. That good soil is made up of the habits that shape my lifestyle—which in turn defines who I am:

Character does not come by chance. It is not determined by one outburst of temper, one step in the wrong direction. It is the repetition of the act that causes it to become habit, and moulds the character either for good or for evil. Right characters can be formed only by persevering, untiring effort, by improving every entrusted talent and capability to the glory of God (Child Guidance, 164).

Richard Foster describes the reflection of God's character as a journey along a path. On one side of this path we can fall into the chasm of human works where we try to change ourselves. On the other side of the path we can fall into the chasm caused by a failure to do anything for ourselves. Foster continues,

As we travel this path, the blessing of God will come upon us and reconstruct us into the image of Jesus. We must remember that the path does not produce the change; it only places us where the change can occur. This is the path of disciplined grace. (Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1998), 8.)

So **staying on this path of “disciplined grace” requires constant choices**—choices that keep me from self-pity or quitting when life becomes difficult. These choices also keep me in the place where I am open to the influence of the Holy Spirit.

habits and hard work

Working hard to establish godly habits is not salvation by works. As Paul notes, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13). God is at work within us, but we have to make effort—sometimes, lots of effort. As Dallas

OVERVIEW

- **I am my habits**
- **my habits form my character**
- **spiritual habits create the space for the Holy Spirit to shape me**
- **habits take deliberate effort, but the most effort is required to yield my sinful nature to God**

Willard clarifies, “**God is not opposed to effort but to earning**”.

effort to do what?

This effort is necessary for one important reason: my sinful nature. By nature I do not long to do the right thing automatically because there is a war inside me between my sinful nature and the call of the Holy Spirit. So **the tremendous effort that may be necessary to establish new habits is not in actually working harder to be better, but in submitting or yielding myself in deeper ways to God.** For then God can change the direction and desires of my heart. From this submission to God, new habits can be created with God's power.

In the following text, Peter tells us about the qualities of God that God wants to grow within you. Before going any further, read 2 Peter 1:5-7 in your Bible.

2 Peter 1:5-7	Explanation
For this very reason, make every effort to add to your	Effort is required to work in partnership with the Holy Spirit to grow in God's character
1. faith goodness	Goodness: moral excellence, like God, in our character
2. and to goodness, knowledge	Knowledge: of God and spiritual things
3. and to knowledge, self-control	Self-control: is to live by God's principles when our feelings want to do something else
4. and to self-control, perseverance	Perseverance: keeping going—when it is difficult or when there is opposition
5. and to perseverance, godliness	Godliness: a life like God's
6. and to godliness, brotherly kindness	Kindness: caring for others people's needs
7. and to brotherly kindness, love	Love: wanting, and working, for the very best for others

practice it

From the list of Christian virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-7, ask God to show you which of these virtues you most need to nurture today. Use your journal to prayerfully write out a plan to develop new habits in this area. Each day in the coming week, continue to reflect on what God wants to do in your life from this passage.



depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

praying to be filled

prayer brings the presence of the Holy Spirit into my life

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

53

OVERVIEW

- *the divine power of the Holy Spirit comes as a result of prayer*
- *God's power does not come into me by itself but as I collaborate with God*

how can I change?

One of the most common questions Christians ask is “how can I change? I pray for the Holy Spirit to change me, but nothing seems to happen!” It can be very frustrating because we know God has all the power, and we know we want to be changed—so why doesn't anything seem to happen?

Part of the answer is found in what Jesus taught His disciples about the Holy Spirit. He said that the Holy Spirit has two important tasks. First, He will show me what I am doing wrong in my life—“when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin” (John 16:8, NLT) Second, he will show me what is right—“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). **While the Holy Spirit will show me the sin in my life, and show me the right way to go, He is not able to make me repent or obey.** My life will only change as I choose to repent and obey in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If I don't do these two things, I can't change at all. So how can I work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit?

working with the Holy Spirit

Being transformed to be like Jesus does not happen by accident. Nor does it happen by just wanting it to happen really badly. It happens as the Holy Spirit brings the nature of Jesus into my life. Here is an outline of the process that we take when wanting the Holy Spirit to change us inside. (To help you remember this process, the first letter of each word forms the word APCAT.) Look up each of the Bible verses as you read.

Admit your weakness. Tell God that you know there is no way you have the strength or the intelligence to change yourself or to know what is right. (Psalm 6:2; James 5:15; Hosea 5:13)

Pray for the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. We will only change as we have help from Heaven. Ask God to show you what to do, or how to change. (Luke 11:13; James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5-6) Remember that the power of the Holy Spirit does not necessarily come with any sort of feeling, because it is by faith in God that we grow.

Claim God's promise of help. It's one thing to pray for help, but it is something else completely to believe that God will help you. But without faith—complete trust that God will do what He has promised—we won't experience a change. So it is helpful to quote God's promises back to Him—to show Him that you do trust what He has promised to do in and for you. You can read more about quoting God's promises back to Him in chapter 24. (John 14:26; Jeremiah 29:11-13; Isaiah 41:10).

Act. Do what you know to be right, according to God's word, no matter how you feel. Often we don't do the right thing because it "feels" hard. So don't trust your feelings to do the right thing, but trust God's direction in the Bible and His promises. (Philippians 2:12-13) If you begin doing something and are worried that it is wrong, don't worry. Talk about the matter with God and trust that He will guide you in the right way, even if you think you have made a mistake.

Thank God for His work in you. Again, thank God no matter how you feel because thanks is faith in action! Thank God, not because you can see how things will change, but because you are confident that God is working for you according to His promises to you—right now. (Philippians 4:4-6; Psalm 28:6-7; Psalm 56:12)

an example

Imagine that you are struggling with anger at someone who has hurt you, and you want the Holy Spirit to help you stop feeling like this. Following the APCAT outline, you could pray something like this

Dear Father, (ADMIT) I feel totally powerless to stop these feelings of anger inside me. (PRAY) Please will you send your Holy Spirit to help me control my thoughts and feelings. (CLAIM) I know that you have promised to give me the spirit of peace that Paul describes in Galatians 5:22. (THANK) Thank you for hearing. I know that you are a great God and will act in my life to help me. Amen.

Remember that **God's work in you is a process**. Sometimes God does miracles for us that literally happen overnight. But most of the time, **the Holy Spirit works in us over time so we can learn how He works**. After murdering an Egyptian, it took Moses 40 years in the desert before he was ready to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. So don't get discouraged if change doesn't happen as fast as you would like. God has heard your prayers. He is at work for you right now. Trust Him, and he—along with the whole of Heaven—will be working for you.

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son... (Romans 8:28-29, NLT)

practice it

Pray now following the pattern of APCAT. Each day in the coming week, use your journal to record your prayers for change following the APCAT pattern.



depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

filled through daily devotions

gaining divine power from regular intimacy with God Himself

depending on
**DIVINE
POWER**

54

OVERVIEW

- *daily devotions are times of reorientation*
- *the purpose of communion with God is knowing God Himself*
- *communion with God is always intended to create an exchange—where the nature of God enters into me and replaces my sinful nature*
- *all devotional activities should contain the 4 discipleship process keys—openness, faith, dependence on divine power, and joining God's work*
- *the 4 pillars are intended to shape the way I am continually, not just during my devotional times*

what are personal devotions?

I like to **think of personal devotions as regular times of re-orientation**. Imagine you are walking to the next town using a map as a guide. Every now and again you have to stop walking, look at the map, and correct your course. **Without regular pauses to check our direction, we can find ourselves completely off track.**

It's the same in our life with God. At the very least, it is important to set the direction of our spiritual compass first thing in the morning, and then to continually check how things are going—as we pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)—with a review at the end of the day. As we see from David's experience in Psalm 27:4, our ultimate purpose is not to get things from God, but to see God Himself.

1. What are some of the things the Psalmist does in his time with God?

Psalm 5:3 _____

Psalm 119:147-148 _____

Psalm 63:6 _____

4 pillars

It's easy to think about our daily devotional time in terms of such activities. But it is possible to be praying and thanking God without being changed. Let me explain.

