Title: Growing in Christ

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TEACHERS EDITION

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Growing in Christ

by: Kwabena Donkor

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Bible Versions Table

Scripture references other than from the King James Version quoted by permission in this Bible study guide, for Teachers Edition Fourth Quarter 2012, are as follows:

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Everyone believes in something. Even those who claim to believe in nothing, or in nothing absolute, still believe in something (in this case, their relativism). Beliefs are important because they greatly impact the way in which we live. For some Christians, belonging or a sense of community is more important than belief or behavior. Yet community must be based on shared beliefs, shared goals, and common concerns.

For Seventh-day Adventists—people from almost every conceivable manifestation of humanity—what holds us together as a community are our “fundamental beliefs,” all 28, which are foundational for growing in Christ and living as a community of faith in the light of eternity.

Some argue that what matters is our love of Christ, not doctrine. This sounds nice, but the Bible never separates a love for Christ from a love for the truth. We are told that by “speaking the truth in love,” we may grow into Christ (Eph. 4:15, 16). Knowing doctrine is not mere accumulation of correct data; rather, knowing doctrine
results in love for God (2 John 6-10). Furthermore, the
Bible is concerned about “sound doctrine” because, among
other things, it affects the ethical life (1 Tim. 1:9, 10;
Titus 2:1-5).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a statement of 28
fundamental beliefs. These are not a creed in the sense
that one could not expect any further development of the
truths expressed in them (or that even more teachings could
be added). And though we must always be open to more light,
a firm consensus on these beliefs is crucial to the unity
and mission of the church. What else has brought together
millions of people from all over the world into a unified
movement other than our shared doctrines?

This quarter, then, we are going to focus on some of
those teachings. Though we believe that all 28 are
foundational and fundamental to our identity as Seventh-day
Adventists, we cannot study them all in one quarter. But we
do hope to present a systematic and coherent guide to some
of these beliefs. Special attention will be given to belief
number 11, “Growing in Christ,” accepted by the General
Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2005 (see
lessons 5-7). This belief, in and of itself, didn’t add new
Introduction: Fundamental Beliefs

1 or previously unknown teaching; rather, in response to
2 needs in certain parts of the world, it helps to clarify
3 the church’s understanding of the power that God has to
4 give believers in Christ victory over the forces of evil.
5 In fact, all the lessons this quarter will be framed within
6 the context of the struggle between Christ and those forces
7 of evil—what we call “the great controversy.”
8 Within the great controversy motif, and directly
9 related to it, salvation in Christ is the thread that runs
10 through all our doctrines. The great controversy, and the
11 issues it has generated, sets the stage for the plan of
12 redemption, which is what underlies and permeates all 28 of
13 our fundamental beliefs.
14 Doctrines, then, are not an end in and of themselves.
15 They are a means to an end, and that end is Jesus and the
16 knowing of Jesus for ourselves and growth in Him. Or, more
17 subjectively, all 28 of our doctrines should lead us to a
18 deeper understanding of what Jesus has done for us through
19 the plan of salvation; this, in turn, should lead us to a
20 deeper love of God and to a life more committed to the
21 revealing of that love to the world and to “principalities
22 and powers in heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10).
Yes, everyone believes in something. The goal of this quarter is to help us to not just believe in Truth, but to love Him even more (John 14:6) and to grow in His grace.

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TE-4Q-2012-The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Genesis 3:15

The Student Will:

Know: Outline the events of the great controversy between God and Satan and the ways in which it affects every aspect of the Christian’s life and belief system.

Feel: Sense the eternal significance of individual choice in this great conflict.

Do: Accept Christ’s sacrifice on his or her behalf and cooperate in the sharing of this gospel as an essential part of the great controversy.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: The Big Picture

A. What critical events have happened up to the present date, and what events will take place in the future that will eradicate evil from the cosmos?
B. In what ways does the conflict between good and evil affect everything that both Christians and non-Christians do and think during their daily lives?

II. Feel: Choosing For Eternity

A. What part do daily decisions play in the shaping of eternal destinies?
B. Why is it so important to protect everyone’s opportunities to choose between God’s way and Satan’s way, as well as educate others regarding the eternal choices that God calls them to make?

