

# Adventist World

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# Introduction

The Holy Bible is the best-selling book of all time, with an estimated total of 5 to 7 billion copies sold. In the twenty-first century, Bibles are printed at a rate of approximately 80 million per year.<sup>1</sup> Multiple online platforms offer the Bible in numerous languages.<sup>2</sup> Currently the entire Bible has been published in 736 languages, with the New Testament being translated into an additional 1,678 languages and smaller portions into 1,264 languages.<sup>3</sup> Altogether, the Bible is now more accessible to more people than at any time in earth's history.

Nevertheless, *Christianity Today* (CT) reported a sharp decline in the percentage of American Christians reading the Bible in 2021, with only 10 percent stating they read the Bible daily.<sup>4</sup>

Although the latest data regarding Bible reading practices among Seventh-day Adventists is from the 2018 Global Church Member Survey, statistics show an increase in daily Bible reading from 42 percent in 2013 to 48 percent in 2018.<sup>5</sup> While these percentages are considerably higher than those reported among Christians in general, they reveal that less than half of Seventh-day Adventist members worldwide are reading God's Word daily.

How important it is that we, as "people of the Book," read and base our faith on the Word of God!



The theme for this Week of Prayer is "I Will Go and Share God's Word." In these readings you will be inspired as you consider what role the Bible has in the life of the church, bringing a message of joy and hope. The Bible is unique—it is a power for salvation, and nourishment for our lives. Most important, the Bible is a revelation of Jesus Christ. Rounding out the week

is an important call to give the final proclamation of the gospel during these times of global turmoil.

Surely Jesus is coming soon! May the Lord bless us together we "will go and share God's Word" to a world in desperate need of Him.

Maranatha!

<sup>1</sup> "Best-selling Book," Guinness World Records, [bit.ly/Biblebestseller](https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/best-selling-book).

<sup>2</sup> "19 Websites for Reading and Searching the Bible," For All Things Bible, [bit.ly/ReadStudyBible](https://forallthingsbible.com/).

<sup>3</sup> "2023 Global Scripture Access," Wycliffe Global Alliance, [wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/](https://www.wycliffe.org/en/resources/statistics/).

<sup>4</sup> "Report: 26 Million Americans Stopped Reading the Bible Regularly During COVID-19," *Christianity Today*, [https://bit.ly/stateofBible](https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/07/26-million-americans-stopped-reading-the-bible-regularly-during-covid-19.html).

<sup>5</sup> "Spiritual life, involvement, and retention," *Ministry*, April 2019, [bit.ly/spirituallifeinvolvement](https://www.ministrymag.com/resources/articles/spiritual-life-involvement-and-retention).

Ted N. C. Wilson, president  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

First Sabbath

# The Word of God in the Life of the Church

BY TED N. C. WILSON

**O**n a grassy hillside 2,000 years ago heaven touched earth as the greatest Teacher this world has ever known began to speak timeless words. The people sat transfixed as Jesus broke the bread of life to them. His words opened eyes, touched hearts, and at times startled His listeners as they heard things never taught by the religious teachers of the day.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” He said (Matt. 5:3). “Blessed are the meek. . . . Blessed are the merciful” (verses 5-7). “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (verse 20).

Going deeper, Jesus taught how one’s innermost soul reveals character. “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (verse 28); “I tell you not to resist an evil person. . . . Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (verse 39). “Love your enemies” (verse 44). “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (verse 48, KJV). The sermon went on, revealing the secret of peace and the perpetuity of God’s law.

The people were amazed. “No man ever spoke like this Man!” (John 7:46) was on the lips of the multitude. However, “while the hearts of the people responded to His words, few were ready to accept them as the guide of life.”<sup>1</sup>

### **BUILDING ON THE ROCK**

Knowing their resistance, Jesus concluded His amazing sermon with a powerful illustration, vividly pointing out the importance of putting into practice the words He had spoken.

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matt. 7:24-27).

Centuries before Christ’s sermon on the mount, the prophet Isaiah pointed out the permanence of God’s Word: “The word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8). Quoting this passage in Isaiah, the apostle Peter affirmed, “This is the word which by the gospel was preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25).

“The word of God is the only steadfast thing our world knows,” wrote Ellen White. “The great principles of the law, of the very nature of God, are embodied in the words of Christ on the mount. Whoever builds upon them is building upon Christ, the Rock of Ages. In receiving the word, we receive Christ. And only those who thus receive His words are building upon Him.”<sup>2</sup>

### **SCRIPTURE IS FOUNDATIONAL**

It was upon this foundation that Christ built His church. From the beginning Christ pointed to the Scriptures as the solid rock on which to build. “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8).

And history has proved this to be true. Against all odds, the apostles built upon that rock and turned the world upside down. Through trials and tremendous persecution, the early church continued clinging to God’s Word, and it stood strong. The Reformers took their stand on Scripture, and the “gates of hell” did not prevail against them.

Through the ages God continued speaking through His Word, leading His people out of darkness and into greater light.

Such was the case with William Miller, an early-nineteenth-century farmer who studied Scripture diligently. From his deep study Miller concluded that Christ’s return was imminent, and he preached the prophecies found in the book of Daniel to all who would hear. When Jesus did not come as expected, it was a bitter experience. But even this great disappointment was foretold in Revelation 10:8-11, where the apostle John was commanded to “eat” the “little book” of Daniel, which was “sweet as honey” in his mouth, but “bitter” in his stomach. Looking to the future, the heavenly command was given: “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings” (verse 11).

### **A FIRM FOUNDATION OF FAITH**

Believing that God was still speaking through Scripture, the early Advent believers continued to earnestly study God’s Word. Reflecting on that experience years later, Ellen White wrote, “Many of our people do not realize how

firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid.”<sup>3</sup>

Explaining how a small group of Advent leaders searched the Bible “as for hidden treasure” following the Great Disappointment, she wrote, “I met with them, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, ‘We can do nothing more,’ the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me.”<sup>4</sup>

In explaining those intense Bible study sessions, Ellen White shared how, when not in vision, she had difficulty understanding the biblical passages. This, however, made it even clearer that the explanations given her while in vision were coming from the Lord rather than her. She wrote:

“During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying. This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. I was in this condition of mind until all the principal points of our faith were

made clear to our minds, in harmony with the Word of God. The brethren knew that when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted as light direct from heaven the revelations given.”<sup>5</sup>

As the small group grew and earnest Bible study continued, a foundational set of biblical beliefs came into place—the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, the sacredness of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the nonimmortality of the soul.<sup>6</sup>

### A GUIDING LIGHT

The Seventh-day Adventist movement, from its beginning, took Scripture as its foundation and guiding light. And while Ellen White acknowledged that “the truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light,”<sup>7</sup> she also warned, “Men will arise with interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth. The truth for this time, God has given us as a foundation for our faith. . . . We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith. They gather together a mass of Scripture, and pile it as proof around their asserted theories. . . . And while the Scriptures are God’s word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves one pillar from the foundation that God has sustained . . . , is a great mistake.”<sup>8</sup>

The Bible is God’s living Word. It is the foundation of the church and serves as the guide to our faith and practice. It reveals God’s will and teaches us timeless lessons we can apply to all parts of our lives. As our official “Methods of Bible Study” document explains, we are to “seek to grasp the simple, most obvious meaning of the biblical passage being studied” and

avoid using the historical-critical method and other human-centered approaches of interpretation.<sup>9</sup>

Our first Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief states:

“The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”<sup>10</sup>

God’s Word, my friends, is the foundation upon which His church is built, and it is the sure foundation upon which Jesus invites each one of us to build our hope, our characters, and our lives.

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock” (Matt. 7:24, 25). ©

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148, 149.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 1, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 207.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), pp. 30, 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup> “Methods of Bible Study,” official document, [adventist.org/documents/methods-of-bible-study/](http://adventist.org/documents/methods-of-bible-study/).

<sup>10</sup> “The Holy Scriptures,” Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief 1, [adventist.org/holy-scriptures/](http://adventist.org/holy-scriptures/).

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The Seventh-day Adventist movement, from its beginning, took Scripture as its foundation and guiding light.

Sunday

# A Message of Joy and Hope

BY STANLEY ARCO

**C**hristian was born into a Christian home but didn't have access to the Bible. When he grew older, he became an alcoholic. He married Alcyline, an Adventist, and her Bible soon became the source of quarreling in their marriage. Frustrated with the trouble the book was causing, Christian gave the Bible to a friend who used the pages to smoke tobacco.

Christian's wife threatened to leave him. Desperate to save his marriage, he accepted an invitation to attend a prayer meeting at church. There the preacher embraced him and gave him a Bible.

Christian stubbornly challenged his wife, "If I find in the Bible that alcoholics won't go to heaven, I will stop drinking." Would reading the Scriptures change Christian's life and attitude?

## THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL GOD'S PLAN

In the Bible we find a message that shows the continued authority and relevance of Scripture for the Christian's life; a testimony of God's redemption plan throughout history; and encouragement with the lessons of perseverance, joy, and hope in God.

In its first and last chapter, the Bible gives us a picture of what a perfect life was intended to be, without sin, and what it will be restored to when Jesus returns. Suffering, pain, sadness, and sin were not God's plan. It was a choice that human beings made.

Adam and Eve enjoyed a daily encounter with the Lord. When they disobeyed God, they felt shame and fear (Gen. 3:8). Then it was necessary for God's love and compassion to show up. He gave them the promise of a Savior, the Messiah (see Gen. 3:15). The Bible reveals that the plan of redemption was "from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

God was sad to be separated from His creation. "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil

# God has a plan of redemption for humanity.

continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth” (Gen. 6:5, 6).

And while humanity knew the history of Creation and sin—they knew the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; they knew the consequences of sin and the world-washing flood—they still trusted in their own ability to save themselves. “And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves’” (Gen. 11:4).

God did not grow tired of loving. He called a faithful man, Abraham, to be a blessing for all humanity. When Abraham’s descendants were enslaved in Egypt, God heard their cries and delivered them. As they wandered in the wilderness, God established a physical sign of His alliance of love and friendship. He said, “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8). But they weren’t happy with a sanctuary, a living symbol of God’s presence.

What did they ask now? “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). God heard them and gave them the desire of their hearts. First Samuel 9:16 says, “For I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me.” Was an earthly king part of God’s plan? No. He had a better plan: an eternal King, the Messiah! This King, the Messiah, loves and

saves His people. Despite the many times the people grew apart from the Lord, He persisted in looking for them.

## THE BIBLE GENERATES JOY AND HOPE

In what ways does the Bible generate joy? It tells us about God and His loving character and the attributes of His work in history. When we learn about God, we understand more of His love, kindness, faithfulness, and other attributes that bring us joy.

The Bible provides wisdom and guidance for our lives. Through its encouragement we can face challenges with confidence. We receive comfort in the Bible biographies and Jesus’ lessons. Perseverance and joy begin to be part of our lives, even amid difficulties. The Scriptures give a purpose and mission for each challenge. They offer a divine plan for humanity’s future.

Communion with God brings joy of the certainty of His presence and a deep and intimate connection with Him. Finally, we have not just a theoretical knowledge of but a friendship relationship with the Creator. Hope generated from reading the Bible is much more than a positive attitude.

God has all power to fulfill His promise of eternal life. He says, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Rev. 1:17, 18).

The Bible gives us the promise of a new heaven and earth. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”; “for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). It also offers us the promise of reinstatement. John 14:1-3 says, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. . . I go to prepare a place for you. . .

I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

As we study the Bible, we discover that God has a redemptive plan for humanity. We actually become new creatures. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

## THE RESULT

Remember Christian and his pledge? Christian and Alcyene began reading the Bible together. In 30 days they had read it completely. Christian found all the answers he had been looking for. Their family life was transformed, and Christian was baptized. He began to teach the Bible, giving Bible studies and holding evangelistic meetings.

Within 13 years of being baptized, their family had built six churches with their own resources and contributed to the construction of 22 more churches in the Autazes region of the Amazon jungle.

Does the Bible contain transformative power? Does it give life a purpose and a mission? By the grace of God and through a sincere study of the Word, Christian became a new creature. The many people touched by him and his family are a testimony to God’s amazing grace and His divine plan. ☺

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**Stanley Arco** is president of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Questions for Reflection:

1. What are your favorite verses that bring you hope and joy?
2. How have you seen the persistent love of God?

Monday

# No Other Book Like This Book

The uniqueness of the Bible

BY DANIEL DUDA

**I**n 1800 a 15-year-old Welsh girl named Mary Jones walked barefoot 26 miles (42 kilometers) through the rugged terrain of north Wales to buy a Welsh Bible. Mary had such a strong desire to own her own Bible, in her own language, that she worked hard and saved every cent she earned for six years. Then she had to trek for a long distance to buy it! Her inspirational story led to establishing Bible societies that print and distribute Bibles across the world.

Today you and I live in a different world than Mary Jones did. But we still consider the Bible to be a unique book. Of course, all religions have their holy writings and consider them special. Why do we believe the Bible is unique?

## THE BIBLE AS GOD'S REVELATION

Throughout the centuries people have identified three sources of knowledge: mind, experience, and God's revelation. The human mind can be the source of amazing discoveries that make our lives easier and move humanity forward. People, through their personal experiences, can broaden their perspectives on life and society and improve the quality of their own life and of humanity. Yet though the human mind and experience are useful *tools* for understanding the world around us, because of the effects of sin they are insufficient as *sources* to grasp ultimate realities. We did not create ourselves, so we cannot create the ultimate meaning of things. We need God's revelation (Deut. 29:29).

Where there is love, where there is relationship, there are words. Therefore, God speaks. That's why ancient Israel treasured and loved God's book.

The apostle Paul wrote a classic statement on this: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, NIV). In other words, the Bible carries God's authority because it has been uniquely inspired, breathed out, by God.

The Bible is not just a history book but contains powerful truths, which underwrite the work of the Holy Spirit and can help bring us to spiritual maturity. Second Timothy 3 shows how the Holy Spirit uses the Bible in four specific directions:

The Scriptures give us the basic elements of our faith (teaching/doctrine). But when we have broken or missed God's principles, it brings rectification (rebuking/reproof). That's why it is important to read the Bible in such a way that

we hear even those things that we do not want to hear. It is easy to read the Bible as a confirmation of what we have always believed. But when the Scriptures are properly read, the Holy Spirit can administer to our soul rebuke and correction, truths that change our thinking and behavior (exhortation). Finally, the Bible also shows us how to maintain God's principles for living—instructions in righteousness (training).

### THE BIBLE HAS A DIVINE-HUMAN CHARACTER

As already mentioned, the message of the Bible comes from God, but by necessity, it is expressed by humans with words and thoughts reflecting the place and time of their writing. Different writings clearly reflect the personality of the author. Both these aspects, divine and human, are equally important and must be kept in balance. They need to be distinguished, but they cannot be separated.

Because the Bible is God's Word, it has eternal meaning, it is addressed to all humanity. It is relevant for every person in every age, place, and culture. That's why we need to listen to what the Bible says, and obey what it advises.

The human aspect is given by the fact that it was written in a certain time and place, in the language of certain people (Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic; New Testament in Greek). Because of this, to a certain extent Scripture reflects the thinking of the authors. Literary genre, style, and vocabulary are different in different parts of the Bible. Some writers even use sources that they themselves didn't write. Every book of the Bible has therefore a certain specific style.

Because there are no degrees of inspiration (insinuating that some parts are inspired more, others less),

we talk about dynamic inspiration rather than verbal (literal dictation). Once we realize that the divine and human aspect are inseparable, we will take these two aspects into account in our study and interpretation. The Bible needs to be studied historically and grammatically (because the document was written in a certain historical time by a certain author), but we cannot remain just at that level, because the Bible is more than just history. It is God's timeless revelation that addresses every human being until the end of time. That's the divine aspect of the Bible.

"The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'"

### OUR STORY IS PART OF GOD'S STORY

Seventy percent of the Old Testament and 60 percent of the New Testament came in a narrative form. God chose the story because it has the power to inspire people and carry the meaning better than anything else. This provides a unified focus for 40 Scripture writers. The ultimate problem and the ultimate solution are the same for all writers.

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in *all the Scriptures* concerning himself" (Luke 24:27, NIV).

The word "all" is important here. Jesus did not talk about a few messianic prophetic predictions. What Jesus is saying is "Now you get the whole story. Now you understand it in a way that no one did before. Now you see what it all means,

what God has been up to." Then the Bible story continues with the fulfillment as expressed through the new community (church), until the Day of the Lord and the new creation and eradication of sin.

The only way to redeem a broken story is to embed it in a bigger story. When you read the Bible, you can see your temptations, your fall, your coming out of Egypt, your crossing of Jordan, your wandering in the wilderness, your exile. Jesus opens your eyes, cleanses you. The Bible becomes a living Word in your own experience (Heb. 4:12).

God's Word accomplishes the creation of life, the conviction of sin, the achievement of hope, brings power in your weakness, provides guidance in darkness. It becomes a lamp to your feet, a light to your path (Ps. 119:105). It is the story that gives your personal story a new meaning. Therefore, you can be a woman, you can be a man, of the Book. We can and need to be the people of the Book! ☺

\* Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. vi.

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**Daniel Duda** is president of the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Questions for Reflection:

1. What makes the Bible different from other holy books?
2. Have you been able to identify with a specific biblical character in your spiritual experience?