This book is divided into four sections or pillars: 1) openness to God, 2) faith in God, 3) living by God's power through dying to self and being baptised by the Holy Spirit, and 4) joining God's work. The first three areas focus on "being" rather than activities for "doing". For example, **I can do the activity of praying, but not actually be open to God because I am stressed and worried by what happened at work yesterday. I can read the Bible but not believe what God is saying.** In both of these examples, I can be doing an activity which looks religiously good, but it is not leading to change because these spiritual essentials of openness, faith, dying to self and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit are missing. And when they are missing, I can appear religious because I am gaining information and doing right things, but inside I am spiritually dysfunctional.

it's all about communion

However, I will not survive spiritually from only a few minutes at the beginning and end of the day. **Devotional times are merely times of re-orientation. The whole of my**

day is intended to be lived in a state of openness to God, a state of trusting God, a state of dying to my own sinful desires, a state of being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the life of continuous communion with God. This is how we were all designed to live. Most importantly, **communion isn't simply about being close to God, but being close to God for the purpose of receiving the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit. This baptism of the Holy Spirit provides the daily exchange critical to my life. It is this filling of the Holy Spirit that enables the nature of God to flow into my life that I may think and feel and live as God does—for now He is living His life through me.**

practice it

- Our challenge is that our natures do not instinctively desire "to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord" (Psalm 27:4). We have a daily fight to remain open, faithful, surrendered to God and filled with His Spirit. In the box below, write down the main causes of being antagonistic towards God, and how this reveals itself in your life.

	Causes of being...	Symptoms of being...
Closed		
Faithless		
Independent		
Lacking the Holy Spirit		

Think about how best to nurture openness to God, faith in God, dying to self and the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit. Write out a daily devotional plan to use this week that will include each of these four pillars.



depending on divine power

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?



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ONE AMBITION

HOW WAS I
DESIGNED
TO LIVE?

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek,
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the
days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

Psalms 27:4

CHAPTER 5 *joining*
GOD'S WORK

a practical introduction to life with God

G A V I N A N T H O N Y

the mission of the church

the urgent task of the church before Jesus returns is to restore broken people back into the image of God

joining
GOD'S WORK

55

OVERVIEW

- *the call to come out of Babylon is a call to help restore what is broken down—God's temple*
- *God longs for my life to be rebuilt, for I am designed as His temple*
- *before Jesus returns, there is a final call by God's remnant people for others to join them in restoring the image of God in broken people*

leaving Babylon to rebuild the temple

God proclaimed through Zechariah, "Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north . . . Come, Zion! Escape, you who live in Daughter Babylon!" (Zechariah 2:6--7). At that moment, Zechariah was living in Jerusalem. He was among a small part of Israel—a remnant—who had followed Zerubbabel back to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon for the specific purpose of rebuilding the temple and city. But this remnant had faced opposition, become discouraged, and had stopped work.

Haggai writes that they were focused on enjoying the comforts of their own houses (Haggai 1:4). Two months later, Zechariah stood up in Jerusalem and appealed to the remnant's relatives who chose to remain in Babylon. While warning of the fall of Babylon, Zechariah's concern was for their relatives to leave Babylon and join them in renewing the remnant's commitment to restore the temple and the city—the place God had chosen to reveal His presence on the earth.

the church is God's temple

Years later, Paul called on the Corinthian Christians to a life of purity. He quoted the prophet Isaiah's call to "come out of Babylon" to encourage the Christians who were lukewarm and compromising in their religious experience to fully enter into God's presence—into the "temple of the Living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16-18). So as Zechariah called the remnant from Babylon to restore the place of God's presence at the temple in Jerusalem, so Paul called the Corinthians to holiness that their Christian community could be restored as the place of God's personal presence.

final call to leave Babylon

Finally, at the end of the Bible there are three important warnings given through God's spiritual remnant to prepare the world for the imminent return of Jesus (Revelation 14:6-13). **These Heaven-sent messages are for the world to, firstly, realise that global judgement is happening and so return to God as Creator, secondly, to know that Babylon is fallen, and thirdly, to avoid being identified with false religion.** Similar to Zechariah's time, there is one final warning given by God's remnant people for their spiritual relatives to come out of spiritual Babylon. It is similar to the warning already given by the second warning in Revelation 14:8.

1. Read Revelation 18:1-4. What do you find most striking about this warning to leave Babylon?

This is the final invitation given to the world to be ready to live in the presence of God in the eternal temple of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2-3). Again, the call to come out of Babylon is a call into God's presence. The focus is not simply on leaving Babylon because Babylon is a bad place, but a call to join the work of restoring broken lives—just before we enter into the eternal New Jerusalem.

i am God's temple

Paul also writes, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" (1 Corinthians 6:19) **Underpinning the prophetic message of Revelation 18:4—to call people out of the confusion of spiritual Babylon—is the the call to discipleship—a call to rebuild human hearts as the temples of God's presence. It is a call for broken people to enter into a community utterly devoted to restoring the temple of the human heart back into the image of God, that in God's presence, they may be transformed to reflect the character of Jesus. This is the primary purpose of God's Church at the end of time.**

practical application

2. What does it mean for you to be the temple of God?

3. What might it mean for you to help in restoring other people into the image of God?



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the remnant in Fundamental Belief 13: The Remnant and its Mission. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

Jesus' method to reach the world

learning to make disciples who make disciples

joining
GOD'S WORK

56

Jesus' call for disciples to make disciples

Jesus had both a message and a method. **If we try and separate Jesus' message from His method, we will likely find ourselves with very different results.** In this lesson we are going to focus on *how* Jesus did ministry—His method.

There is a temptation to think about discipleship as a process of self-improvement. However, when Jesus called His first disciples, it was a call to prepare for mission.

1. How does Jesus explain the purpose of His call to follow Him in Matthew 4:18-20?

Jesus makes it clear in His call to Simon Peter and Andrew that to follow Him is to be trained to "fish for people". Later when Jesus commissioned these disciples at the end of Matthew, mission is again in focus.

2. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What does Jesus ask His disciples to do?

Jesus calls His disciples to do three things, 1) Go and make disciples—which literally means, make disciples as you are going out—out to where non-believers live. 2) Baptise—for people to identify with the person and people of Jesus. 3) Teaching them to obey—the emphasis is not so much on teaching but on teaching so people will obey—everything that Jesus commanded, which includes making more disciples! The main thrust of these verses is for Jesus' disciples to make more disciples. This was the reason He called them at the beginning of His ministry.

Paul's call for disciples to make disciples

3. Read 2 Timothy 2:2. How many generations of disciples do you see?

In this verse we can see Paul who is a disciple of Jesus, who is discipling Timothy, to disciple "reliable people", who will be qualified to teach "others." In just one verse, we see four generations of disciples! As a disciple and disciple maker, Paul is calling Timothy to make disciples who make disciples.

think big. start small. go deep.

Someone summarised Jesus' method as "**Think big, Start small. Go deep.**" Jesus'

OVERVIEW

- *Jesus' method is just as important as His message*
- *the call to discipleship is a call to mission, not merely self-improvement*
- *Jesus and Paul trained disciples who could make disciples*
- *Jesus' plan was to "think big, start small and go deep"*
- *Jesus invested His time with FAT people—Faithful, Available and Teachable*
- *Jesus' method revolved around multiplying people into God's kingdom, not merely adding them*
- *I become a disciple when I have made a disciple*

plan was to reach the whole world, yet He started very small. While He preached to the crowds, it has been said that Jesus spent 90% of His time with just 12 people. Indeed, out of this group of 12, the Gospels record five occasions when Jesus spent time with just 3 people—Peter James and John—in “equipping” situations. This happened at the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31), at the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37), on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2), at the Olivet discourse when Jesus explained end-time events (Mark 13:3), and in the Garden of Gethsemane just prior to Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 26:37).

As you can see from these examples, Jesus exposed His disciples to paradigm shifting situations and challenging tasks. It was a continuous field school where Jesus allowed the disciples to watch how He ministered, then propelled them out of their comfort zones, before bringing them back to reflect on their experiences together in quietness away from the crowds. This was life-on-life ministry. It was certainly not Christianity life, but through these situations the disciples gained experiences which developed spiritual depth through dependence of God.

looking for FAT people

Such discipleship is not for the uncommitted. Jesus only initiated discipling with people who were spiritually open. He called people who instantly followed, and discipling began immediately. Jesus poured His energy into a band who were fully devoted. If Jesus sensed people were not 100% committed, He exposed their lack of dedication, and they went home (see Matthew 19:16-22). Craig Etheredge suggests that Jesus looked for FAT people—**Faithful, Available and Teachable**. Without these qualities, discipling soon fails.

discipling math

Jesus’ method to reach the world is based on multiplication not addition. Both Jesus and Paul knew they had a limited time on earth, so their plan was to replicate themselves over and over and over again. Consider the maths involved: If you disciple 1 person a year, after 20 years you would have discipled 20 people. But if you taught everyone you disciple how to make disciples and everyone pours their life into just one person a year until the end of the same 20 years, a total of 1,048,576 people would have been discipled (2^{20}). And if you started with 2 people, there would be 3,486,784,401 (3^{20}) discipled at the end of 20 years!