III. Do: Cooperating With Divine Agencies

A. Why is it essential that we accept Christ’s sacrifice on a daily basis?
B. What opportunities are available every day to share the gospel?
C. What are the best ways in which to cooperate with heavenly agencies in the sharing of the gospel message during these last days?
Summary: The great conflict between good and evil has affected every life in the universe. The essential issue centers on each person’s choice between God and Satan.
Lesson 1

TE-4Q-2012—01-Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Life is a constant warfare between good and evil, between Christ and Satan. As we study this conflict and the ways in which it impacts our lives and destinies, the central question to contemplate should be: on whose side should we choose to be—Christ’s or Satan’s?

Just for Teachers: In an age that refuses to acknowledge the need for moral and spiritual allegiance to God, it is essential to recognize that we are engaged in a real spiritual war. Understanding this war is and how we shall gain victory is the central focus of our lesson this week.

Opening Activity: Gautama, heir to the throne of Kapilavastu in ancient Nepal, was the sole object of his father’s love and concern. The king shielded the prince from any knowledge or experience of pain, suffering, and death. But one day as a teenager, the
prince rode out of the palace and for the first time
saw the afflictions of old age, sickness, and death.
Much distressed, Gautama left the palace, and his
young wife and child and wandered through the forests,
enduring years of self-affliction, fasting, and
meditation—until one day he claimed to have found the
answer to the question of evil. Thus was born the
Buddha whose essential teaching was this: the answer
to the problem of suffering is to be found in the
renunciation of all desire and craving of sensuality.

That is one answer. Hinduism offers another:
death is nothing but a door to a new form of life in
the endless cycle of reincarnation. Some would deny
the reality of sin while others would see death as the
normal end of a biological process.

But what does the Bible say about the origins of,
and solution to, pain, suffering, and death? See Gen.
3:1–23, Rom. 5:12, 6:23, Isa. 14:12–15, Rev. 12:1–4,
20:7–15.

Discuss: From the above verses and other passages,
what are pain, suffering, and death a result of? Where
did sin originate, and how did it result in the
conflict known as the great controversy between God and Lucifer? When will the great controversy end, and what will be the final outcome?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: Lead the class in a brief review of the great controversy in regard to its nature, origin, contenders, and its final conclusion.

Bible Commentary

In Christian history, no other church has grasped, as the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grasped, the significance of the theme of the great controversy when understanding the problem of sin and its ultimate destruction. Ellen G. White’s five-volume series, “The Conflict of the Ages,” begins with the words “God is love” and ends with the words “God is love.” In between, the more than 3,000 page-page narrative traces the history of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, providing an expanded commentary on
the history of Redemption from the origin of sin to
the final restoration of righteousness, as portrayed
in the Bible. Today’s lesson reviews the origin,
nature, and conclusion of the great controversy.

I. The Great Controversy: Its Origin

“There was war in heaven” (Rev. 12:7). The very phrase
is a paradox and a mystery. How can there be war in
heaven—a place where God’s throne is (Isa. 66:1) and
where absolute holiness, righteousness, love, and
peace dwell? The word war indicates that there arose
in heaven someone contrary to God’s will. Revelation
12:7-9 identifies the rebel as the “dragon,” “the
great dragon,” “that serpent of old, called the Devil
and Satan” (NKJV). Further, the same passage says that
Satan and his angels fought with “Michael and his
angels” (vs. 7). Michael, a name used only in
apocalyptic passages (see Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude
9; Rev. 12:7) to represent Christ in direct conflict
with Satan, prevailed in the war. This led to the
expulsion of Satan and his hosts to the earth, where
the old serpent deceived Adam and Eve and plunged the
world into sin (Gen. 3:1-15). Thus began the great controversy, a cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan, between the forces of good and evil.

**Consider This:** To act contrary to God’s will, as Lucifer did, is an act of war against God’s throne. Why didn’t God simply exterminate sin and Satan at the first signs of the uprising before it turned into a full-scale war that ended in the expulsion of Satan and his rebel angels to earth? What does the answer reveal about God’s justice and mercy?

**II. The Great Controversy: Its Nature**

Various biblical passages, such as Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-17, Genesis 3:1-15, and Revelation 12:1-17, reveal some of the basic aspects of the great controversy.

First, the great controversy is a battle between creature and the Creator over God’s character of love and sovereignty. By its very essence, the Creator-creature relationship has a built-in boundary line. The Creator extends life, love, and fellowship to the
creature, and the creature is to respond with love, obedience, and praise. A crossing of this line is rebellion. That was one of Lucifer’s first sins, in addition to envy and unholy ambition. He boasted, “I’ll be like the Most High’” (Isa. 14:14, GW Translation). The boast led to arrogance, pride, and lawlessness, all of which culminated in a revolt against God’s authority.

