

Christian Education

Education and Redemption

Lesson #8 for November 21, 2020

Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-27; Isaiah 11:1-9; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 1 Kings 4:29-34; John 14:17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

1. How would you summarize God's thousands of years of interaction with His people? Was it like a love story gone bad? Like a father with a group of rebellious children? Or, a teacher whose students seemed to fail every test? Of course, **we know what the final result will be. God has won the great controversy.** In this lesson we will suggest that the Bible story is an invitation to learn about God through His interaction with the human race. In fact, **we have been told repeatedly that Jesus came to this earth primarily to teach us the truth about God.**

Genesis 1:26-27:²⁶ Then God said, "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small."²⁷ **So God created human beings, making them to be like himself.** He created them male and female.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 1:26–27). New York: American Bible Society.†

2. God started out with a perfect world, a beautiful garden, and a perfect pair. But, we know that very quickly things turned bad; Cain, their first son, killed his brother Abel.
3. What does it mean to say that *God made man in His own image*? Does it mean that we look like God? Does it mean we have freedom of choice? Does it mean that we are more like God than other creatures on this earth? Are we supposed to be more like God intellectually? Spiritually? Physically? What was God's plan for us? What is His plan now that we have messed up?

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. This is the object of education, the great object of life.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 15.2-16.0.†

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, **to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought.** Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, **institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions.**—Ellen G. White, *Education** 17.2.†

4. How are we supposed to attain to such a lofty goal? God has not left us alone to accomplish this task on our own. He offers us the help of the Holy Spirit. God's goal is to get us to think and act like Jesus Christ. The story of redemption begins with the promise in Genesis 3:15, comes down to the story of Jesus Christ and the incarnation, and will proceed to a re-creation at the third coming. So, where are we in that scheme of things?

Heaven is a school; its field of study, the universe; its teacher, the Infinite One. A branch of this school was established in Eden; and, the plan of redemption accomplished, education will again be taken up in the Eden school.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 301.1.†

Here must begin that study which shall be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In the light of the cross alone can the true value of the human soul be estimated.—Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles** 273.1.

5. We have many titles that we apply to Jesus Christ such as Son of God, Messiah, the Son of Man, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Lord, and the Lamb of God. However, the people who knew Him best when He was on this earth called Him "Master" or "Rabbi," both of which mean "Teacher." In almost everything Jesus did, whether it was healing or preaching or teaching, the ultimate goal was to teach some important lesson.
6. Notice what Isaiah said about Him more than 700 years before He was born.

Isaiah 11:1-4,9: The royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down; but just as new branches sprout from a stump, so a new king will arise from among David's descendants.

² **The spirit of the LORD will give him wisdom,
and the knowledge and skill to rule his people.**

He will know the LORD's will and honour him,

³ **and find pleasure in obeying him.**

He will not judge by appearance or hearsay;

⁴ he will judge the poor fairly and defend the rights of the helpless....

⁹ **On Zion, God's sacred hill,**

there will be nothing harmful or evil. The land will be as full of knowledge of the LORD as the seas are full of water.—*Good News Bible*.*†

7. Notice that in this beautiful prediction of what heaven and the new earth will be like, the focus is on how it will be "as full of the knowledge of the LORD as the seas are full of water." That kind of knowledge requires an excellent education. Our Savior, our Teacher, wants to bring us knowledge, counsel, wisdom, and understanding.

In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one, for in education, as in redemption, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell." 1 Corinthians 3:11; Colossians 1:19, R.V.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 30.2.†

8. The story of Jesus's interaction with Nicodemus in that nighttime visit fairly early in His

ministry is a familiar one recorded in John 3. There, Jesus stated an interesting fact.

John 3:1-3: ^{3:1} There was a Jewish leader named Nicodemus, who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. ²One night he went to Jesus and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent by God. No one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God were with him.”

³Jesus answered, “I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again.”—*Good News Bible*.*

9. First of all, notice that this Pharisee referred to Jesus as “Rabbi” or “Teacher.” And he recognized that God was with Him. He also said to Jesus, “We know....” Who was the “we”? Jesus did not waste any time but immediately started talking about telling the truth.
10. How can we pick up the baton that Jesus laid down in that conversation recorded in John 3 and carry the message to the world?
11. There should not be any question about the fact that the Bible is our textbook for learning about God.