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

You are currently learning to be a disciple of Jesus. When you have finished this course, who are you going to disciple using this material, just as you have been? Pray that God will show you someone who is FAT—Faithful, Available and Teachable.

three priorities for mission

(1) sharing God's words, (2) reflecting Christ-likeness, (3) intercession

joining
GOD'S WORK

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OVERVIEW

□ *the “continual” services of the Sanctuary teach me the mission priorities I should “continually” be involved with today*

□ *the three mission priorities are sharing God's word, revealing God's character, interceding for others*

□ *my ability to minister to others with divine power depends on whether I am continually filled with the Holy Spirit*

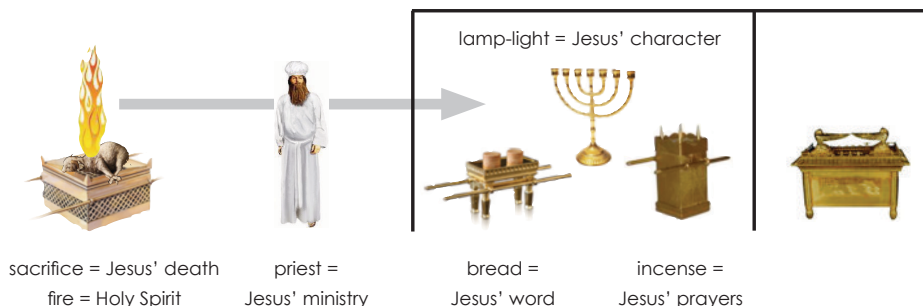
□ *there is a religious power prophesied by Daniel that works to obscure or destroy the continual ministry of Jesus and what Jesus does through His people*

lessons from the sanctuary

When God made the nation of Israel His chosen people, He established daily and annual rituals to teach them how to remain in relationship with Him. At the heart of these rituals was the Sanctuary where God personally dwelt, indicated by His own glory that shone across the camp (Exodus 40:36-38).

At the heart of the Sanctuary services were the “daily” services. While people would come and present personal offerings for thanks and forgiveness, the priests would perform special services every morning and evening of every day of the year. These services symbolised Israel's continual devotion and dependence on God.

Each part of these services was linked to the idea of being “continual”. The divine fire burning on the altar is described as being “continual” as God instructed the priests that it should never go out (Leviticus 6:8-13). The reason the fire would burn “continually” was because God wanted the sacrifices to be placed “continually” on the altar. In the Holy Place—the first compartment of the sanctuary—there were three main offerings of bread, light and incense which were all to be offered “continually”. Finally, the devotion of the priests in maintaining these services was also considered to be “continual”.



Each of these symbols pointed forwards to Jesus. Jesus is continually our sacrifice (altar sacrifice) and is continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is also continually the bread of life, continually the light of the world, continually our intercessor, and continually our High Priest. Jesus is working for you every moment of the day.

In a similar way, every disciple of Jesus is to reflect Jesus and His ministry. Christians are called to be living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2) and filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We are to tell others about the bread of life (John 6:11, 51), reveal the light of the Holy Spirit in our lives through Christlike character (Matthew 5:16), pray for others (James 5:15), and serve as priests for Jesus (1 Peter 2:9). We are also to do these things “continually”.

The ministry of the priests in these “continual” services required divine fire from the altar to use for the three-fold offerings of the Holy Place. The incense needed divine

fire to burn, the lamp required divine fire, and it has been suggested that even the baking of the bread required holy fire as it was holy bread. So **if the divine fire on the altar went out because sacrifices were no longer placed there, the priest's ministry in the Holy Place would cease.**

personal and prophetic lessons

If we apply this idea to ourselves, the daily “continual” Sanctuary services teach that unless we offer ourselves as living sacrifices and are filled with the Holy Spirit “continually”, our ability to work for Jesus by ministering the word of God to others, reveal Christ-likeness to others, and intercede for others, ceases. **We may still do the actions, but the power of the Holy Spirit in our ministry will be absent.** This is why this book has been written—to highlight the need to live by divine power as we learn how to become living sacrifices filled with the Holy Spirit. Only then will our work for God have divine influence.

This idea is also important when we look at Bible prophecy. We know that when Satan was expelled from Heaven, he “was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus” (Revelation 12:17). Part of this is seen in Daniel 8:11, as a “little horn” is described as working to take the “daily” (continual) away from Jesus. In other words, this “little horn” power in history has worked to obscure the ministry of Jesus as highlighted by the different components of the daily services of the Sanctuary identified in the diagram. Consequently, the “little horn” has also obscured the role that Jesus’ disciples are to have as they do the work of Jesus on the earth. So by looking at the offerings presented in the Holy Place, we can identify the three priorities of Jesus’ ministry for others—each one made successful as we minister as living sacrifices. As we prioritise each area of continual ministry, we honour and expand the ministry of Jesus in our world.

practical application

Which one of these three priorities of God's work would you most like to focus on?
How could you get more involved in this area?



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the Church's mission in Fundamental Belief 12: The Church, 13: The Remnant and its Mission, and 14: Unity in the Body of Christ. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about these Fundamental Beliefs in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

how God prepares us

our life is God's school that He uses to shape us for His glory

joining
GOD'S WORK

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OVERVIEW

- *God already has plans for me to serve Him*
- *life is God's school*
- *becoming aware of God's leading in my life until now can indicate the direction in which He is equipping me to serve Him*

it's about our whole lives

While the Holy Spirit equips us with spiritual gifts for His service, these gifts are often matured in God's school—the school God uses to train us for service through His providential leading of our lives. **God uses various periods in our life to shape us into people He can use to reveal His glory.**

how God prepared Moses

Consider the example of Moses. God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, but how do you learn to do a job like that? Look at how God trained him through different phases in his life. **Phase 1: Shaped by time with his parents (Exodus 2:1-9).** Though taken out of the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, God enabled Moses to return to his own mother who then taught him the ways of God. God provided the right environment for Moses' early development (around 12 years). **Phase 2: Learning in Pharaoh's court (Exodus 2:10).** After learning about God from his mother, Moses then went to live in the courts of Pharaoh as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. This is where Moses learnt the specific skills of a civil and military leader (28 years). **Phase 3: Maturing in the wilderness (Exodus 2:11-25).** After killing an Egyptian in an attempt to repay the cruelty of the Egyptians against the Hebrews, Moses escaped to Midian. It was here that God taught him not to depend on his own strength and to learn the Christ-like characteristics of humbleness and patience—as he looked after sheep (40 years). **Phase 4: Application of learning in successful ministry (Exodus 3 onwards).** Moses was 80 years old before God called him into service at the burning bush, and when this happened Moses felt unable (Exodus 3:11). But, these previous 3 phases of Moses' life were exactly what God needed for the task ahead.

created to do good works

Paul wrote, “we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). So how does God prepare us to do these good works? Robert Clinton suggests that **we serve God primarily out of who we are**, and who we are is developed through God's providential circumstances in our lives. Clinton studied hundreds of Christian leaders throughout history to see how God trained them. He found that God used particular methods to foster certain qualities, and then checked to see if these qualities had taken root. Clinton saw that if people failed these tests, they could not move forward until they were re-tested and passed. He observed that God tests the following through His providential leading in our circumstances:

1. **Integrity**—where God is assessing my intentions and desires—which lay at the heart of character. For example, Daniel's integrity is tested as he refuses food offered to idols (Daniel 1), or Joseph's integrity is tested when Potiphar's wife

wants to sleep with him (Genesis 39).