Second, the great controversy is a battle for allegiance. Do we belong to God or Satan? “Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer’s endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 494.

Third, the great controversy is a universal battle that affects each individual until it ends with Satan’s destruction (Rev. 20:7–10). Ever since Satan introduced this cosmic conflict into the history of the human race, through the deception of Adam and Eve
(Gen. 3:1-15), the whole creation has become the battleground of Christ and Satan. No one can escape the battle, and all can avail of the victory available through Christ. The Christian “should understand the nature of the two principles [Christ and Satan] that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 190.

**Consider This:** A sobering thought: every act of life reveals whose side of the great controversy you are on—Christ’s or Satan’s. Try to truly grasp the full implication of this thought. Why is it a fatal deception to believe anything less than this reality? Why is there truly no neutral ground in this conflict, and what does that truth say about all—both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond—being involved?
III. The Great Controversy: Its Conclusion

The cosmic conflict has its origin in Satan’s accusation that God is arbitrary, His love is false, and His law cannot be kept. Although the conflict in heaven was resolved when Christ crushed its roots and Satan was cast out to earth, the arch-enemy of God continues the conflict on earth, where he hopes to deceive the entire human race and become the ruler of this world. He determined that if he could not own this earth by obtaining the power of creation, he would do so by deceiving the earth’s inhabitants and turning them against God. But God did not leave this earth unguarded and, indeed, had a plan to meet such a contingency of the evil one: “He [Christ] indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:20, 21, NKJV). Through His Cross and the Resurrection, Christ has won the final victory over sin and Satan. The conflict, however, awaits its
final consummation at the end of the millennium, when
sin and sinners will be no more and the devil himself
will be cast “into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:7-10).

Consider This: In section two, we read in Ezekiel
28:12-17 how Lucifer once walked back and forth amidst
the stones of fire in heaven. Whatever else these
stones may signify, one thing is clear. Lucifer walked
with impunity among them, unburnt and impervious to
the flame. He was “fireproof.” But at the final
consummation of the great controversy, Satan will be
flammable and will burn until he is nonexistent. The
contrast contains a spiritual lesson for us. Our God
is a consuming fire. We have one of two alternatives:
allow Him to refine us in the furnace of affliction
during this probationary period, purging the dross
from our characters until the pure gold of His image
shines through, or refuse to yield and endure the
refining process in the lake of fire. Both choices
burn up the sin in us. But one consumes the sin only
and results in eternal life; the other consumes us and
ends in eternal death. What protection does God give
to us now, as He gave to Daniel’s three friends, to
fireproof us in the furnace of affliction, even as the
fires purify and refine?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The Bible is a great lesson book on
the subject of the great controversy between Christ
and Satan. Through the failures and triumphs of many
of the biblical characters, through the ups and downs
in the history of Israel, through the prophetic
warnings and blessings, through the life, death, and
resurrection of Jesus, and through the final events of
earth’s history, we must believe that God is in
control of history and that He will bring those who
trust in Him to inevitable triumph.

Application Questions:

1. Why is the study of the great controversy important
   for Christian living?

   characters illustrate that human beings are very much
   involved in the great controversy?
STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: For every human being assaulted by the power of sin and Satan, the Cross is the assurance of triumph. Emphasize this lesson to the class as powerfully as you can.

Activity: Read the following quotation as a class. Discuss Satan's hope for victory and how this hope was dashed. Why does Satan keep persisting, even though he knows he must finally die?

“When Jesus was laid in the grave, Satan triumphed. He dared to hope that the Saviour would not take up His life again. He claimed the Lord’s body, and set his guard about the tomb, seeking to hold Christ a prisoner... When he saw Christ come forth in triumph, he knew that his kingdom would have an end, and that he must finally die.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 782.
TE-4Q-2012-The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Hebrews 1:1, 2

The Student Will:

Know: Discuss the critical role of the divinely inspired Scriptures as a means of getting to know and understand God.

Feel: Respond on a personal and intimate level to the drawing power of the Holy Spirit.

Do: Actively pursue the study of God’s revelation of Himself in Scripture and develop a personal relationship with Him.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: God-Breathed Words of Life

A. What role does the Holy Spirit take in inspiring human thoughts and words to illuminate God’s nature and purpose?

B. What role does Scripture have in helping followers of Christ develop faith and a personal relationship with Him?
II. Feel: Intimacy With the Unseen God of the Universe

A. How are Christ’s disciples drawn into an intimate knowledge of, and relationship with, the unseen God of the universe? 
B. How does God’s revelation of Himself through history and through the personal experiences of many biblical authors build faith and trust?