2 Timothy 3:14-17: ¹⁴But as for you, continue in the truths that you were taught and firmly believe. You know who your teachers were, ¹⁵and you remember that ever since you were a child, you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and is **useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living,** ¹⁷so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.—*Good News Bible*.*†

12. The Hebrew Bible, which Christians call the Old Testament, is divided into three parts. Those three parts are described as *the law*, *the prophets*, and *the writings*. The first five books of Moses are known as *the law* or the *Torah*. These five books are intended not just to lay down God’s rules, but also to teach us a great deal about what He wants of us.
13. The next section in the Hebrew Bible, known as *the prophets*, consists of *the former prophets*—the historical books from Joshua through 2 Chronicles—and *the latter prophets*—most of the books from Isaiah to Malachi. The latter prophets are divided into the *major prophets* which are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and the *minor prophets* which are what the Christian Bible has as the twelve books from Hosea to Malachi collected in the Hebrew Bible into one book—talking about what they should have learned from the earlier Scriptures.
14. The remaining part of the Old Testament, called *the writings* consists largely of poetry and talks about some successful and some less successful teachers and students. Some of the better examples of educational successes would include Esther, Ruth, Daniel, and Job. Among some of the clear failures in learning the truth about God were Job’s four friends! Did they ever learn anything? While the Psalms is a hymnbook, it also has a lot of educational portions, particularly Psalm 1, Psalm 37, and Psalm 73.
15. The Gospels tell us the stories of the life of Jesus and abound with educational materials. Particularly appropriate are the parables of Jesus. Many of Paul’s letters are full of educational material, including practical lessons about daily life. Even the book of Revelation is full of educational material.

Revelation 5:1-5: I saw a scroll in the right-hand of the one who sits on the throne;

it was covered with writing on both sides and was sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel, who announced in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" ³But there was no one in heaven or on earth or in the world below who could open the scroll and look inside it. ⁴I cried bitterly because no one could be found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside it. ⁵Then one of the elders said to me, "Don't cry. Look! The Lion from Judah's tribe, the great descendant of David, has won the victory, and he can break the seven seals and open the scroll."—*Good News Bible*.*

Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons** 294.1.

The Book With Seven Seals Contains the History of the World—"And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon" (Revelation 5:1-3).

There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God's providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth's history to its close.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*,* vol. 9, 7.1-2.†

16. It is clear that there is a very careful record being kept in the very throne room of heaven of every event in the life of every person from the days of Adam to the final events leading up to the second coming. Is this record part of God's memory? Jesus has worked with humans from the beginning of our history to the end. So, He is the One who can reveal it.
17. One very sad section in the book of Deuteronomy is found in Deuteronomy 17:14-20.
18. **Deuteronomy 17:14-20:** ¹⁴ "After you have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is going to give you and have settled there, then **you will decide you need a king like all the nations round you.** ¹⁵Make sure that the man you choose to be king is the one whom the LORD has chosen. He must be one of your own people; do not make a foreigner your king. ¹⁶The king is not to have a large number of horses for his army, and he is not to send people to Egypt to buy horses, because the LORD has said that his people are never to return there. ¹⁷The king is not to have many wives, because this would make him turn away from the LORD; and he is not to make himself rich with silver and gold. ¹⁸**When he becomes king, he is to have a copy of the book of God's laws and teachings made from the original copy kept by the levitical priests.** ¹⁹**He is to keep this book near him and read from it all his life, so that he will learn to honour the LORD**

and to obey faithfully everything that is commanded in it. ²⁰This will keep him from thinking that he is better than his fellow-Israelites and from disobeying the LORD's commands in any way. Then he will reign for many years, and his descendants will rule Israel for many generations."—*Good News Bible*.*†

19. Imagine how different the history of the children of Israel would have been if they had simply followed those directions! Did any of them follow those instructions?

20. **Our church would probably be in the kingdom by now if we all had studied our Bibles, the writings of Ellen White—especially her understanding of the great controversy spelled out so well in the *Conflict of the Ages* series—and had spread that news to all around us.**

21. The Bible does not talk very much about schools or study or details about education. We know about the schools of the prophets which were started by Samuel and expanded by Elijah and Elisha, who worked in the northern kingdom of Israel; but, we do not know very much about those schools.