2. **Obedience**—where God is looking to see if I will obey his voice. For example, God's call for Noah to build an ark (Genesis 6).
3. **Word integration**—where God is checking if I will take and apply His word to my life. For example, God's call for Peter to minister to non-Jews (Acts 10).
4. **Submission**—where God tests our dependency on Him. Submission is often tested in the face of injustice and conflict, and requires a growing trust that God is responsible for leading your life. For example, God's call to Hagar to return to live as Sarah's maid, even after much abuse (Genesis 16).

life is God's school

While God wants to use you today, God's preparation for you to become increasingly effective is often a process of many years. This is because God is looking to re-shape your wayward heart and affections. So from the moment you are born, God is leading you through various experiences to build into you the qualities that enable you to authentically reflect His glory. **Our whole life is God's school—a school from which we never graduate!**



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

practice it

1. Ask God to show you how He is guiding your life to prepare you for His service.
2. In your journal, draw a time-line that represents your life. Mark all the significant events that happened to you. How might God have been involved in these events? These may include places you have visited, conversations you have had, important decisions you have made, and spiritual lessons you have learnt.
3. Look for patterns or phases where God may have been working to equip you to do what you are doing today, or to do a special work that you know He wants you to do in the future. These patterns may be more difficult to see earlier in your life. But you will begin to notice more and more of the working of God to prepare you for service in ways you may have never considered before.

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about our work for God in Fundamental Belief 17: Spiritual Gifts and Ministries. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

finding my place to serve

God has given me special gifts to serve others

joining
GOD'S WORK

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God has given us all gifts

While every Christian is called to give a verbal witness for God, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit gives specific gifts to every Spirit-filled person in God's church—including you.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

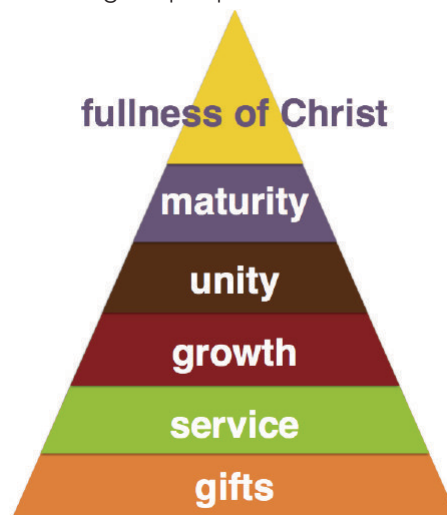
The purpose of these gifts is for an important purpose,

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-13)

Paul's pyramid

Here is Paul's text in a pyramid. Notice that God first gives people in His church spiritual gifts. These are for the purpose of serving others, which leads to growth, then unity, maturity, and finally the ultimate goal is achieved—the church reveals the fullness of Christ to the world.

So how do you become prepared to receive and use the gifts of the Spirit? Jesus says, "how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13) **If you ask God to be used, He will send you exactly what you need from the Holy Spirit to serve Him.** So we could call prayer the foundation of Paul's pyramid.



Sometimes people take tests to try and find their spiritual gifts. While tests may be helpful to see what we are already good at or like doing, they don't necessarily say what God is preparing us to do. Like Jonah, God may call you to do something you don't want to do. Or like Moses, God may call you to do something you feel unable to do.

It is important to remember that **spiritual gifts and talents are two different things.** Someone may have a great talent as a teacher, but they may not have the spiritual gift of teaching that results in the church being strengthened. While both talents and

OVERVIEW

- **The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts for the building up of God's church**
- **the goal of my spiritual gifts is to encourage others to reveal the character of Jesus**
- **when I ask Him, God will show me what spiritual gifts He has given me to serve others**
- **God can use me for His work if I am open to being used**

spiritual gifts are from God, we can choose how we use our natural talents. However, the Holy Spirit is the one who directs how His gifts are used, as He is the one at work in our lives.

what the Bible says

1. When God has a work to do, what type of person does He look for?
 - i. When God called Jeremiah, Jeremiah thought he was... (Jeremiah 1:6)

 - ii. When God called Moses, Moses thought that he was... (Exodus 3:11)

 - c. When God called Isaiah, the first thought that came to Isaiah's mind was... (Isaiah 6:1-5)

2. In order to use a spiritual gift, what has to happen first? (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

to start using your gifts

1. **Ask God to direct you to a place to serve Him in the building up of His church**—"If you have any question as to your post of duty, pray to God for guidance, and your work will be assigned. God has told us expressly that He has placed every man at his post." (*Ye Shall Receive Power*, 220)
2. **Immediately offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice** (Romans 12:1)—which means to be willing to do anything God asks, not matter the cost.
3. **Share your desire to serve with someone who has the spiritual gift of wisdom and discernment.** Listen carefully to their godly insight as we can easily have an inflated ego or misguided evaluation of our own abilities that can lead us in the wrong direction.
4. **Ask them to pray for you for God's direction.**



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about spiritual gifts in Fundamental Belief 17: Spiritual Gifts and Ministries. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

tithing & stewardship

I carry the resources needed for expanding God's kingdom

joining
GOD'S WORK

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OVERVIEW

- **all my money and possessions belong to God**
- **tithe and offerings test my loyalty and attitude towards God**
- **God deliberately places the resources for His work in my pocket**
- **everything that I have and am belongs to God**
- **financial security comes once I place God first in everything**

it's all in my pocket!

It is often said that God has all the resources He needs for His work. The challenge is that these resources are still in our pockets.

Unfortunately, we often find ourselves very attached to what is in our pockets. I like to think that what is in my pocket or house is mine. So **the first principle to address is recognising that everything belongs to God—I am merely a steward of God's property.**

To help us understand this, God instituted a tithing system—10% of any income we receive for the payment of pastors.

1. Who does tithe belong to? (Leviticus 27:30) _____
2. Why does God call for offerings and how much should we give? (Deuteronomy 16:16-17; 2 Corinthians 9:7)

We could say that **returning tithe to God tests our loyalty, while returning offerings to God tests our attitude.** Every pay cheque reveals our willingness, or reluctance, to part with "our money" and so reveals what we think about God and the work of His Kingdom.

In the Old Testament, the giving system that God designed the Israelites to live within required at least 25% of their total income. It would be easy to imagine that such a high level of giving would be a heavy burden. But the reverse was actually true. The returning of what belonged to God in the first place was an act of faith in God, and it was such faith that enabled Israel to prosper. It is the same faith in God that enables us to mature and become useful today.

3. What does Paul warn Timothy about money in the days before Jesus returns? (2 Timothy 3:1-2)

Ellen White describes a discussion Satan had with his angels to emphasise what Paul is warning Timothy:

Go, make the possessors of lands and money drunk with the cares of this life. Present the world before them in its most attractive light, that they may lay up their treasure here and fix their affections upon earthly things. We must do our utmost to prevent those who labour in God's cause from obtaining means to use against us. Keep the money in our own ranks. The more means they obtain, the more they will injure—our kingdom by taking from us our subjects.

Make them care more for money than for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom and the spread of the truths we hate, and we need not fear their influence; for we know that every selfish, covetous person will fall under our power, and will finally be separated from God's people." (Testimony to Ministers, 474)

4. What was the consequence to God's people of withholding tithes and offerings? (Malachi 3:6-9)

5. What does God say is the consequence of obedience in returning tithes and offerings? (Malachi 3:10-12)

6. What is Jesus' solution to the temptation of materialism? (Matthew 6:33)

7. What danger does Jesus alert us to when we return our tithe? (Matthew 23:23)

practical application

The focus so far has been on our finances, but the same principles can be applied to our abilities and other possessions. What does Jesus' parable of the money bags teach you about your stewardship of what you have and own as it relates to growing God's Kingdom? (Matthew 25:14-30)