III. Do: In Pursuit of God

A. How has God actively pursued His children, as revealed through Scripture?
B. How, in return, do His children actively pursue a revelation of, and relationship with, Him? What does this pursuit look like on a day-to-day basis?

Summary: The Scriptures, as breathed by the Holy Spirit through the thoughts and words of Bible writers, reveal the nature of God and His dealings with men and women, and draw His children into relationship with Him.
Lesson 2

TE-4Q-2012-02-Learning Cycle

STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Accepting Scripture’s divine inspiration, we consequently strive to listen to our Creator God’s voice in its pages and live out our gratitude in response to the unfolding story of Redemption.

Just for Teachers: This week’s study explores the statements that what Scripture makes about its own inspiration and what it teaches about the God who inspired it. However, an intellectual belief that Scripture is inspired is not enough. The Word of God is also a Living Word to be personally experienced. Your goal in Step 1 is to encourage your class members to share their experience with God’s inspired Word in response to the following questions: (Please note: You will want to allot no more than 5–6 minutes to this activity in order to ensure that you have at least 15 minutes to devote to Step 2—Explore, with 30 minutes
for Step 3—Apply, ending with 5 minutes for Step 4—Create.

Opening Activity: Ask your class members the following questions:

“How old were you the first time you read the Bible, and what do you remember?”

“Describe a time when you discovered a new story, principle, or truth from your reading of the Bible that changed an attitude or behavior in your life.”

“In view of your sharing, what is your testimony about God’s inspired Word?”

Discuss: Invite your class members to share their favorite method of personal Bible study and the ways in which this particular manner of learning has influenced their spiritual growth.

STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary
Just for Teachers: In this section, we will explore the purpose and function of the inspired Word, as well as introduce a methodical approach to Bible study.

I. Why Study the Bible?

(Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 with your class members.)

Regardless of age, profession, or background, most of us have a deep yearning to learn how to study the Bible in a manner that will draw us nearer to God and also equip us to share its truths with others.

In the passage that we just read, Paul encourages Timothy to remain inspired by, motivated by, and confident in the trustworthiness of the “holy scriptures.” Why? Paul explains that Scripture is able to “instruct” you; that is, give the believer the ability to grasp God’s saving purpose for his or her life when Jesus Christ is accepted by faith as Savior and Lord.

The beginning words of verse 16 tell us that the nature of Scripture is that it is “inspired by God.” While Paul is referring to the Old Testament in this
verse (as the New Testament books had not yet formed part of what later would become the Holy Bible) today we accept the entire Old and New Testaments as inspired by God.

Understanding that “all Scripture is inspired by God” (NASB), one can then rely on its value and usefulness as a source for teaching and doctrine, as well as for the pointing out of error and as a way of setting one in the right direction. The phrase “for training in righteousness” (NASB) indicates Scripture’s profit and value in constructive education in how to live the Christian life.

Why study the Bible? Notice the ultimate function in the closing words of verse 17: “So that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (NASB). Paul indicates that with strong and solid scriptural training, the believer becomes skilled, able, and efficient to engage “in every good work;” that is, in all of the opportunities and responsibilities that may face the Christian believer in the process of participating in good works.
Therefore, the study of Scripture is able to accomplish an end product that is testimony to the power of divine inspiration that not only leads to salvation but also develops a solid foundation for living God’s Word.

**Consider This:** How does the Bible serve as our “teacher”? What does its status as an inspired document mean for all aspects of our Christian walk?

**II. How to Study the Bible**

*(Read Hebrews 11:6 with your class.)*

This week’s lesson also highlights the attributes and activities of the God who inspired Scripture. Reviewing our text in Hebrews tells us that in order to draw near to God we “must believe that he exists” *(NIV).* This verse also states that God “rewards those who earnestly seek him” *(NIV).* Thereby, faith and belief are also part of our quest for God.

Most of us engage in Bible study not only to learn biblical truths but also with the objective of drawing closer to the God of Scripture through
reading, reflecting, and meditating on His Word. While this purpose is of utmost importance, we must also place emphasis on the process of Bible study.