Tuesday

# God's Relentless Search

BY G. ALEXANDER BRYANT

Simply put, the gospel is the power of God to transform lives. The good news of the gospel is the essence of God's Word. Paul declares in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also to the Greek." The Word of God unveils and demonstrates His boundless love, reveals His mercy, and shows His relentless pursuit of all His children.

Notice that Paul lists two groups of people to whom this power of salvation is directed. The gospel is for the Jews and for the Greeks. I see the Jews as representing the household of faith, those who grew up in the church. The Greeks represent those who were never part of the church. Both groups, however, need the gospel. They are both of equal value to God, both are pursued by God, and both groups would be lost without His search.

The most remarkable theme and story of the Bible is the exploration and evidence of God's power to save. Spanning from the book of Genesis through Revelation is God's substantiated quest and resolute efforts to save humanity. The Bible provides a kaleidoscope of characters testifying to the transformative and saving power of the gospel—from the uttermost to the "guttermost." God always initiates this salvific process.

## **GOD'S SEARCH**

Sometimes, in referring to their salvation, people say, "When I found the Lord . . ." While I understand their intent and the message, it is not an accurate portrayal of the salvation story, which is never about humans searching for God, but about God's relentless pursuit of humans. The Lord was not lost; He did not need to be found. We did not find God; He found us.

In the Garden of Eden God calls, "Adam, where are you?" God searching for the lost is exemplified throughout the Scriptures. He found Abraham on Mount Moriah, Joseph in a pit, Moses

# The word of God unveils and demonstrates His relentless pursuit of all His children.

at the burning bush, Elijah in a cave, David tending his father's sheep, and Paul riding on a donkey. The theme of God's Word is God's search. The Word of God encapsulates God's search for humanity and lists His many redemptive acts in the plan of salvation.

The stories that God has revealed through His Word provide encouragement and insight of what God is doing even now in the lives of all His created beings. God does not passively wait for us to come to Him; instead, He actively and aggressively pursues us. Luke 15 gives a concise yet comprehensive account of God seeking to save His creatures. God is the active agent. Ellen White reminds us, "God is no respecter of person, and He has an equal care for all the souls He has created."<sup>1</sup>

We do not often see how God is searching, but He is relentlessly doing so. God initiated His redemptive plan to find and save me. He orchestrated a set of circumstances that steered me down a certain path to give me an opportunity to choose Him and be transformed by the power of the gospel.

## ORCHESTRATING EVENTS

It started with Adventist church members coming to my neighborhood conducting a survey to identify those interested in taking Bible studies. My family was not home, but our next-door neighbor, Mrs.

Jones, signed up. When she found out the folks were Adventists, she requested them not to return, but instead to check with the family next door. They came to our house, and my family consented to taking Bible studies. They presented the Sabbath message, and the evidence that Saturday is the Sabbath was overwhelming and irrefutable to me.

I was 14 years old, however, and seriously involved in sports, playing basketball, football, and baseball at the neighborhood boys' club. With all games scheduled on Saturdays, I was unprepared to give that up or join the church. Then something strange happened. My parents abruptly decided to move out of the four-family flat into a single-family dwelling, taking me out of the neighborhood, away from the boys' club and the sports that I loved to play on Saturdays.

About a year after our relocating, the deacons who gave us Bible studies came by to check on us and invited us to visit their church again, but I was still reluctant. A few weeks later one of them got sick, and my dad and I visited him in the hospital. He was extremely ill, and when he asked if I would do him a favor, I said yes, thinking he wanted water or needed the nurse. Instead, he asked if I would go to church for him that Sabbath. Well, I had already said yes (which he reminded me), so I kept my word. God found me, and I was later baptized into the church.

My story chronicles God's search for me. I was not looking for Him. He was looking for me. Who prompted the Adventists to survey the neighborhood? Who guided Mrs. Jones to refer them to my family? Who influenced my parents' decision to move out of that neighborhood? Who impressed the deacons to come by later? Who inspired my father to

visit the deacon in the hospital? Who led the deacon to ask me to do him a favor? Who gave me the will to say yes? It was God orchestrating the events of my life to position me for an opportunity to receive the gospel!

Therefore, for every living person God is searching. God is still orchestrating the events in our lives to bring us salvation. It does not matter if you grew up within or outside the church; God is seeking and searching to save you. There is no one so evil or corrupted that God does not pursue. There is no life so damaged that the power of the gospel cannot redeem! There is no one who has sunk so low that the power of the gospel cannot uplift. There is no life so sin-stained that the power of the gospel cannot cleanse. Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible is a rich tapestry of stories of God's search for humanity to give us hope in the potency of the gospel. God is no respecter of persons. The good news of the gospel is that God is in search of you! Has He found you? If not, He is still looking! ☺

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 639.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to Romans 5:20.

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**G. Alexander Bryant**, D.Min., is president of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Questions for Reflection:

1. What verses speak to you about God's relentless pursuit of you?
2. How have you seen God's grace poured out toward you?

Wednesday

# The Word as Revelation

Examining John 5:39

BY ROBERT OSEI-BONSU



**A**s we consider “the Word as revelation,” perhaps we need to start by answering the question “In what ways has God revealed Himself?” This fact is foundational to the Christian faith. God has revealed Himself in words and acts through many different channels, but most fully in the person of Jesus Christ.

God’s explicit intention is that through this revelation, humans may come to know Him and enter a saving relationship, which will result in eternal fellowship with Him (John 17:3). Both the Old and New Testaments present a

record of how God manifested Himself in human history, especially the history of Israel, and supremely in the person of Jesus Christ. Without this divine revelation, humanity would perish, ignorant of God's real character and estranged from Him through sin and guilt.

Thus, the Bible is rightly called the Word of God because it contains God's inspired words. The purpose of God's Word is to give us information and reveal Jesus to us. Jesus said in John 5:39 that you search the Scriptures because you believe they contain eternal life. They are those who bear witness to me. This crucial verse emphasizes the central role of the Word of God as a revelation from Jesus.

#### **HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

John's Gospel dates from the first century, between A.D. 70 and 90—a period marked by a mixture of cultural (Roman, Greek, and Jewish) influences. Tension existed between Jewish religious leaders under Roman rule and Jesus' followers. Jesus' statement in John 5:39 challenged the Jewish religious leaders regarding their understanding of the Torah, the Prophets, and religious practice as the ultimate authority. Instead, Jesus redirected the leaders' focus on Him as God's supreme revelation.

In the Gospel of John there is a dialogue between Jesus and the religious authorities who question His authority and identity. Jesus challenges their understanding of Scripture, positing that Scriptures speak about Him, so they should study them and recognize they testify of Him as the way to eternal life. Luke 24:27, 44, and 45 reinforce the idea that Jesus is the center of Scripture and His role in God's plan of redemption. The New Testament highlights Jesus as God's Word, fully revealing God and fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

The Christian view is that to understand the Word of God in its entirety as a revelation of Jesus, you must acknowledge the Bible's entire focus. The Old Testament is a precursor to the New Testament, which reveals Jesus Christ. God's redemptive plan is revealed throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. The Word of God is not a collection of morals or stories, but a coherent narrative highlighting Jesus Christ as the world's Savior.

John 1:1-14 describes Jesus as the Word, the eternal Word of God who existed from the beginning of the world and took on flesh to dwell among us. It emphasizes Jesus' divinity and His role in creation and redemption. Hebrews 4:12 also describes the Word as a powerful living force capable of discerning one's thoughts and motives. The Word can inspire transformation and change. John 5:39 and other verses of the Bible depict the Word as a dynamic and divine power that reveals God's purpose and character.

## **Jesus is more than a teacher or prophet; He embodies God's message for humanity.**

#### **THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF JOHN 5:39**

John 5:39 states that the Word of God is more than written words. It symbolizes Jesus' divine nature as the messenger of God's redemption plan. Jesus is more than a teacher or prophet; He embodies God's message for humanity. This concept emphasizes the importance of the Old Testament Scriptures in helping us understand Jesus and His teachings. The Scriptures challenge religious leaders to put their faith in Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of its message. The Word of God can transform us, leading to spiritual growth, obedience, and becoming more like Him.<sup>1</sup>

John 5:39 is Jesus' response to the Jewish leaders who challenged His authority. This verse highlights the purpose of the Scriptures, which Jesus explained to them. "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (ESV).<sup>2</sup> They believed they could discover the path to eternal life by studying the Scriptures. Jesus clarifies, however, that the Scriptures are meant to testify about Him, who is the way to eternal life.

Understanding the meaning of this verse requires an understanding of its context. The verses preceding this one tell of Jesus healing a man. This man had had a disability for 38 years. The healing occurred on a Sabbath day, and the Jewish leaders questioned Jesus' authority. Jesus told them that He had authority as the Son of God. In verse 39 He explained that the Scriptures exist, not simply to be read, but to lead people to Him. The Scriptures are centered on Him and testify to His existence. They are evidence of His identity and what He came to do.