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about tithing and stewardship in Fundamental Belief 21: Stewardship. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

the end of the world

understanding earth's final events to share with others

joining
GOD'S WORK

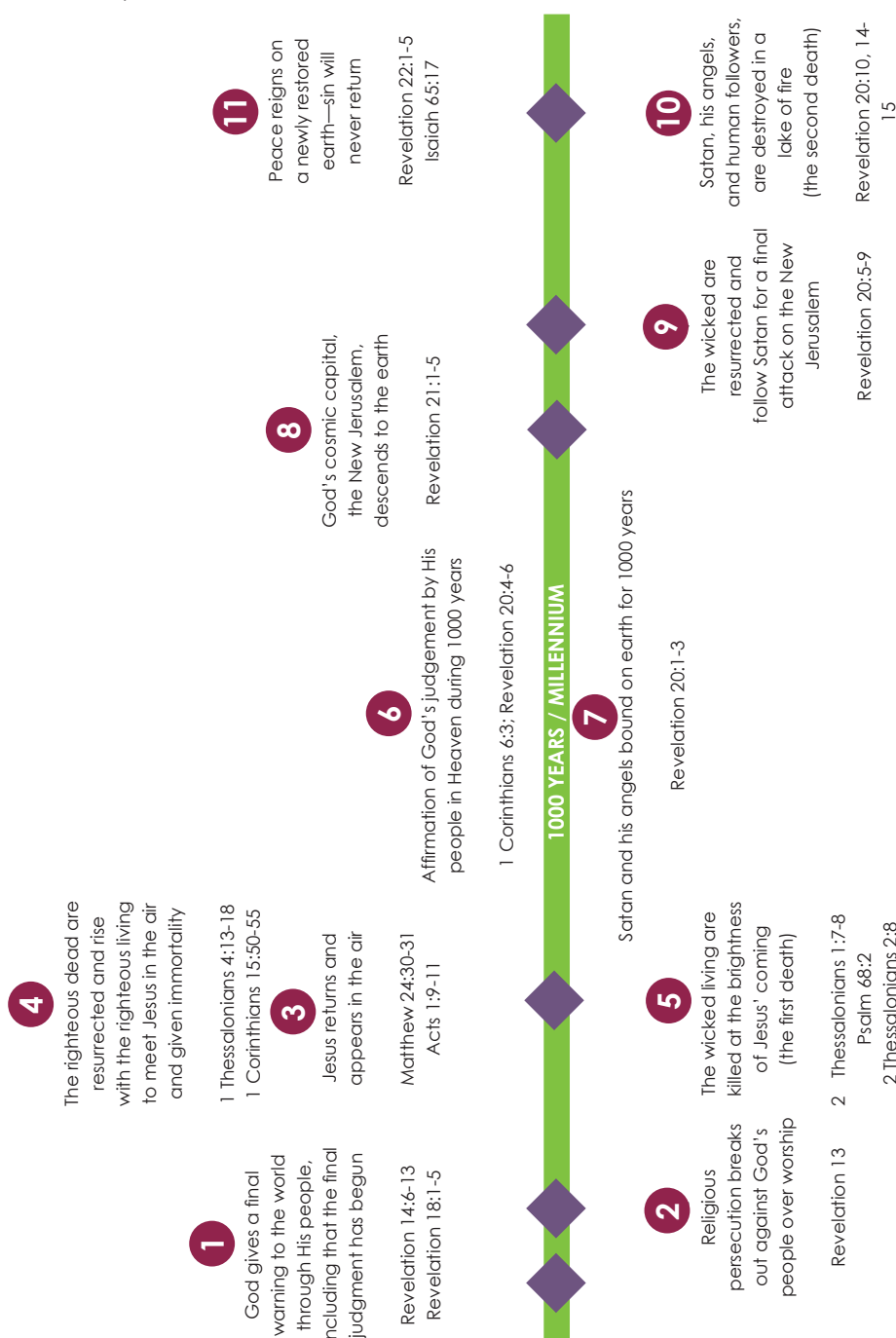
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OVERVIEW

- the Bible gives a clear outline of what we can expect to happen before and after Jesus returns
- people need to be warned about what is about to happen so they can prepare to meet Jesus

what's on the horizon?

The Bible describes the events that happen just before Jesus returns, and up until Jesus re-creates the heavens and earth. Read through the biblical texts to gain an overall understanding of what is going to happen. Try to develop a good enough overview so you are able to share this with others.



issues to consider

Looking at the order of events, consider the following questions:

1. What do you think is the purpose of God taking the righteous to Heaven for 1000 years? What will they do in Heaven? What has this got to do with God's justice?
2. What do you think is the purpose of God raising the wicked at the end of the 1000 years, only for Satan to lead them in an attack on the New Jerusalem?
3. Why do you think God moves the New Jerusalem from Heaven to earth at the end of the 1000 years?

practical application

How do you think you can share what you have learned without people feeling afraid?



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the end of the world in Fundamental Belief 25: The Second Coming of Christ, 26: Death and Resurrection, 27: Millennium and the End of Sin, 28: The New Earth. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about these Fundamental Beliefs in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

praying for others

prayer to build up God's kingdom

joining
GOD'S WORK

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OVERVIEW

- *keeping prayer lists can help me become organised and focused as I pray for others*
- *the more specific I am in my prayers for others, the more specifically God can answer*
- *the Bible gives many examples of things I can pray for others that will impact their eternal journey*

a God of order

God is a God of order. David writes that God “determines the number of the stars, and calls them each by name.” (Psalm 147:4). Imagine the memory and organisation needed to govern such a universe!

We don't have as many things on our minds as God. Even with the few things we need to remember, it is still easy to forget what we have been praying for. And our prayers are too important to forget.

That's when it can be helpful to write down what we pray for others. **Writing prayer lists also help us to concentrate on specific needs and to see when God answers.** It also teaches us to be as careful with our prayers as God is with His universe.

Sometimes we might see God answering our prayers almost immediately, like when Elijah prayed for fire to come from Heaven and burn up his offering (see 1 Kings 18 for the whole story). At other times, we may have to keep praying until an answer comes, as when Elijah later prayed for rain, but had to keep praying seven times before the rain cloud finally appeared (also in 1 Kings 18).

Here are two things to remember when you are praying for others—being specific, and being focused.

exercise 1: be specific

Below, or in your journal, write today's date followed by a list of all the things you want to pray for others. Then pray for each request individually. Try and make your prayers as specific as you can. So rather than writing, “pray for Edgar”, write, “pray that Edgar has confidence when he goes for the job interview.” The more specific you are, the easier it is to see when God answers your prayers. Perhaps more importantly, when you are specific, you give God permission to act specifically.

Date	Specific request

exercise 2: focus on what is important

1. Read the following biblical prayers and make a list of everything the author prays for others.

a. Ephesians 1:15-23.

b. Ephesians 6:10-18.

c. Philippians 1:3-11

d. John 17

2. How will the specific content of these prayers shape the way you will pray for others in the future?



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

sharing my story

sharing my testimony with others is a compelling witness

joining
GOD'S WORK

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OVERVIEW

- *a verbal testimony of what God has done for me can become a most powerful witness to His power to transform*
- *a simple model for organising my personal testimony is to split my story into three parts—my life before I met Jesus, how I met Jesus, how my life has changed because of Jesus*

God needs willing mouths

I am called to reflect the character of Jesus in my actions. But **everyone who has been born again by the Holy Spirit is also called to be verbal witnesses for Him**. As we prepare for Jesus' return, people need to hear the importance of Jesus' life and death and second coming explained. Christians are God's mouthpieces, for we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9) So at the end of each day it is good to ask, "Have I been a verbal testimony to the truth about God today?"

Paul's testimony

Part of declaring the praises of God is to share what Jesus has personally done for us. In Acts 26, knowing that Paul is facing almost certain death, he gives a helpful example of how he shared his personal testimony with King Agrippa. Paul's testimony is split into 3 parts:

1. What his life was like before he met Jesus. (v4-11)
2. How he met Jesus (v12-18)
3. What his life was like after meeting Jesus. (v19-23)

Though Paul's testimony was quite short—perhaps just 2 minutes—the Holy Spirit was able to use it to impress the king's mind, for "Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?'" (v28) This shows that when we are faithful in being a verbal witness, the Holy Spirit will work through us to connect others to Jesus.

If you have been born again by God's Spirit, you will have a testimony to share! So when you suddenly find yourself in a situation where it is possible to talk about God, you can use your own life as a testimony to His goodness.

making my testimony

Like Paul, think of your life in 3 sections. Use the following questions to help you develop a verbal testimony of God's work in your life. You should be able to share this experience in under 2 minutes.

1. **What was my life like before I was born again in Christ?** What sort of person was I like before asking Jesus to save me and His Spirit began working within me? How did I think and feel about life? How did I live and behave?
2. **How did I come to know Jesus as my own Saviour and have His Spirit begin to work within me?** Where were you? What happened that caused you to

change from not believing or trusting God, to knowing that He is real and alive, and at work in your own life? What caused you to accept Jesus as King and Lord, and to follow the habits, principles and laws of His Kingdom rather than those of the world?

3. **What difference has God made in my life?** Compare and contrast your life now with how it was before you knew Jesus. What has God done that has made the biggest impact on the way you think, or the way you behave today?

practice it

To help you prepare, use your journal to write out your testimony word for word. Ask God to help you remember the things that are most important for you to share. You can also write your prayers asking God for opportunities to share your testimony, and record what happens. You can outline your testimony below.