There are many statistics which indicate that a consistent daily reading of the Bible is at a very low percentage among church-attending members. While this may reflect the influence of a secular culture or the busyness of life, for many, however, the case is that they lack a method of study or the skills that allow for discovery of deeper insights into biblical truths in a fashion that is relevant and connects these truths to their everyday life.

How then might we study the Bible in a manner that will connect its study to our life experience? A starting point is to develop at a methodical approach to the study of the Bible, called inductive Bible study. The inductive Bible study method, by its nature, develops and builds skills. Learning how to use the tools of inductive Bible study (referred to as observation, interpretation, personalization, and application) is a process that allows the reader to slow down in the study of Scripture so as not to miss the deeper levels of meaning. It also facilitates
listening to God’s Word which, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, speaks into the soul and heart and allows the Word to transform our lives.

**Consider This:** Why is the belief in the existence of God a requisite to drawing near to Him? How do we “listen” to God’s Word, and how does transformation through a study of God’s Word take place in the life?

**STEP 3—Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** Read Mark 5, dividing its passages into sections to be read by several class members, and then work through the chapter, utilizing the questions as a way in which to exercise each inductive Bible study skill.

**Inductive Bible Study Skills**

1. Observation: This skill helps us to answer the question “What does it say?” We become alert to the details of the text, finding key words, contrasts, comparisons, repetitions, and also the use of
Let’s practice by answering the following questions in connection to Mark 5:

• What did the people in Decapolis of the Gerasenes know about “the demon man”?

• Now observe what Jesus wanted His “trophy of grace” to do in verses 18–20. Compare this with what the man wanted.

2. Interpretation: This tool answers the question, “What does it mean?” This step raises questions about the observations made of the text, “What does this word, phrase, or statement mean?” “Why has the author used this particular word or phrase?” “What does this illustration imply?” These are called questions for understanding. This step is possible only after thorough time has been spent in observation.

• Read verses 18–20 again. What are the implications between the comparison of what the man wanted and what Jesus wanted him to do?

• What would such implications mean to the characters involved in these verses?

3. Personalization: This tool assists in answering the question, “What does this passage, insight, et cetera.
mean for my life?” We look to identify with the characters, actions, or circumstances in the text.

• Review verses 21-25, while scanning to the end of the chapter. Identify with the father. What must this have been like for him?

• Observation: While urgently trying to get to the house, Jesus is interrupted by a sickly, nameless woman and takes vital time to hear her story.

• Question: As the father, what attitudes and feelings do you think you would have had?

• What would you have wanted to say?

• Identify with the woman and answer the same questions.

• Try to identify with the disciples.

• Questions for personalization: In relationship to Mark 5, which of these statements would Jesus say to you, and where do you need to go in order to find healing?

"'Go in peace, and be healed’’ (vs. 34, NKJV).

"'Don’t be afraid; just believe’’ (vs. 36, NIV).

"'I say to you, arise’’ (vs. 41, NKJV).
4. Application: This last step in the inductive Bible study method is the most important, asking, what is one thing I can do today or this week that will help me to begin living according to the biblical principle(s) that I have discovered? What will I specifically do, keep, or obey?

**STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** Share the following activity with your class. Begin by distributing 3 x 5 cards (or small pieces of paper) and writing utensils, if supplies are available. Alternately, this exercise can be conducted without the use of cards or writing utensils by substituting discussion in the place of the supplies.

**Activity:** Ask the class members to write down one thing for which they are grateful and a specific action they will carry out as a result of today’s Scripture study. Please be sure to emphasize that it must be specific. For example, this Thursday at 6:00
p.m. I will share dinner and one Bible highlight with my new neighbor.

In closing, encourage your class members to try the skills of inductive Bible study, and tell them to plan on sharing next week how God’s inspired Word is coming alive in their Bible study.
Key Text: Psalm 110:3

The Student Will:

Know: Compare and contrast biblical and evolutionary views of human origin, nature, and the purpose of existence.

Feel: Ponder the honor of being created in God’s likeness and the corresponding responsibilities that come with this origin.

Do: Accept the grace that Christ offers for a new life in Him and cooperate with Him in battling temptation.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Divinely Designed

A. What philosophies of human nature and purpose are associated with a belief in evolution?

B. What philosophies of human nature and purpose are associated with the belief in divine design and creation?
II. Feel: The Image of God

A. What emotions are evoked by the realization that humankind was made in the likeness of God?
B. Similarly, how must God feel upon seeing His image marred so severely as a result of sin?
C. What responsibilities for service and relationship accompany a proper sense of divine heritage?