22. What we do know is that the Bible talks a lot about wisdom and about the wise.

2 Samuel 14:2: So he sent for a clever woman who lived in Tekoa. When she arrived, he said to her, "Pretend that you are in mourning; put on your mourning clothes, and don't comb your hair. Act like a woman who has been in mourning for a long time."—*Good News Bible*.*

Proverbs 16:23: Intelligent people think before they speak; what they say is then more persuasive.—*Good News Bible*.*

23. Read 1 Kings 4:29-34. What does this teach us about the importance of wisdom?

1 Kings 4:29-34: ²⁹ God gave Solomon unusual wisdom and insight, and knowledge too great to be measured. ³⁰Solomon was wiser than the wise men of the East or the wise men of Egypt. ³¹He was the wisest of all men: wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame spread throughout all the neighbouring countries. ³²**He composed 3,000 proverbs and more than a thousand songs.** ³³He spoke of trees and plants, from the Lebanon cedars to the hyssop that grows on walls; he talked about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. ³⁴Kings all over the world heard of his wisdom and sent people to listen to him.—*Good News Bible*.*†

24. If Solomon's wisdom was so valuable, why is it that we only have a small portion of his proverbs and only two or three of his songs? Are the proverbs that we have just a selection of his best ones? Were some or all of the others not "inspired"?

25. It is important to notice also that even the books which are generally regarded as being from King Solomon include things which were not specifically written by him.

Proverbs 30:1: These are the solemn words of Agur son of Jakeh.—*Good News Bible*.*

Proverbs 31:1: These are the solemn words which King Lemuel's mother said to him.—*Good News Bible*.* [Was that Bathsheba?][‡]

26. The children of Israel were advised repeatedly about different methods they were to use in educating their children. The youth were strongly encouraged to remember their Creator

in the days of their youth. (Ecclesiastes 12:1) There are many bits of wisdom scattered through the Proverbs, including passages such as:

Proverbs 1:7: To have knowledge, you must first have reverence for the LORD. Stupid people have no respect for wisdom and refuse to learn.—*Good News Bible*.*

Proverbs 6:6-8: ⁶ Lazy people should learn a lesson from the way ants live. ⁷They have no leader, chief, or ruler, ⁸but they store up their food during the summer, getting ready for winter.—*Good News Bible*.*

27. Read Jeremiah 18:18. This passage suggests that wise teachers were considered to be on an equality with priests and prophets in teaching the people.

28. It is interesting to observe that Christ's ministry on this earth lasted about three and one-half years. During the first one and one-half years, only a few followers were with Him, working in Judea sporadically. In the last two years, He chose His 12 disciples; they, along with many others, followed Him and learned from Him. (See Luke 8:1-3.) But, Jesus recognized that there were still many things they needed to learn. And so we read:

John 14:16-17: ¹⁶ "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever. ¹⁷He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive him, because it cannot see him or know him. But you know him, because he remains with you and is in you."—*Good News Bible*.*†

29. Paul also had some interesting things to say about education and its relationship to spreading the gospel.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1,6,10-11. It should be clear that Paul did not intend for us to be only beginners in understanding the plan of salvation. We certainly should start with the story of Jesus; but, that story grows deeper and deeper as we study it.

30. Elsewhere, Paul told us we must **not** remain as children in our understanding of the truth.

Ephesians 4:11-16: ¹¹It was he who "gave gifts"; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. ¹²He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ. ¹³And so we shall all come together to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature. ¹⁴**Then we shall no longer be children, carried by the waves and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful people, who lead others into error by the tricks they invent.** ¹⁵**Instead, by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.** ¹⁶**Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.**—*Good News Bible*.*† [Compare Hebrews 5:14-6:3.]†

31. On one of the occasions when He met with His remaining disciples after He rose from the dead, He gave that commission that we can read in Matthew 28:18-20. The disciples were then to be apostles (Greek) or missionaries (Latin). Those two words mean the same thing: "Those who are sent." **So, today, when people are led to accept the truth and choose**

to be baptized, that should be just the starting point of their Christian education. They should be led through the Bible book by book, learning the main principles taught in each book and in the Bible as a whole. So, how many things are we supposed to learn from the Bible?