Before I meet Jesus	How I met Jesus	Life after meeting Jesus

Rehearse your testimony each day this week so that you can be prepared the next time an opportunity arises for sharing.



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

serving like Jesus

I serve God as I help those in need

joining
GOD'S WORK

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OVERVIEW

- *I prepare for the return of Jesus as I demonstrate His*
- *compassion in serving those in need*
 - *I can only serve people as I get to know them*

just before the crucifixion

When people are hurting, and tired, and lonely, there is a desperate need to see a revelation of Jesus character through in our actions, not just our words. When we see such actions, we will know that the words are genuine.

According to Matthew, the last teaching that Jesus gives before He was taken to be crucified, contains some really important instruction about how we are to act as we wait for His second coming. This parable in Matthew 25:31-46 describes the way that Jesus will identify His true followers from those who just pretended to follow Him.

What do you think makes the difference between those to whom Jesus says, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" (v34), and those to whom He says, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."? (v41)

Jesus is explaining that those who truly have faith in Him will show it by what they do. He says,

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. (v35-36)

how Jesus served

Living a life of service like Jesus, is to show real care for people in need. But how do we do this? Ellen White observes Jesus' example in the gospel stories:

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." (Ministry of Healing, 143)

We can break this idea down into 3 sections. To be able to witness to the goodness of His Father through serving others,

1. **Jesus spent time with people.** Jesus was in close relationship with those who needed His help.
2. **Jesus showed people sympathy.** He wasn't distant or uncaring — people could see He cared!
3. **Jesus helped people in practical ways.**

practice it

Spend some time now to ask God the question, "Who can You serve through my hands, mouth and feet today?" Ask God to show you specific ways to serve those in need. In the table below, write their names and how God would like you to serve them.

Family	Friends	Enemies	Others in need
Spend time to talk with my brother who has been looking sad recently.	Ask Mike if he needs to use my car while his is in the garage.	Ask _____ if I can help him in his duties at church when he is away on holiday.	Ask my neighbour if he needs help putting up his fence.
□			

Practice praying this prayer each day in the coming week.



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

adventures in service

God will always give me opportunities to serve when I am listening

joining
GOD'S WORK

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OVERVIEW

- *God is continually at work around me*
- *my task is to see what God is doing and join Him*
 - *when I am open to the Holy Spirit, I will have continual opportunities to participate in God's work*
- *as long as I am willing, God can use me—even if I feel unprepared*

what Heaven is doing

Right now, God is at work. His Holy Spirit and angels are tirelessly working to prepare people to meet Jesus who is coming very soon. God's angels are around us all the time. They are very busy, and they don't waste time.

God is always at work in our world. So the question Henry T. Blackaby likes to ask us is, **"Will we join God in what he is doing?"** And of course, what God is doing is to point people to see Jesus.

There is plenty of work for us to do for God's kingdom. **So if you desire to be used to reveal the glory of God, and are willing to do whatever He asks you, God will definitely use you.**

God will never say...

God will never say to you, "You are not old enough" or, "You are not clever enough", or "I can't use you because you don't know enough yet." God specialises in using people who don't think they are good enough. He used Moses who pleaded, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it." (Exodus 4:13) And God used Jeremiah who complained, "'Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.'" (Jeremiah 1:6) **The reason God chooses people who don't think they can do the job is because only such people are willing to depend on God 100% for ideas and strength.**

God chooses the weak things of the world

We like to think we are clever and strong, but as humans living in the middle of a battle between two supernatural superpowers, we don't have what it takes to live for God without complete dependence on His divine power.

This is why Paul says, "we have this treasure [Jesus and the power of his word] in jars of clay [us] to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." (2 Corinthians 4:7) Later Paul notes God's promise to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9) So **no matter who you are, or how weak you think you are, God can use you.** He is willing to start the moment you are willing.

how to have an adventure with God

This makes every day a potential adventure with God in witnessing and service.

When you wake up in the morning, pray that the Holy Spirit and the angels will guide you to serve or witness to someone that day. As you go through the day, keep a prayerful attitude, asking God to open your eyes to the service and witnessing opportunities around you.

practice it

How do you think God might have used you in the past week?

In the coming week, use your journal to write about your daily adventures in service. How did God use you today? How did the Spirit direct you? If you can't see where God was, think back to the places you went to, the people you spoke with, the things you did. Were there times God wanted you to serve Him but for some reason you missed the opportunity? Why was that? Ask God to show you your day from His point of view.

The good news is that every time you pray to be used, God will send people in your direction, or you will be sent to them. You can be sure that God is continually at work around you to reveal His glory.



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

being authentic

I reveal Jesus powerfully by who I am, not only by what I say

joining
GOD'S WORK

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“the medium is the message”

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan wrote that ‘the medium is the message’. If we apply this idea to us as Christians, we would say that **what we share about God is shaped and altered by the sort of people we are**. We are the medium. For example, if we say that God is love and He can change us to be like Him, but are not loving ourselves, people will tend not to believe us. However, if we say God is loving and can change anyone to be like Him, and we are also loving, we (the medium) harmonise with our message. We are what you would call, authentic Christians. When we are authentic, what we share to others about God is carried with power.

Jesus Himself was “the medium”

God speaks to our world most powerfully through *who* we are. This is what Jesus was trying to say to His disciples. He wanted them to see that they could know His Father by seeing Him.

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (John 14:6-10)

Jesus wants people to know the Father when they meet us too.

truth is a person

Jesus says that when people meet Him, they can know His Father. It was not a question of people meeting people and telling them about His Father. His life was an accurate reflection of the Father. So when Jesus says, “I am... the truth”, what He meant was, “who I am is what my Father is like.” Truth is a person. **Truth is not simply a right idea, but is linked directly to who God is.**

We reveal truth to others by revealing who God is in our own lives. When we (the medium) match the message (the truth—who God is), there is a great power in our witness to others as we demonstrate authenticity.

OVERVIEW

- **truth is a Person**
- **people see Jesus primarily by who I am, rather than simply what I say**
- **one of the greatest longings people have today is for authenticity**

preparing the world for Jesus' return

As we prepare the world for the second coming of Jesus, the most important thing people need to know is that God really does exist, and what sort of God He is. They will understand this most powerfully when God is revealing Himself through us. There will be times when the message that God wants us to share may appear difficult for others to hear or believe. But when our lives reflect the truth about who God is, the Holy Spirit will be able to convict people's hearts. Written as a formula, this would be,

a God-revealing authentic life + a God-given message = powerful impact

am I authentic?

Perhaps one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves is if we are authentic. Is what I say and do the same as who I am inside? I tell people this or that about God, but **is God able to validate that "truth" through who I am?**

practice it

In the first column, make a list of all the things you want to share about God. In the second column, think about how you will demonstrate this idea authentically in your own life—that what you are saying really is true.

things I want to share about God	how will I show this is true through my life?
eg. God loves everyone, even those who don't care about Him.	By showing love to those who don't necessarily like me.

In the coming week, you can use your journal to draw out a table like this and to think about how you will grow to authentically reveal "the truth"—the person of God, and the messages He wants you to share.

joining God's work

W

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

prophetic messages to share

important messages for the end of the world

joining
GOD'S WORK

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preparing the world

Throughout history, God has sent prophets to prepare the world for important events.

Below you can compare the prophetic messages given by Noah before the global judgement of the flood, those given by John the Baptist before the coming of Jesus, and the messages to be given through God's people before the final judgement and return of Jesus.

preparing for global judgement

1. What was the problem in the world? (Genesis 6:11-13)

2. What was Noah's preaching about? (2 Peter 2:5)

preparing for the first coming of Jesus

3. What was John the Baptist's purpose and what did he preach? (Luke 3:1-14)

preparing for global judgement

4. What problems does Jesus say will be in the world before He returns? (Matthew 24:4-13; 38-39)

preparing for the return of Jesus

In Revelation 14:1, John describes the people of God who have given messages of preparation to the world, "Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." **This "name" of the Father and Son is the character or image of God that has prepared them to stand during the turbulent times of the second coming of Jesus.**

Revelation 14:6-13 then describes three angels giving three messages to the world. These prophetic messages from Heaven are given through the preaching and teaching of God's people who live before Jesus comes—those who carry "his name and his Father's name". Pause and read these verses before you read further.