III. Do: A New Creation

A. Though men and women can no more recreate themselves than they could have created themselves in the beginning, what part do they play in God’s plan of restoration?
B. How do Christians who are a “new creation” face temptation and evil hereditary tendencies?

Summary: A belief that humans were originally created in the image of God carries with it recognition of God-given responsibilities. While the Fall marred God’s image, He has purposed to restore His image
as His children accept Christ’s merits and cooperate with Him in resisting temptation.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: “In the beginning God created . . .” (Gen. 1:1). These words declare humankind’s origins. The first chapters of Genesis also reveal the entrance of sin into humanity’s history, as well as hope for restoration to all that was lost.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson highlights Creation, the entrance of sin into the human experience, and God’s plan of restoration. Your goal in Step 1 is to encourage the class members to reflect upon the significance of this knowledge within the scope of what it tells us about God and ourselves.

Opening Activity: Share and discuss the following information with your class. Today, we know that genetics influences not only our physical appearance but also our temperaments and many times our special talents, aptitudes, and even propensity toward certain
inherited disease factors, such as high cholesterol.

Therefore, being aware of our ancestral origins is cause for appreciation and, at times, cause for taking rigorous measures in order to avoid a negative, continued family propensity.

**Discuss:** What is one special feature that is predominant in your family of origin that you really appreciate? How important is it to know that all of the generations that have existed in the past and that are living in the present have one beginning and one Creator God? What does Genesis 1 tell us about this Creator God? What do we learn about ourselves in relationship to the first created beings?

**STEP 2—Explore**

**Bible Commentary**

**Just for Teachers:** Today, we have a great need to think deeply about God, to observe His work, and reflect upon the implications that this need has for
our daily relationship with Him and the way in which
we view ourselves as bearers of His image.

Reading the Creation story is only the beginning.

We must delve more thoroughly into the theological
themes of sin, judgment, and grace, as well. How do
all these matters come together with the promise of
restoration and the gospel story?

It is important that in the reading of the first
section of the Bible Commentary, “In the beginning
God,” that you read the text of Genesis 1:1–2:3 slowly
and invite your class members to read and listen to
the story as if for the first time. Instruct class
members to take notes of new insights they are
gathering about the Creator God in the story. Invite
them to identify with how He might have felt as He
experienced relationship with the first humans.

I. In the Beginning God

(Read Genesis 1:1–2:3 with your class members.)

There is nothing like starting at the beginning of
everything, and this is what the study of the book of
Genesis accomplishes. The first verse of the Bible,
with its opening words “In the beginning God . . . ,”
may be the most profound statement, bringing us face-to-face with the Creator God, who is also the God
through whom we have our breath and being and our salvation.

We learn that God stands at the beginning of, and behind, all things. Pastor and biblical scholar James Montgomery Boice comments, “Grammatically speaking, there is only one subject in all these verses: God himself. Everything else is object. Objects are acted upon. Light, air, water, dry land, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, fish, birds, land animals—all are objects in a creative process where God alone is subject. In these verses we are told that God ‘saw’ (vss. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25), ‘separated’ (vss. 4, 7), ‘called’ (vss. 5, 8, 10), ‘made’ (vss. 7, 16, 25), ‘set’ (vs. 17), ‘created’ (vss. 21, 27), and explained to the man and woman what he had done (vss. 28–30). Moreover, before that, God spoke (vss. 3, 6, 9, 14, 20), as a result of which everything else unfolded.”—Genesis, an Expositional Commentary, vol. 1, Genesis 1–11 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), pp. 81, 82.
It is in this beginning portrayal of God that we learn the value placed upon all Creation as we hear the Creator declare “and it was very good.”

Consider This: The opening chapters of Genesis, depicting the Creation week, paint a portrait of our Creator God. What does that portrait of God look like? What does that portrait tell us about who He is?

II. Created in God’s Image

(Read Genesis 1:22, 28; 2:3 with your class.)

The first chapters of Genesis so beautifully depict that in the beginning Creation was enveloped in divine blessing. Animal life, human beings, and the Sabbath were all specifically blessed by the Creator God. Genesis also gives us a glimpse of the experience of the first human beings, made in the image of God, enjoying sovereignty over the creatures of the earth; and can you imagine what Sabbath “observance” might have been like before sin entered into history? What a blessed beginning.
The book of Genesis also vividly describes the experience of the seductive temptation, the entrance of sin, and the ruin of the human race. It is here that we find the unvarnished record of the loss of the image of God in humanity as Adam and Eve fell away from what the Creator God had originally intended for them to be.