This verse has essential implications for our understanding of the Bible. The Bible is more than a collection of historical accounts or poems. The Bible is God's revelation of His plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. When we

## This verse has essential implications for our understanding of the Bible.

study the Scriptures, we must explore its testimony of Jesus and His redemptive work on the cross. It is only through Him that we can have eternal life.

We must study God's Word with a Christ-centered perspective. Each passage, story, or teaching should be read to understand how it relates to Jesus. When we read about Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, we can see God's willingness for His Son to be sacrificed for us. We can read the Psalms and see Jesus' emotions and struggles as He faced His cross.

We must study the Word of God and put it into practice. The Word of God should inform and transform us. We should be transformed by Jesus' love, grace, and truth as we encounter Him through the Word. We should strive to live our lives in a way that reflects His character and mission.

Ellen G. White affirms that the Bible bears witness to Jesus Christ. "The Old Testament Scriptures reveal Christ, and bring us to a knowledge of His prerogatives."<sup>3</sup> She emphasizes that it is crucial to study the Scriptures to understand Jesus Christ. In *The Great Controversy* Ellen G. White posits that the Bible was not written just for scholars but was also intended for ordinary people. The truths that are necessary for salvation become more apparent as the noonday. No one will make a mistake or lose their way unless they follow their judgment instead of God's revealed will.<sup>4</sup> Use the Word of God to spread Jesus' teachings. It can change people's lives and give hope to the entire world.

### MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF JOHN 5:39

John 5:39, from a missiological perspective, emphasizes Jesus' vital role and the importance of spreading the Word through evangelism. This verse challenges religious practices that place other authorities above Jesus. It calls for a change in focus, urging us to look at the Scriptures and see Jesus as God's true revelation. Acts 4:12 and Romans 10:14, 15, are other Bible passages that highlight the implications of this concept for missionary work. These passages emphasize the importance of proclaiming Jesus as the sole means of salvation. John 5:39, however, calls on all Christians to

proclaim Jesus as God's Word, who reveals God's grace, truth, and salvation, regardless of background.

This verse encourages believers to read the Bible and recognize how it points to Jesus. It is essential to equip and disciple Christians to understand the Bible, recognize Jesus as its center, and share this revelation with others. John 5:39, from a missiological perspective, emphasizes Jesus' message and the importance of His role in evangelism. It challenges religious systems and traditions that place other authorities above Jesus. It calls for a shift in focus to examine Scripture and encounter Jesus, the ultimate revelation of God. As believers are equipped with this knowledge, they can then share the revelation and lead others to understand the Scriptures better.

### CONCLUSION

The Scriptures challenge the traditional belief system and focus on Jesus. Understanding His teachings is easier when we understand the historical context. Examining relevant verses helps us understand God's Word and emphasizes Jesus' divine nature.

The Word of God reveals Jesus Christ. It is more than a collection of old texts. The Word of God should be approached from a Christ-centered point of view, and we should seek to meet Jesus through it. It is crucial to apply the teachings of Christ to our daily lives and allow them to change us. We should also use it to spread the gospel. Remember that we can understand and experience Jesus through the Word of God. Let us make sure to share this with others. John 5:39 tells us that the Scriptures lead us to Jesus and point us in His direction. As we read and study the Bible, we should always keep this in our minds and try to find how each passage relates to Him. ©

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 109, 1899.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 598, 599.

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### Questions for Reflection:

1. Have you ever considered John 5:39 as relating to our method of mission?
2. How can you use the Word today to encourage someone else?

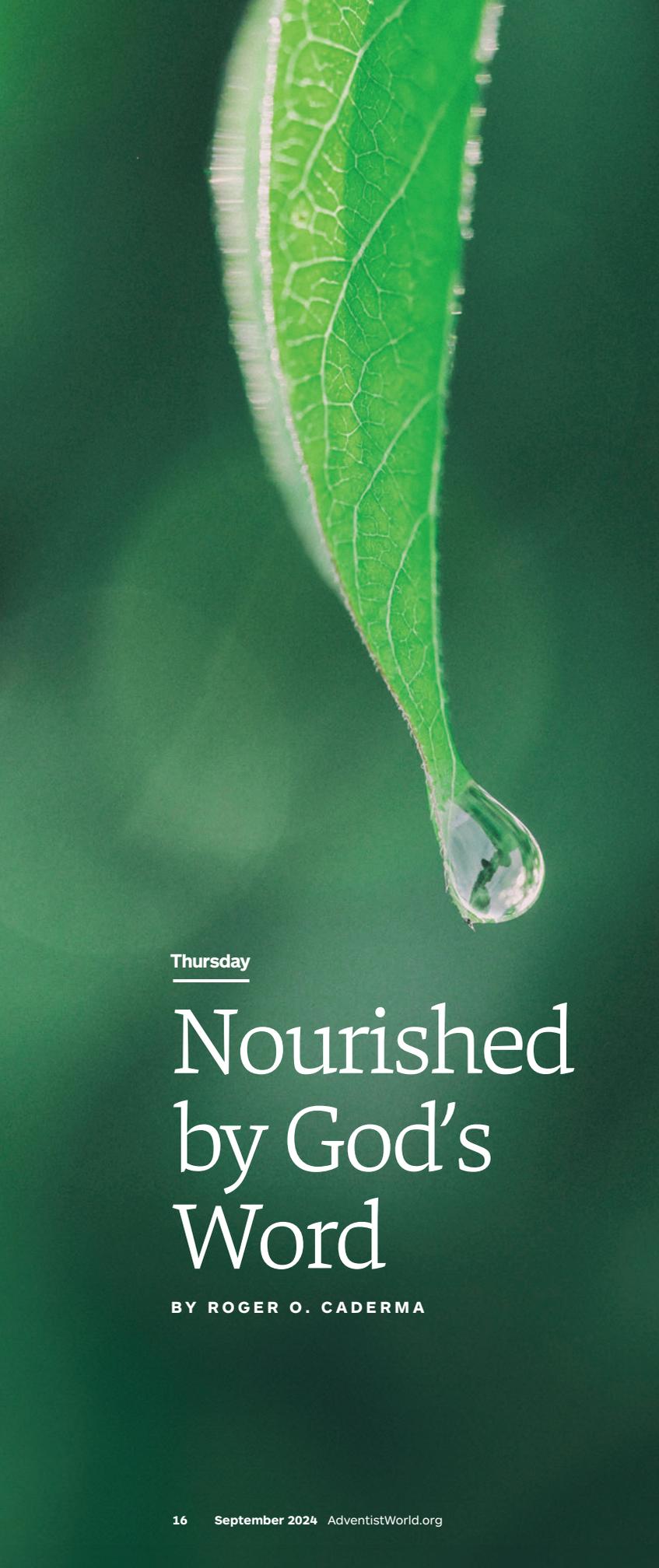


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Thursday

# Nourished by God's Word

BY ROGER O. CADERMA

**I**n a world in which the din of life usually drowns out God's voice, the Word of the Lord provides actual sustenance and nourishment. Psalm 19:7-14 is a lovely example of how God's Word gives us spiritual sustenance, wisdom, joy, and guidance. In this devotional message we will delve thoroughly into the theme, "I Will Go and Share God's Word." We'll discover the transformative power of speaking His truth and how it can provide a rich life for both the giver and the listener.

## IDEAL FUEL

Our spiritual well-being is dependent on nourishment, just as our physical bodies are dependent on food and drink to survive. The Bible is a wonderful refuge in an unstable and unpredictable world. We are immersed in the depths of God's love, comprehension, and grace when we study His Word. It feeds our souls by reminding us of God's steadfast character and unbreakable promises. Like a desert waterfall, it quenches our thirst with cool, pleasant water.

This spiritual food, on the other hand, should be shared rather than kept to oneself. When we encounter spiritually parched people, we can offer them the same reviving waters that we have discovered in God's Word. In this way we become conduits for God's grace, revitalizing and reviving people around us.

## EVERYDAY WISDOM

The Bible is a source of knowledge. Those who seek it develop understanding and wisdom. Many of us regard ourselves as simple or unwise, but God's Word has the power to change the unwise into wise. It offers helpful advice for dealing with life's challenges.

The Bible is filled with stories of ordinary people who achieved remarkable feats through faith and obedience to God's Word. Their faith in God and dedication to His Word paved the way for their discernment and success.

God uses us as a medium for wisdom transmission. Those who are struggling to navigate life's challenges may find clarity and aid from us. We can equip them to make wise decisions that glorify God and lead to a fruitful life.

## HEARTFELT HAPPINESS

Joy is a precious and elusive gift in our world. Many people seek it in passing pleasures and

## We become joy-bearers when we share the good news of God's Word with others.

pastimes, only to learn that true and lasting joy can be found only in God's presence. His Word reveals the path to genuine delight.