Work, rest, social issues, community relations, church and worship, economics, philanthropy, relations with the authorities, counseling, family systems, marriage relations and child rearing, food and its preparation, clothing, and even getting old and preparing for the end of life—both one’s personal life and life in this world; **to be a Christian means to learn something about all these things and more.** Understanding them does not come naturally. It has to be learned.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, November 20.[†]

32. Have you ever thought of reading the Bible from the perspective of the student-teacher relationship? Do you pray daily for the divine Teacher to guide you and teach you? Back in the beginning when He created us in His image, was it God’s plan that we should learn to think His thoughts along with Him as we gain that most valuable education? Don’t you wish that you could hear some of God’s lessons for Adam and Eve?
33. From the point where Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden and God gave them that promise in Genesis 3:15, God’s plan for restoration and redemption has been key to His relationship with human beings. How successful has God been? Does our world today seem to be getting closer and closer to God’s ideal?

For example, a Christian may want to witness by sharing a favorite Bible verse with a college friend but soon realizes that the friend sees the Bible as a compilation of myths with zero credibility. Now what? When the Christian skips the Bible and goes straight to explaining how God sent Jesus to die for our sins, he or she is met with a disdainful look over the word *sin*. “Sin?” the friend smirks. “Sin is an outdated concept from the days when religion controlled society. We’ve moved beyond objective morality.” In other words, what may be a “sin” for you may be a virtue in another culture. The Christian struggles to look unperturbed and as a last-ditch effort says that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that salvation can be found in Him if you believe. The friend patronizingly pats the Christian on the shoulder and remarks that postmodern studies have shown that the term “truth” is problematic and is a throwback to the era of modernity. The friend expresses contentment that the Christian has found a path that brings him peace but that he or she is on a different one. They part ways, and the Christian is left wondering why that whole witnessing opportunity didn’t go the way it was supposed to.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 106-107.[§]

34. So, how are we supposed to prepare ourselves for a response like that? **The first step always should be to pray for wisdom on our part and for understanding on our friend’s part.** Do we also need to delve into the academic literature of philosophy, the biblical and social, systematic theology, history, faith/science studies, and other disciplines to prepare ourselves for meeting our friend’s skeptical concerns? What should be our approach? It would be easy just to decide to tell them about Jesus; and if they do not accept it, give up on them. But, that seems like a copout.
35. In J. P. Morgan’s book, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, page 58, he suggested the following:

1. There is a false and prideful use of reason that is not conducive to spreading the gospel. Reason itself and “wisdom from above” cannot be under condemnation—but only its abuse. “It is *hubris* (pride) that is in view, not *nous* (mind). God chose foolish (*moria*) things that were offensive to human pride, not to reason properly used. For example, the idea of God being crucified was so offensive that the Greek spirit would have judged it to be morally disgusting.”

2. Paul also could have the use of Greek rhetoric in mind. Greek orators prided themselves on being able to argue persuasively any side of an issue for the right price. The truth of a matter becomes secondary in this context, and the prize goes to whoever gives the slickest, most polished speech. Paul may well want to distance himself from these methods.

3. Paul also may be arguing for the insufficiency of pure reason alone to communicate the gospel. It is not possible first to begin with principles of logic and deduction and somehow arrive at a crucified and risen divine Savior. Revelation, apostolic/prophetic testimony, the draw of the Holy Spirit, and faith are necessary components in conjunction with reason to make the move from unbelief to a commitment to Christ.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 108].^{†§}

36. But, if we study Paul in a little more detail, we come across sections of his writings (See Romans 1-12.) where we discover a very carefully crafted and profoundly brilliant theological treatise.

37. Then, should we, as Adventists, avoid higher education and just spend our time reading the Bible and the writings of Ellen White and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us? We should not forget a couple of pieces of advice, the first from Peter and the other from C. S. Lewis:

“Be ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15, *emphasis added*).

“If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were educated. But a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”—C. S. Lewis.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 109].^{†§}

38. When looking at the Gospels and the life and ministry of Jesus and also the letters of Paul, it is important to notice that there is a lot of practical as well as theoretical advice in places like Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and Paul’s letter to the Romans. Are there things in those passages that we still need to learn?

39. If Jesus were here in person, what do you think He would want us to learn as most important?

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