**Consider This:** At this juncture, we need to pause and reflect upon the actions of Adam and Eve that led to sin. What were those actions? How does reflecting upon what led to their fall help us to be more aware of our own inclination to disobey our Creator God? What might this reveal about our relationship with our God and how we might be reflecting God’s image? What do the curses pronounced by God against sin tell us about how offensive sin is to God? What do they reveal to us about the nature of sin itself?

**III. Sin**

*(Read Genesis 3:1-15 with the class.)*
Today we have the advantage of being able to look back to the Creation story in regard to sin. We learn that in Adam and Eve’s experience, and in their encounter with evil and sin, there first existed a preliminary attitude that seems to indicate that they desired to know “good and evil” and not just the “good.” They experienced firsthand that knowing both evil and good marred the blessings intended in God’s Creation.

The first humans desired to be wise and ended up hiding in fear from their Creator. Today we know that theologically wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord and obedience to His Word.

Our first father and mother were carried away with the appearance of beauty and goodness of the forbidden fruit. Scripture teaches that we must be satisfied with what God provides and calls good.

**Consider This:** What is sin a result of, and what is it about sin that causes us to “hide” from God? What is the difference between the fear that comes from wanting to hide from God and the “fear of the Lord” that leads to wisdom? What is the only source of wisdom and true understanding? How does the Genesis
account of the Fall serve as a warning against the
spurious idea that a knowledge of evil or sin is
necessary in order to truly understand what is good?

IV. Judgment

(Read Genesis 3:14-19.)

The first chapters of Genesis tell us that sin’s curse
created a permanent enmity between the human race and
evil. This animosity became evident in the immediate
conditions that brought about pain in childbirth and
in the difficult daily toil involved in working the
land. With decay and death in view, the prospect of
life and the image of God in humanity were marred by
the perpetual consequences of sin.

However, along with judgment, hope was extended
with the promise that good would triumph over evil in
the end. Therefore, while the human race would
continue on, humans were now part of the great
controversy; yet, hope and divine promise were also
part of their human experience.
Consider This: What were the results of sin in regard to the earth and to humanity? What does it mean that the earth was cursed? What happened to the image of God in humanity at the Fall? What hope did God promise to the fallen race in order to rescue humans from ruin?

V. Grace

(Read Genesis 3:21.)

The Creator God’s love and care for humanity was evidenced in His clothing of them with animal skins after the Fall. How heartbreaking it must have been for Him to witness their departure from their garden home. What unfathomable love He expressed in the divine provision for the guilty.

Consider This: What provision did God make for the guilty race? What did this provision imply about what had been forfeited through sin? How did the animal skins foreshadow the divine promise of salvation? How did this symbol show God’s love to humanity?
STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Having reflected deeply in Step 2 on the reading of Genesis, your class members will now have some ideas, concepts, and insights with which to work. With that in mind, have them work through the following activity and questions, allowing enough time and expression of thought to discuss at a deeper level the theological themes of Genesis and the implications that these themes hold for their lives.

Activity: Have two or three members of your class paraphrase the Creation story in their own words. Follow this by having two or three other members paraphrase the story of the temptation, Fall, and promise of Genesis 3:15.

Thought Questions:

1. What marked contrasts or key words did you find in Genesis 1–3?

2. How is one remade in the image of God? What does it mean to reflect God’s image?
STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Reading about, thinking through, and contemplating who God is elicits gratitude and praise for our Creator. The Creation story speaks to the entrance of sin into the experience of humanity; yet, there is the great promise of hope that, through Jesus Christ, God’s image may be restored within us and our relationship may be renewed with the Creator God. This promise in and of itself is cause for praise and thanksgiving as the attention is directed to the God of grace and love, who is also our Creator God.

Please allow enough time in the following activity (about 15 minutes for creating and 10 minutes or more for expressing and sharing with the group members).

Activity: Divide your class members into groups of three and have each group write a psalm or poem that gives praise to the Creator God and also praises Him for His gift of grace and the hope of becoming recreated in and by Jesus Christ.
Regroup into your large group and have each small group share their psalm or poem with the other members of the class.
TE-4Q-2012-The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: John 3:16

The Student Will:

Know: Outline both the devastating results of sin and the solution that God has provided.