The laws of the Lord are correct because they reflect His faultless and honest character. They direct us away from the disastrous paths of sin and selfishness and toward a life defined by love, grace, and joy. When we obey God's commands, we experience a profound and enduring delight that transcends circumstances.

We become joy-bearers when we share the good news of God's Word with others. We share the wonderful joy of knowing Christ, as well as the good news of redemption and transformation that He provides. Our testimonies bring delight and hope to people who are dealing with life's difficulties.

### A SHINING LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

God's Word acts as a guiding light in a dark world, illuminating the path ahead of us. "The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes." It provides direction in uncertain times, hope in despair, and clarity in confusion. The Lord's laws empower us to walk in His truth because they are liberating rather than limiting.

We become lights in a dark world as we spread the message of God's Word to others. We assist people in discovering the way to salvation and virtue. We point people in the right way when they are lost and searching for significance. Our lives take on a testimony-like quality, shining brightly in front of everyone as proof of the transformative power of God's Word.

### DEEP SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY

As we journey to spiritual discovery, we unveil truth that combines the personal nutrition found in God's Word with a broader calling: the mission we have been chosen for.

We recognize the crucial need to nurture our mind through the daily study of His Word to prepare for this responsibility. This is more than simply information; it is a spiritual feast, a source of power, that vibrates deep inside the heart. This acceptance of God's Word as a perfect, trustworthy guide speaks not just to personal enlightenment, but also to being prepared for the mission to which we have been called.

Furthermore, the commitment to obeying God's Word is emphasized, echoing Psalm 19:11's promise of great retribution. This alludes to a double blessing: the personal enrichment that comes from living according to God's Word, as well as the preparation for the mission ahead. It is a process of transformation in which the Word serves as a guide, a source of strength, and a source of joy.

In keeping with these fundamental realities, Ellen G. White's timeless wisdom resounds through the Spirit of Prophecy: "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice." This is not a fleeting notion, but a fundamental principle that

sets the tone for our faith journey and, by extension, our readiness for the role that has been assigned to us. Ellen G. White's teachings emphasize the timeless fact that the Bible is more than a book; it is the authoritative guide that steers our path of faith and mission.

Our reading ends in verse 14, which becomes a personal commitment: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." This is more than a desire for personal purity; it is an understanding that incorporating His Word into our life is not a passive act, but rather an active readiness to participate in God's plan.

As a result of communicating the gospel with power and strength, our lives become living testimonies to the transformative power of His Word. We have been chosen for a mission, and this selection is more than just a name; it is a recognition that our lives, fed by His Word, are equipped, and enabled to fulfill a purpose greater than ourselves. ©

\* Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 78.

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### Questions for Reflection:

1. How does God's Word nourish your soul?
2. Has reading the Scriptures become a "passive act" for you? What changes could you make for it to become more active?

Friday

# Proclaiming the Word in Times of Global Turmoil

A tutorial from Acts 4:4

BY YO HAN KIM

**T**he world is suffering. No one can deny that the world we live in is experiencing global turmoil. Of course, these difficult situations may be a great opportunity to introduce God's last-day messages to those who are in despair and uncertainty. People have become more open to having spiritual conversations, but this does not mean that proclaiming the Word has become easy.

## CONTEXT

Acts 4 depicts a very interesting time. Perhaps it was much like what we are witnessing today. Many people were in despair, disappointment, and uncertainty. People were confused and frightened. Though the believers witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts 1), the power of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost (Acts 2), and the healing of a crippled man in the temple (Acts 3), there were still concerns as they faced intense opposition and persecution from religious leaders. This is where Acts 4:4 comes in. "But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand" (NIV). This verse is truly significant for us today, as it not only reveals the power of the Word during these times of turmoil, but also calls us to be united in mission as Seventh-day Adventists.

## POWER OF THE WORD

Though Peter and John were put in jail (verse 3) for "teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead" (verses 1, 2, NIV), those who heard the message believed, and the numbers grew (verse 4). Acts 4 reminds us that the Word of God stands as an unwavering beacon of truth and light. It is not just something to use as a reference, but a revelation of God Himself in times of chaos and uncertainty. The Word of God is a divine communication to inspire, empower, and transform our lives. Surely there is power in the Word of God. The Scriptures tell us in Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (NIV).

# We were chosen to be bold and unwavering to reach the lost in times of uncertainty and chaos.

Ellen White reminds us of this infinite power. “In its power, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have been transformed into the image of God. This change is itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe.”<sup>1</sup>

It is sad to say that we live amid global turmoil. In fact, this world is falling deeper and deeper into the consequences of sin. There is hope, however! The Word of God provides the greatest hope in Christ. It transcends and breaks various barriers. It reassures and reminds us of God’s love and faithfulness. Ultimately, the Word of God affirms that we are chosen for God’s mission.

## CHOSEN FOR MISSION

When Peter and John were warned not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (verse 18), they replied by saying, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!” (verse 19, NIV). Then comes the apostles’

famous testimony in verse 20: “As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (NIV). Obeying the Word of God and participating in the mission of God was their life calling and purpose.

Two thousand years after Acts 4, we live in a time the world needs the message of hope more than ever. Increasing uncertainty and turmoil lead people to seek answers and meaning in life. The hope and truth in Christ and Christ alone can provide true happiness and comfort. God has entrusted us with a great mission to accomplish in the last days. God has chosen us to share what we have seen and heard.

Let us remember what Ellen White wrote, “The words of Jesus Christ are spoken to us living down here in the close of this earth’s history. ‘When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.’ The nations are in unrest. Times of perplexity are upon us. The waves of the sea are roaring; men’s hearts are failing them for fear and for expectation of those things that are coming upon the earth; but those who believe on the Son of God will hear His voice amid the storm, saying, ‘It is I; be not afraid.’ . . . We see the world lying in wickedness and apostasy. Rebellion to the commandments of God seems almost universal. Amid the tumult of excitement with confusion in every place, there is a work to be done in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

When the people witnessed Peter and John’s release from prison and heard their reports, “they raised their voices together in prayer to God” (verse 24, NIV). Notice their amazing prayer found in verses 29 and 30: “Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great

boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (NIV). Here are the results of their prayer. “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (verse 31, NIV).

## CONCLUSION

Standing on the promises of God and accepting the call to mission was an unchanging divine responsibility 2,000 years ago and even more today. It is not an option, but a part of our identity as Seventh-day Adventists. As we reflect upon the words found in Acts 4, let us be reminded of our mission. We were chosen to be bold and unwavering to reach the lost in times of uncertainty and chaos. May we believe, practice, and proclaim the Word of God in times of global turmoil. May the testimony of Peter and John be our testimony today: “As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (NIV). ©

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 18.

**Yo Han Kim** is president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

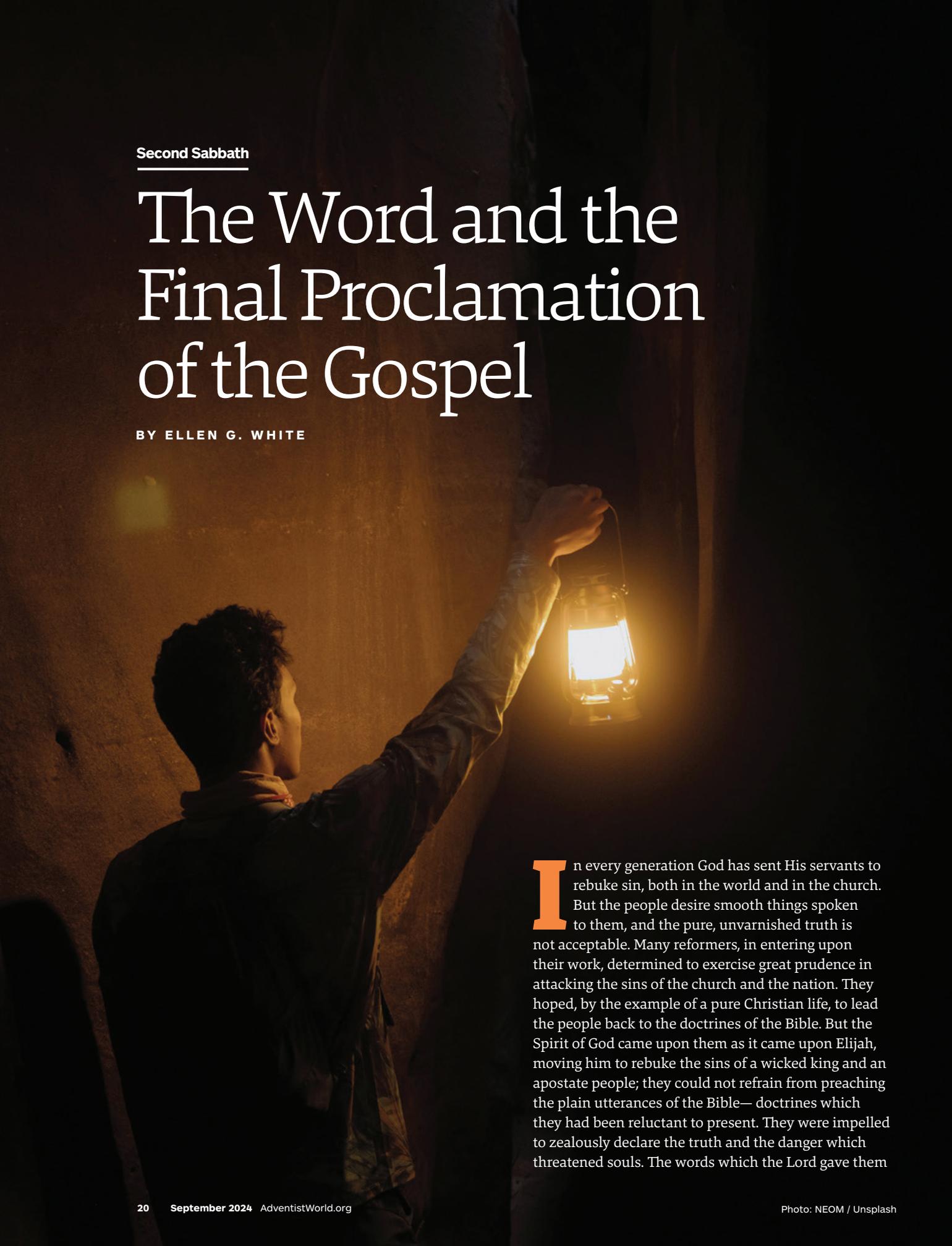
## Questions for Reflection:

1. How can we be bold and unwavering in chaotic times?
2. What have you seen and heard in your study of the Word that you can share with someone else?

Second Sabbath

# The Word and the Final Proclamation of the Gospel

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

A man in a dark jacket is shown from the side, holding a glowing lantern against a textured, brownish wall. The lantern is the primary light source, casting a warm glow on the man's face and the wall. The background is dark, making the man and the lantern stand out.

**I**n every generation God has sent His servants to rebuke sin, both in the world and in the church. But the people desire smooth things spoken to them, and the pure, unvarnished truth is not acceptable. Many reformers, in entering upon their work, determined to exercise great prudence in attacking the sins of the church and the nation. They hoped, by the example of a pure Christian life, to lead the people back to the doctrines of the Bible. But the Spirit of God came upon them as it came upon Elijah, moving him to rebuke the sins of a wicked king and an apostate people; they could not refrain from preaching the plain utterances of the Bible—doctrines which they had been reluctant to present. They were impelled to zealously declare the truth and the danger which threatened souls. The words which the Lord gave them

they uttered, fearless of consequences, and the people were compelled to hear the warning.

“Thus the message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. . . . By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven. As the people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry, Are these things so? the ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears and quiet the awakened conscience. But since many refuse to be satisfied with the mere authority of men and demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ the popular ministry, like the Pharisees of old, filled with anger as their authority is questioned, will denounce the message as of Satan and stir up the sin-loving multitudes to revile and persecute those who proclaim it.

#### **SUPPRESSING THE LIGHT**

“As the controversy extends into new fields and the minds of the people are called to God’s downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and, in this work, papists and Protestants unite. As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some will be offered positions of influence, and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith. But their steadfast answer is: ‘Show us from the word of God our error’—the same plea that was made by Luther under similar circumstances. Those who are arraigned before the courts make a strong vindication of the truth, and some who hear them are led to take their stand to keep all the commandments of God. Thus light will be brought before thousands who otherwise would know nothing of these truths.

**As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service.**

“Conscientious obedience to the word of God will be treated as rebellion. Blinded by Satan, the parent will exercise harshness and severity toward the believing child; the master or mistress will oppress the commandment-keeping servant. Affection will be alienated; children will be disinherited and driven from home. The words of Paul will be literally fulfilled: ‘All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution’ (2 Timothy 3:12). As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath, some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as slaves. To human wisdom all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God’s fear and love are removed.

“As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren. When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent

## **We dare not tamper with God's word, dividing His holy law; calling one portion essential and another nonessential, to gain the favor of the world.**

and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.

### **STANDING FOR TRUTH**

"In this time of persecution the faith of the Lord's servants will be tried. They have faithfully given the warning, looking to God and to His word alone. God's Spirit, moving upon their hearts, has constrained them to speak. Stimulated with holy zeal, and with the divine impulse strong upon them, they entered upon the performance of their duties without coldly calculating the consequences of speaking to the people the word which the Lord had given them. They have not consulted their temporal interests, nor sought to preserve their reputation or their lives. . . . They are hedged in with difficulties. Satan assails them with fierce temptations. The work which they have undertaken seems far beyond their ability to accomplish. They are threatened with destruction. The enthusiasm which animated them is gone; yet they cannot turn back. Then, feeling their utter helplessness, they flee to the Mighty One for strength. They remember that the words which they have spoken were not theirs, but His who bade them give the warning. God put the truth into their hearts, and they could not forbear to proclaim it. . . .

"Every new truth has made its way against hatred and opposition; those who were blessed with its light were tempted and tried. The Lord gives a special truth for the people in an emergency. Who dare refuse to publish it? He commands His servants to present the last invitation of mercy to the world. They cannot remain silent, except at the peril of their souls. Christ's ambassadors have nothing to do with consequences. They must perform their duty and leave results with God.

"As the opposition rises to a fiercer height, the servants of God are again perplexed; for it seems to them that they have brought the crisis. But conscience and the word of God assure them that their course is right;

and although the trials continue, they are strengthened to bear them. The contest grows closer and sharper, but their faith and courage rise with the emergency. Their testimony is: 'We dare not tamper with God's word, dividing His holy law; calling one portion essential and another nonessential, to gain the favor of the world. The Lord whom we serve is able to deliver us. Christ has conquered the powers of earth; and shall we be afraid of a world already conquered?'

### **A MIGHTY MOVEMENT**

"Persecution in its varied forms is the development of a principle which will exist as long as Satan exists and Christianity has vital power. No man can serve God without enlisting against himself the opposition of the hosts of darkness. Evil angels will assail him, alarmed that his influence is taking the prey from their hands. Evil men, rebuked by his example, will unite with them in seeking to separate him from God by alluring temptations. When these do not succeed, then a compelling power is employed to force the conscience.

"But so long as Jesus remains man's intercessor in the sanctuary above, the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is felt by rulers and people. . . . The enemy moves upon his servants to propose measures that would greatly impede the work of God; but statesmen who fear the Lord are influenced by holy angels to oppose such propositions with unanswerable arguments. Thus a few men will hold in check a powerful current of evil. The opposition of the enemies of truth will be restrained that the third angel's message may do its work. When the final warning shall be given, it will arrest the attention of these leading men through whom the Lord is now working, and some of them will accept it, and will stand with the people of God through the time of trouble.

"The angel who unites in the proclamation of the third angel's message is to lighten the whole earth with his glory. A work of world-wide extent and unwonted power is here foretold. The advent movement of 1840-44 was a glorious manifestation of the power of God; the first angel's message was carried to every missionary station in the world, and in some countries there was the greatest religious interest which has been witnessed in any land since the Reformation of the sixteenth century; but these are to be exceeded by the mighty movement under the last warning of the third angel." ©

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This article is excerpted from Chapter 38, "The Final Warning," of *The Great Controversy*, by **Ellen G. White**. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

# The Bible Is God's Word to Me

**Welcome to a special  
Children's Week of  
Prayer all about the  
most amazing book in  
the world—the Bible!**

This week we're going to embark on a wonderful journey together, exploring the treasures found within the pages of God's Word. The Bible isn't just any book; it's a living, breathing testimony of God's love, wisdom, and power. So get ready to dive deep into the wonders of Scripture as we discover how God's Word impacts every aspect of our lives.

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible tells us the story of God's love for His creation, the redemption plan through Jesus Christ, and the promise of eternal life. It's filled with exciting adventures, inspiring stories, and timeless truths that teach us about God's character and His incredible plan for each of us. We pray that this Week of Prayer will draw you closer to Jesus!

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**Beth Thomas** is assistant editor of *Adventist World*.

# All About God's Word

## USING THE "P.E.N."

**Memory Verse: "No prophecy ever came from what a man wanted to say. But men led by the Holy Spirit spoke words from God" (2 Peter 1:21, ICB).\***

What do a pen, pencil, and paintbrush have all in common? One, they all start with a letter "p." Two, they are all instruments used by someone. An artist uses a paintbrush to create art pieces. A student uses a pen or pencil in school to complete their homework. An author uses a pen or pencil to draft a book.