OVERVIEW

- *God always warns the world before important global events relating to the biblical story of His work of salvation*
- *Noah, John the Baptists, and those who proclaim the angels' messages in Revelation, call the world to biblical holiness and Christ-likeness*
- *those who have given the messages of warning to prepare the world for the return of Jesus reflect God's "name"—the image and character of God*

Through symbolic language, the **first message** calls the attention of the world to worship God as Creator, particularly as the world is about to be judged and people need to make themselves ready to meet God. The **second message** refers to the fall of Babylon. Many of the prophetic books—in both the Old and New Testaments—refers to Babylon as a power that stands against God and His people who hold onto biblical truth. Through this message, God wants to alert the world that Babylon, although it may appear strong and powerful, is doomed to failure. The **third message** refers to a political-religious power mentioned in Revelation 13:11-18. Just before Jesus comes, this power will exert pressure across the world to persecute those who stand for biblical Christianity. God is warning that eternal destruction will result for anyone who becomes an ally of this power.

A final prophetic message is given in Revelation 18:1-4. This is a final call to become separate from spiritual Babylon and enter into a community devoted to God and restoring His image in human beings. You can read more about this in the lesson entitled, *the mission of the church*.

prophecy at the end of the world

The Bible says that God sometimes gives the gift of prophecy to members of the church (eg Ephesians 4:11). The Seventh-day Adventist Church has recognised this spiritual gift in the life and writings of Ellen White. Her writings help to focus our lives on complete devotion to Jesus and to prepare ourselves and the world for His return.

practical application

5. From what you have read, what part of the prophetic messages do you think your friends would most need to hear?



joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?

who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the three angel's messages in Fundamental Belief 13: The Remnant and its Mission. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*.

the Sabbath

the Sabbath is a public & prophetic symbol declaring God's creation and re-creation of man in the image of God

joining
GOD'S WORK

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the Sabbath and creation

In the Genesis account of creation (Genesis 1), God, through the person of Jesus (Colossians 1:15) created different things on different days. Read Genesis 2:1-3.

1. What did God create on the seventh day? _____
2. What quality did God attach to the seventh day? _____
3. Why did God create a seventh day? _____

Even before Adam or Eve had lived for 24 hours, 2300 years before the establishment of the nation of Israel and the giving of the law to the Israelites from Mount Sinai, the Sabbath existed as holy time. From the beginning of time, God created holy time. As human beings, we cannot make anything holy, nor can we take away the holiness of anything that God has made holy. Only God can make something holy because only He is holy.

Unlike days, months or years which are related to the cycles of the earth, moon and sun, our week of seven days is not linked to anything in our solar system other than the command of God at the creation of the world. Later, when God made the Israelites into their own nation, He repeated His law. **God's law was not new, but a restatement of the way God has intended the world to run from the beginning.**

the Sabbath and re-creation

4. Read Exodus 20:8-11. Why does God say we should remember the Sabbath?

5. Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15 Why does God say we should observe the Sabbath?

In these two versions of the ten commandments, God links the Sabbath to creation and salvation. So in the Sabbath, I celebrate the perfection of God's original work of creating. I am also celebrating how Jesus will continue His re-creative work in me as He addresses the damage sin has caused in my life.

Colossians 1:15, tells us that it was Jesus who created the world. It is therefore not a surprise that when Jesus came to the earth, He was involved in restoring broken people. He therefore calls Himself Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8) a term God also uses in Isaiah 58:13-14. Jesus specifically heals a man with a withered hand on

OVERVIEW

- ***The Sabbath is a public witness to Jesus' work for restoring human beings—who are broken with sin— back into the image of God***
- ***The Sabbath is not just a biblical idea to accept, but is intended to shape the way we think and live for at least one seventh of our lives***
 - ***the Sabbath of creation teaches us about how Jesus is restoring people today***
 - ***before Jesus returns, the Sabbath will become a test of loyalty to Jesus***
 - ***the seventh-day Sabbath is a symbol of rest in the completed work of God at creation and my rest in the work of Christ in my re- creation***

□

the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-13), much to the anger of the religious leaders. Jesus evidently wanted to impress on everyone that He is the Creator and the one who re-creates us in the image of God. In this sense, **the seventh-day Sabbath becomes a symbol of God's desire to restore broken human beings into His image.**

Jesus Himself kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16) as did the Paul and the early church (Acts 13:13-4, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4.) Forty years after the resurrection, Jesus expected the early church to be keeping the Sabbath (Matthew 24:20) while God states that we will keep the Sabbath throughout eternity (Isaiah 66:23).

the Sabbath and the death of Jesus

The continual significance of the Sabbath as part of God's law that does not change over time can be glimpsed through the Old Testament service on the Day of Atonement. Each year, the Sanctuary was ritually cleansed from sin by the High Priest dripping blood from a sacrifice on the lid of the ark. Underneath the lid, also called the atonement cover (Leviticus 16:15-16), were the 10 commandments. This symbolised the need for the sacrificial death of Christ to atone for the breaking of all the law written on these tablets—the Sabbath included.

Interestingly, the Sabbath is highlighted at the death of Jesus as it was the only full 24 day that Jesus rested in the tomb. Jesus rested on the Sabbath even in death—He rested in His completed work of Salvation.

the Sabbath and the end times

We have noted that only God can make something holy. In the Sabbath, God made holy time that man cannot remove. However, in the prophetic book of Daniel, we have a reference that a religious power will emerge which will work against God.

6. Read Daniel 7:25. What does this power attempt to do?

In the prophetic book of Revelation, God describes how a great battle will emerge over worship by a persecuting power which will enforce worship in a particular way (Revelation 13:11-17). By contrast, in Revelation 14:7, an angel calls on the world to worship the God of creation. **If the Sabbath stands as a symbol to restore human beings into the image of God, it is not surprising that Satan will be at work to obscure and corrupt God's symbol of creation and re-creation.**

7. Read Revelation 14:6-7. Why do you think that God is urging His people to worship the God of creation?

Jesus has created the Sabbath as holy time which celebrates the original creation, and as Lord of the Sabbath the re-creation of human beings into the image of God. Through earthly powers, biblical prophecy shows how Satan will attack the Sabbath before Jesus comes. **The Sabbath is the focus of attack because it stands as a symbol of God's work to restore us into His image.**

As we experience the Sabbath as God intended, our own hearts are changed because we enter into intimate communion with the Lord of the Sabbath—Jesus Christ. No man or power can change the holiness of the Sabbath that God attached to the Sabbath at creation. Therefore, no sacredness can be attached to the observance of Sunday which has no biblical foundation and exists only by human tradition.

practical application

8. In your home:

- i. What can you do to increase the sense of the Sabbath's holiness?

- ii. What can you do to increase the sense of the Sabbath as a celebration of Jesus work to re-create you and your family into His image? This is particularly important if you have children.

- iii. What might you need to stop doing, in order that you can honour the Sabbath and make it a "delight" (See Isaiah 58:13-14)

joining God's work

What has the Holy Spirit revealed to you, and how do you need to respond?



who can you share this with?

going deeper

1. You can read a summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe about the Sabbath in Fundamental Belief 20: Sabbath. This can be found in Appendix A where you will also find more Bible texts to read on this subject.
2. To study more in depth, read about this Fundamental Belief in the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe.

appendix



One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek, that I dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Psalms 27:4

fundamental beliefs

an official summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe

APPENDIX

The following statement of 28 Fundamental Beliefs is the official summary of what Seventh-day Adventists believe.

introduction

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.

1 holy scriptures

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

2 trinity

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

3 Father

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)

4 Son

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)

5 Holy Spirit

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

6 creation

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)

7 nature of man

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15.)

8 great controversy

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14.)

9 life, death, and resurrection of Christ

In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. (John 3:16; Isa. 53; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:6-11.)

10 experience of salvation

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10.)

11 growing in Christ

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (Ps 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Col 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil 3:7-14; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Matt 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal 5:22-25; Rom 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb 10:25.)

12 church

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11-15; 3:8-11; Matt. 28:19, 20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22, 23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18.)

13 remnant and its mission

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1-14.)

14 unity in the body of Christ

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17:20-23.)

15 baptism

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings. (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20.)

16 Lord's supper

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians. (1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Matt. 26:17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17.)

17 spiritual gifts and ministries

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfil its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied

grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)

18 the gift of prophecy

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)

19 law of God

The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 19:7-14.)