What is your favorite book? What do you think makes one book more valuable than another? You see, the importance of the book is not necessarily the pen it was written with, but the content and the author who wrote it.

This week, we will be learning about the Bible. Did you know that the Bible is the most printed and read book in the world? It is written in more languages than any other book. Why do you think millions of people believe that the Bible is the most important book for our life? Here is essential information: the Bible itself explains how it was written! Let us look at one of the passages that helps us better understand the Bible. It is found in 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

"Most of all, you must understand this: No prophecy in the Scriptures ever comes from the prophet's own interpretation. No prophecy ever came from what a man wanted to say. But men led by the Holy Spirit spoke words from God" (ICB).

The acronym P.E.N. can help us remember 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

**P**rophecy comes from God.

**E**ach thought written is guided by the Holy Spirit.

**N**o prophecy is written based on the prophet's own ideas.

The Bible is unique in that it gives us a picture of what will happen in the future. That is what we call "prophecy." When we study the Bible, we see many

prophecies that have already come true. The men who wrote these prophecies did not write them from their own thinking. Instead, the primary author is God, who guided the writers through the Holy Spirit.

This means that they were the penmen God worked through, but God was the primary author. The Bible states that God knows the beginning and the end and that He used people called prophets to write what will take place so that we will know and not be afraid. Why is that important? Well, there are terrible things happening today. But the Bible says that one day soon Jesus will return and restore everything back to the way He created it. He will get rid of evil, sickness, and death. And those who already died believing in Jesus will be brought back to life. Isn't that exciting? I am so grateful that God gave us the Bible to give us hope and understand that at the end, God wins, God restores, and God is in control. This makes me want to read and learn more about it. How about you?

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**Manuel (Manny) Vitug** is the lead pastor of the Loma Linda Filipino church. He served as the Children's Ministries director for the Southeastern California Conference from 2003 to 2021.

### THINKING TOGETHER:

1. Why is the Bible different from any other book?
2. What is one thing you can do to help you learn the Bible better?



# God's Word Gives Me Hope

**BLESSINGS COME IN BOXES**

**Memory Verse: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, NIV).**

Our memory verse tells us that the stories in the Bible were written to teach us lessons of faith, so that we might have hope! One story that is special to me is the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, found in 1 Kings 17.

The prophet Elijah was hiding from King Ahab beside the brook Cherith. God told Elijah to drink from the brook and that ravens would bring him food. Every day Elijah's needs were taken care of. When the water

dried up, the Lord told Elijah to go to Zarephath, where He had instructed a widow to supply him with food.

When Elijah got to Zarephath, he found a woman gathering a few sticks. He asked her for a drink of water and a piece of bread. What could she do? There was only enough flour and oil to make bread for herself and her son, and then they would not have any more food.

Elijah told her not to be afraid, but to make some bread for him first, and then make bread for herself and her son, for God had promised that the flour would not run out and that the oil would not run dry. The woman did as Elijah told her, and just as God had said, the woman and her son always had enough to eat (1 Kings 17:7-16).

Several years ago I found myself wondering where our next meal would come from! There just never seemed to be enough money or food to go around. Our simple pantry contained oatmeal, rice, beans, and flour, but it was often almost empty. Each day we prayed, “Lord, You know our needs, and You have promised to take care of us.”

A young couple had been camping in the woods near our house, and we became friends. One day the wife came to my

house crying! I asked her what was wrong, and she told me that they had run out of food and didn't know what they would do. God impressed me to give them some food.

How could I do this? I barely had enough for our own family! But I took a box and went into my pantry and started to fill it up. I scooped up some beans and put them into a bag, then rice, oats, flour, and salt. I added a small container of oil, then put some potatoes and onions in the box. Whatever I had, I shared with her. I was amazed that I was able to share, not one box, but more than three large boxes of food with my friend! And, miraculously, I had more food than I had started with! Just as God provided for the widow, He provided for my family.

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**Jodi Genson** is a retired teacher living in **Yakima, Washington, United States.**

## THINKING TOGETHER:

1. Why did it matter that the woman made bread for Elijah first?
2. Has your family experienced a miracle from God?

# God's Word Is Different From Other Books

**IT'S A LIFESAVER!**

**Memory Verse: “You have known the Holy Scriptures since you were a child. The Scriptures are able to make you wise. And that wisdom leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15, ICB).**

Bullets and musket balls flew around Charles Merrill's head as he and his brigade of soldiers pressed forward toward the opposing army. Suddenly, as he stepped forward, a bullet struck him in the right eye, sending him reeling backward. As he fell, he felt the impact of a second bullet as it hit his chest. But something stopped it on its path. That morning, as Charles hurried out of his tent, he had grabbed his New Testament Bible and stuck it into his front pocket. The Bible stopped the bullet!

The Bible saved Charles' life, and it can save yours, too—for eternity. It is the only book with God's words of life. In John 6:63 Jesus says, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they

are life.” Every time God's Word tells us to do something or promises something, His power is there to help us do it.

Jesus used the Scriptures to overcome the power of Satan. When Satan tempted Him three times, He answered, “It is written . . .,” and Satan was defeated. Just as Jesus used Scripture, you can too! That's why the Bible is the most feared book by Satan and his angels: because, through it, so many people have been set free from their control. There is no other book with such power! Throughout history millions have found God's words to be faithful and true. Those struggling with addiction, anger, and more have found the strength to stop. Through God's Word they can live free.

There are many books with interesting stories, but the Bible tells the true story of how our world began and how it will end. How do we know the Bible can predict the future? Because it has correctly done so in the past. Did you know there are more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus' first coming? These prophecies were written by many different people hundreds of years before

Jesus' birth, yet they all came true exactly as predicted.

The Bible is the most precious book because it shows us how much God loves us by giving us Jesus, His Son, to die for our sins so that we can live forever with Him. Many religious books claim that the only way people can have eternal life is through doing lots of good works, but the Bible tells us that we can be saved only through the mercy of Jesus.

The Bible, God's Word, offers us, through Jesus Christ, a pathway to eternal life and freedom from sin. It is a book filled with promises of hope. Start with Jesus every day by exploring His Word.

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**Ruthie Reeves** is the executive director of Starting With Jesus, a ministry focused on helping children develop a daily relationship with Jesus.

## THINKING TOGETHER:

1. Ask an adult how the Bible has changed their lives.
2. Can you find, in the Bible, a prophecy that later came true?



# God's Word Is My Guide

## A BUILT-IN NAVIGATION SYSTEM

**Memory Verse: “Your word is like a lamp for my feet and a light for my way” (Psalm 119:105, ICB).**

When you think of a happy animal, what do you think of? Maybe a sea otter or a dog? Or maybe your very own pet, if you have one! I think of the bottlenose dolphin. I love to watch dolphins swim playfully together. They look like they're always smiling! Did you know that dolphins can swim more than 18 miles (about 29 kilometers) per hour? And they can jump up to 20 feet (six meters) into the air! Dolphins are social animals. You will almost always find them with their friends and family rather than all by themselves. Do you know what a group of dolphins is called? A pod!

Dolphins have a unique way of talking to each other. They make a whistling sound that is carried through the water to the other dolphins in their pod. Each dolphin has their own unique whistle that all the other dolphins can recognize. They have been shown to have very long memories by being able to recognize the whistle of a dolphin that they haven't heard in up to 20 years!

Dolphins have an amazing system for finding food. It's called echolocation. The dolphin makes a clicking sound, then listens for the echo of their clicks to



bounce off nearby fish that they can eat. This system helps them know which direction to swim for their food and how close it is to them. So even when they can't see what they need, they trust the echoes that they hear to help them find their way.

Even though your eyes may work perfectly and you can see everything around you, it may be hard to know what you should do next or how you should feel. Sometimes we know that we need Jesus, but on our own we aren't sure how to find Him. Whether you are happy or sad, confident or confused, God's Word, the Bible, is always there to lead you in your next steps! That's why King David described God's Word as a light when he said, "Your word is like a lamp for my feet and a light for my way" (Ps. 119:105, ICB).

Just as God created the

dolphins with special ways to find what they need, God has given you His Word to help you find Him! You are a priceless treasure to Him! That's why He was willing to give His Son in your place so that you could be in heaven with Him. So open your Bible and let the light of God's Word direct your path as you walk with Him!

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**Stephanie McNeilus** is a wife and mother of three children in southern Minnesota, United States.

### THINKING TOGETHER:

1. How is echolocation similar to spending time with Jesus in His Word every day?
2. Is it OK for us to skip our daily time with God? Why not?

# God's Word Helps Me Grow

IT PLANTS SEEDS OF TRUTH

**Memory Verse: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11, NIV).**

Have you ever wondered how you can grow closer to God? Well, let me tell you a little secret—it's all about His Word! God's Word is like a special seed that, when planted in our hearts, helps us grow in our relationship with Him.

Psalm 119:11 says, “I have hidden your word in my heart

that I might not sin against you” (ICB). Imagine having a treasure chest in your heart (which is really your mind), where you store God's Word. When you hide His Word in your heart, it's like planting seeds of goodness that help you do what is right. We can then live in a way that pleases God.

So how can we hide God's Word in our hearts? Well, it's not like hiding a toy under your bed! Instead it means memorizing verses from the Bible, understanding what they mean, and letting them guide your thoughts and actions.

For example, maybe you're feeling really angry with your brother or sister for breaking something that was special to you. Instead of yelling at them or breaking something of theirs, you remember what King David wrote in Psalm 133:1: “It is good and pleasant when God's people live together in peace!”

(ICB). This verse reminds you to show kindness and pray for your sibling, even when you're upset. You're able to react differently this time! That's hiding God's Word in your heart!

As you grow older, you'll face different challenges, such as making friends, dealing with difficult situations, or choosing what's right rather than what's easy. God's Word has guidance for every situation! The more you read and learn from it, the more you'll understand God's love and His plan for you.

Think of your relationship with God the way you'd think of a beautiful garden. Just as plants need water, sunlight, and good soil to grow, you need God's Word to grow spiritually. The more you water your heart with His Word, the more you'll bloom into the amazing person God created you to be!

So, my dear friends, let's make a promise together today—to hide God's Word in our hearts, to let it shape our lives, and to grow closer to Him every day. With God's Word as our guide, there's no limit to how much we can grow in His love and grace!

**Beth Thomas** is an assistant editor for *Adventist World*.



## THINKING TOGETHER:

1. Do you have a special verse you've memorized?
2. It's funny to think of God's Word as a seed that grows. Maybe next time you're near a garden or see a packet of seeds, it will remind you of the Bible!

# God's Word Gives Me a Picture of Jesus

IT SHOWS ME HOW TO LIVE LIKE HIM

**Memory Verse: “You carefully study the Scriptures because you think that they give you eternal life. Those are the same Scriptures that tell about me!” (John 5:39, ICB).**

When Jesus lived here on earth, not everybody liked Him, including many of the religious leaders. God's people, the Jews, were privileged to have the Scriptures. They studied it because they looked forward to the special promise of a Savior—someone they thought would save them from the cruel Romans who ruled their land.

Unfortunately, many studied the Scriptures without allowing God to help them understand what they were reading. Many read the Scriptures because they felt they had to, without knowing that it had living power. This blinded them to the truth of how the Savior would come. They missed out on what the prophet Isaiah had written in Isaiah 53 that the Savior would come as a humble person. Many missed out on making Jesus their friend, yet He lived with



them every day. They missed out on seeing God's love and character shown through Jesus' life. Jesus came to show us how to obey God and how to love each other no matter how difficult life is.

Just as many in Jesus' time did, it's easy for us to fall into the trap of reading the Bible every day and missing out on making Jesus our friend. The Bible has the power to bring healing to our broken hearts and set us free from our sinful habits. But we can experience this power only when we choose to interact with the Bible for what it truly is, God's living Word.

Growing up, I used to go to church, but never thought that God loved me, because I had gone through some difficult stuff. I thought that God was punishing me. I tried to become a good person by going to church and doing nice things for others, but my heart did not connect with God or other people around me. One day I read John 3:17, which says, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him

might be saved.” This scripture took away the pressure I had put on myself to be a good person. I learned that making Jesus my friend is the only path to peace and living a victorious life.

Jesus wants to be special friends with you so that He can show you the secrets He has for you in His Word and the special work He has for you in this world. Will you invite His Holy Spirit to guide you every time you read the Bible? Will you take time to pause and listen to His voice as He speaks to you? I pray that you'll experience God's inexpressible love and presence as you connect with Jesus through the Bible.

---

**Faith Gor** is a children's speaker based in **Nairobi, Kenya**. Her YouTube channel “Teacher Faith” produces children's content promoting Christian values.

## THINKING TOGETHER:

1. What did God's Word do for Teacher Faith?
2. What have you learned about Jesus by reading His Word?



## God's Word Gives Me Peace

### DISCOVERING HAPPINESS AND COMFORT IN THE BIBLE

**Memory Verse: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV).**

What does “peace” mean? Peace comes when everything feels calm, quiet, and happy. It’s snuggling up in your favorite blanket, feeling warm and cozy. Peace is not being scared or worried about anything.

Did you know that there’s a special place where you can always find peace? It’s in God’s Word! In John 16:33 it says, “I

have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (NIV). This verse is a special message from God, reminding us that even when things get tough, we can find peace in Him.

When I was young, I used to be scared of the dark. I remember being so afraid that I wouldn’t even turn my back away from the wall in bed, just in case something spooky happened behind me. The only way I could sleep was with my back against the wall. But even then it would take me a long time to fall asleep. In the morning I’d wake up feeling tired because I hadn’t slept well.

My mom noticed I was always tired and asked me why. I told her about my fear of the dark and how I could sleep only with my back against the wall. She gave me a great idea to help me feel better. She said, “Tonight when you go to bed, open your Bible to Psalm 91 and read it out loud. Then leave the Bible open next to your pillow all night.” At first I didn’t see how that would

help me fall asleep. But you know what? The first night was OK. By the second and third nights, I started feeling calmer and more relaxed every time I read Psalm 91 before turning off the lights. It really worked! It gave me peace. And you know what else? I even learned the whole psalm by heart! Now whenever I feel stressed or worried, I recite Psalm 91, and it helps me feel peaceful again.

How does the Word of God give us peace? It helps us feel better inside, giving us peace in our hearts. It reminds us that we don’t need to worry, and encourages us to think positive, happy thoughts. It reminds us that we’re never alone. When we follow God’s Word and live according to His teachings, we experience a sense of peace in our hearts.

Remember, God’s Word is like a precious gift we can turn to whenever we need peace and comfort. The next time you feel worried or troubled, open your Bible, read a verse, and let God’s peace fill your heart.

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**Jasmin Stankovic** is a licensed counselor and psychotherapist. She is also a mother and pastor’s wife in **Western Australia**.

### THINKING TOGETHER:

1. How do you think remembering Jesus’ promise of peace can help you feel better during tough or scary times?

2. Can you think of a time reading a Bible story or hearing a Bible verse helped you feel peaceful or brave?

# God's Word Gives Me Something to Share With Others

## SOMETHING INCREDIBLE IN ISLE ROYALE

**Memory Verse: "You will be his witness to all people. You will tell them about the things you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15, ICB).**

It had been a full day of hiking and lugging our backpacks across Isle Royale, an island national park on Lake Superior in the United States. It is the kind of place that is worth the long and difficult trip to get there. We had driven more than eight hours and camped overnight to be ready to take the six-hour boat ride in the morning to get to the island. By the time we finally arrived at the park, we were already exhausted.

We strapped on our heavy backpacks and headed off. We had miles to hike before we could go to sleep. We hiked all the next day, too. We did this day after day until our trip was just about over. We had seen geese and moose, a swan, a fox, snakes, and all kinds of trees and flowers. We were having the time of our lives in God's creation.

It was our second-to-last night on the island, and we were resting our tired feet and sore shoulders. We sat on a dock watching Lake Superior glisten in the afternoon sun. As I looked out

over the water, I had to blink to make sure what I was seeing was real! I told my wife to look quickly, and she saw it too—right in front of us. We waved to the other campers nearby so that they could see it too. It was a whole family of river otters! They swam right up to where we were sitting and raced around, swimming this way and that. They chased each other, doing twists and loops as they flew through the water, up onto the rocks by the shore, and back into the lake.

We will never forget the joy of seeing those otters playing in the water. It was pretty much the only thing that any of the campers could talk about that evening as we had our supper and visited. I can only imagine that if God's creation can bring us this much joy, how much more excited would we be if we saw the Creator? Now, THAT would be something to talk about.

When we dig into God's Word and explore the treasures that are hidden there, we actually CAN see Jesus each and every day. Open up your Bible and spend time looking for Him. When you find Him, I'm sure you'll want to tell others all about it!

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**Ben Martin** is the children and family discipleship pastor at Pioneer Memorial Church in **Berrien Springs, Michigan**.

### THINKING TOGETHER:

1. Name one person you would like to share God's Word with.
2. This week maybe you can draw a picture of or make a card with your favorite Bible verse and give it to someone special.

### Publisher

The *Adventist World*, an international periodical of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The General Conference, Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, is the publisher.

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Justin Kim

### International Publishing Manager

Hong, Myung Kwan

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*Adventist World* is published monthly and printed simultaneously in Korea, Brazil, Indonesia, Australia, Germany, Austria, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States.

Vol. 20, No. 9



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