20 Sabbath

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.)

21 stewardship

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is

a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:26, 27.)

22 christian behaviour

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness. (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; 3 John 2.)

23 marriage and the family

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honour, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)

24 Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In

1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)

25 second coming of Christ

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfilment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:1-6.)

26 death and resurrection

The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later. (Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11-14; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1-10.)

27 millennium and the end of sin

The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever. (Rev. 20; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Jer. 4:23-26; Rev. 21:1-5; Mal. 4:1; Eze. 28:18, 19.)

28 new earth

On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:13; Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.)

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baptismal vow review

preparing to enter into the life-long journey of discipleship to Jesus

APPENDIX

becoming part of Christ's body

Baptism into Christ is to enter into fellowship with the body of Christ—the Church. The following vows are the shared convictions of Seventh-day Adventist Church members. These vows are official statements of our understanding of how the Gospel is to be applied to our practice today.

As part of your preparation for baptism, read through these 13 summaries and some key Bible texts that illustrate each idea. (The texts come from the book, *Fulfilling God's End-time Mission*, by Mark Finley.)

1. I believe there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.
 - 2 Corinthians 13:14
 - Deuteronomy 6:4
 - Matthew 28:19
 - Ephesians 4:4-6
2. I accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for my sins and believe that by God's grace through faith in His shed blood I am saved from sin and its penalty.
 - Ephesians 2:8
 - Romans 3:23
 - Romans 6:23
 - Romans 8:1-4
3. I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal Saviour, believing that God, in Christ, has forgiven my sins and given me a new heart.
 - 1 John 1:9
 - Hebrews 8:12
 - Acts 3:19
 - 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
4. I accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, my Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary, and accept His promise of transforming grace and power to live a loving, Christ-centred life in my home and before the world.
 - Hebrews 7:25
 - Philippians 4:13
 - 2 Corinthians 5:17
 - Hebrews 4:15-16
5. I believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian. I covenant to spend time regularly in prayer and Bible study.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16
 - 2 Peter 1:21
 - John 17:17
 - Psalm 119:105

6. I accept the Ten Commandments as a transcript of the character of God and a revelation of His will. It is my purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law, including the fourth commandment, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord and the memorial of Creation.
 - John 14:15
 - Genesis 2:1-3
 - Exodus 20:8-11
 - Mark 2:27-28
7. I look forward to the soon coming of Jesus and the blessed hope, when “the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:54). As I prepare to meet the Lord, I will witness to His loving salvation by what I do and what I have help others to be ready for His glorious appearing.
 - John 14:1-3
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
 - Revelation 1:7
 - Revelation 19:11-16
8. I accept the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church.
 - Revelation 12:17
 - Revelation 19:10
 - 1 Corinthians 1:4-8
 - 1 Peter 1:10-11
9. I believe in Church organization. It is my purpose to worship God and to support the Church through my tithes and offerings and by my personal effort and influence.
 - Haggai 1:3-11
 - Malachi 3:8-12
 - 1 Corinthians 9:8-14
 - Romans 15:26-27
10. I believe that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; and I will honour God by caring for it, avoiding the use of that which is harmful, and abstaining from all unclean foods; from the use, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages; from the use, manufacture, or sale of tobacco in any of its forms for human consumption; and from the misuse of or trafficking in narcotics or other drugs.
 - Romans 12:1-2
 - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
 - Leviticus 11:1-12
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31
11. I know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I purpose, by the grace of God, to fulfil His will by ordering my life in harmony with these principles.
 - 1 John 2:6
 - 1 John 2:15-17
12. I accept the New Testament teaching of baptism by immersion and desire to be so baptized as a public expression of faith in Christ and His forgiveness of my sins.
 - Matthew 28:19-20
 - John 3:5
 - Mark 16:16
 - Colossians 2:12

13. I accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race, and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship. I desire to be a member of this local congregation of the world Church.

- 2 Corinthians 10:5
- Revelation 12:17
- Revelation 14:6-7, 12
- Revelation 18:1-2
- Matthew 16;16-18

Understanding what God has done for me, it is my greatest desire to become a fully devoted disciple of Jesus and enter into a life long journey of working with Him to restore broken human beings into His image.

signed

date

sanctuary discipleship summary chart

Psalm 27:4—One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

SANCTUARY DISCIPLESHIP MODEL SUMMARY		
DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS KEYS	PROCESS SUMMARY	LINK BETWEEN SANCTUARY AND DISCIPLESHIP KEYS
1 desiring openness	I cannot grow spiritually without openness to God. Openness enables me to move towards the sanctuary—the place where I have the possibility to “contemplate the Lord’s glory”.	The heart as God’s sanctuary must be soft, not hard, if the Holy Spirit is going to make an impression.
2 deepening faith	Openness enables the possibility for faith to take root in me. Faith enables me to start trusting enough to contemplate “the Lord’s glory” in His sanctuary	The heart as God’s sanctuary must be circumcised, illustrating a trusting covenant relationship.
3 depending on divine power	Without faith, I will never yield myself completely to God, so that I may be filled by His Spirit. As I contemplate the beauty of the Lord in His sanctuary, His divine power displaces the sinful nature in me and enables me to reflect the divine image.	The daily services of the Sanctuary—which illustrates continuous dependence on God—requires, 1) a sacrifice (something that is completely dead), which is then, 2) completely consumed by divine fire.
4 joining God’s work	Once filled by God’s Spirit, I will be able to join God in His work using His power rather than my own. This is a consequence of contemplating “the Lord of glory”.	1. The divine fire from the altar of sacrifice—which is kept alight by continuous sacrifice—is required for the priest’s ministry in the Holy Place: to continually maintain the offerings of the bread, incense, and light. 2. The evidence of God living within His Sanctuary is made visible to anyone around.

2 Corinthians 3:18—And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

1. A hard heart is not open to God (Exodus 7:13).
2. A hard heart does not understand spiritual truth (Mark 8:17).
3. God promises to replace a hard heart with a soft heart of flesh filled with the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26).

1. Circumcision is a sign of a covenant relationship with God (Genesis 17:10-11).
2. God's desire is that our hearts are circumcised ie to participate in a covenant of love with God (Deuteronomy 30:6).
3. Circumcision of the heart is done by the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:28-29).

A) Continual sacrifice (TAMID: Hebrew for continual)

1. Sacrifices symbolising commitment to God must be made continuously (Numbers 28:3-4).
2. Discipleship to Jesus begins by following Jesus' example of death (Luke 9:23).
3. We are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices. (Romans 12:1).
4. The sinful nature must be put to death (Romans 6).

B) Continually consumed by divine fire (TAMID)

1. Holy fire for the altar of sacrifice originated from Heaven (Leviticus 9:24; 2 Chronicles 7:1).
2. The holy fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously (Leviticus 6:8-13).
3. The continual sacrifices must be consumed by fire (Numbers 28:8).
4. The gift of the Holy Spirit to Timothy is described as fire (2 Timothy 1:6).
5. Thessalonians urged not to put out the Holy Spirit's fire (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
6. The Holy Spirit (fire) falls upon Jesus after coming out of the watery grave of baptism in the river Jordan (Matthew 3:16), and falls on the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2).

A) The continual devoted ministry of the priesthood (TAMID)

1. The ministry of priests is continual (Exodus 28:29-30).
2. God's people are saved to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

B) A continual threefold ministry (TAMID) requiring divine fire

3. After Jesus received the Holy Spirit, He launched into ministry led and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21-4:19).
4. After the disciples received the Holy Spirit, they began to preach and minister (Acts 2).
5. Jesus modelled this priestly role for his followers as their were sent out into the world to as reconcilers: as Jesus Himself is a sacrifice consumed by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16) before engaging in ministry, so His followers are to be consumed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) ushering in a world-wide witness. As Jesus Himself is the bread of life (John 6:51; cf. Philippians 2:16), the light of the world (John 8:12) and intercessor (John 17), so His followers are called to pass out this bread (John 6:11), reveal His light (Matthew 5:14) and intercede for others (1 Timothy 2:1). Consequently, New Testament Christians take on the priestly role as the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16).

C) A public display of God's presence

6. God's glory was visible shining out from His Sanctuary (Exodus 40:34-38).
7. God's glory is revealed as His image is restored in us (2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:9-15).

notes

APPENDIX

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