Feel: Sense the goodness and magnitude of Christ’s pardoning love and the forgiveness, justification, and restoration that He makes possible.

Do: Repent and experience the new life that comes with acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Large Problem, Large Fix

A. How has sin changed human nature and life in this world, as well as in the universe?

B. What was God’s solution to sin? When, in the course of eternal history, was this solution
provided, and what power does it have to fix the problem?

II. Feel: Overwhelming Goodness

A. Why is it important for each follower of Christ to consider on a daily basis his or her great need as a sinner?

B. Why is it also important to ponder on a daily basis what Christ has done on the sinner’s behalf by His death on the cross?

C. How does responding to God’s loving sacrifice and accepting the forgiveness, justification, and restoration that He makes possible, change the human heart?

III. Do: Repent and Believe

A. What does God ask the sinner to do in response to Christ’s sacrifice?

B. How can the sinner be assured of salvation?

Summary: Without a Savior, we would face eternal destruction because of sin. However, God has provided a perfect, all-encompassing solution through the sacrifice of Christ, which, if
accepted, provides forgiveness, justification, and restoration.
Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Through Christ’s death on the cross, God provided the ultimate and only solution to the problem of sin. Without God’s way, there is no way out of sin.

Just for Teachers: Of the many questions that confront human existence, one of the most perplexing is: “‘Who am I?’” (2 Sam. 7:18, NKJV). The world in all its confusions either tempts us to exalt ourselves or to plunge ourselves into depths of despair. What is the problem with either of the world’s responses, and what is the answer? Our lesson this week will focus on this issue.

Opening Activity: Who am I? Many answers are possible, but consider four. First, the philosopher says, “The unexamined life is not worth living. Knowledge is power, and it is power that makes or breaks me.” Second, the “primitive” person answers in terms of
tribal identification. "I find my security in my
group; no one else matters." The trouble with such
primitiveness is that it never gets beyond the cave of
self-interest. Third, consider the "mundane." In the
world of the mundane, my identity—be it in business,
politics or profession—is in myself. Power becomes my
focus. In the sentence of life, the subject is "I,"
the verb is "am," and the object is "me." I am me.
Nothing else matters.

None of these answers will suffice. Thus, we turn
to the Cross. There we see our status: a sinner sought
by God. At the cross, the sinner sees two persons: "
'the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me'"
" (Gal. 2:20, NIV). The Son and me. With that
perspective, I can affirm that I am not a cosmic
accident in this universe. I am not the climax of an
evolutionary process. I am not a cog in a giant
machine, moving in a meaningless cycle. I am a child
of God gone astray.

Discuss: Why is it that the most satisfactory answer
to the human predicament can be arrived at only when
it is studied in light of going astray from, and coming back to, the foot of the cross?

**STEP 2—Explore**

*Just for Teachers: The Bible describes the act of “going astray” as sin—leaving the will of God, rebelling against His law, rejecting His rightful claims, and asserting self. With heaven as the point of departure and with sin the downward plummet away from this ideal, this descent has a vertical dimension. “Going astray” also brings a horizontal relational break—across family and community, expressed in terms of pride, jealousy, unkindness, and other such acts. Lead the class in a general discussion about both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of sin.*

**Overview:** Approaches to dealing with sin are varied. Some would deny sin. Others would equate sin to a biological mishap, a sociological accident, or a psychological underdevelopment. Still others would argue for a moral deficiency or economic deprivation.
But what does the Bible say? This week’s lesson points to the nature of sin, to what God has done about it, and to what we need to do.

I. Sin: Its Nature and Essence

(Read Romans 7:23-25 with the class.)

Sin is an intrusion. The Bible begins with the portrait of sin as an intrusion into God’s perfect creation, brought about by the choice of our first parents to cast their lot on the side of Satan as opposed to the side of God (Genesis 3). The Bible ends with the judgment of God destroying sin and Satan and creating a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 20:11-15, 21:1-5). In between the opening and the closing, the Bible narrates sin’s history as it is played out in the lives of individuals and nations.

Sin is a rebellion against God. In heaven sin began with Lucifer’s rebellion against God (Isa. 14:12-15, John 8:44). On earth, it began with the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3, Rom. 5:12). “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV). Thus, sin
is not simply a wrongful act—as in driving through a red light—but an actual revolt against God (Ps. 51:4, Isa. 1:2). Moreover, it is both a refusal to be subject to Him (Rom. 8:7) and a choice to live in enmity with Him (Rom. 5:10, Col. 1:21).

**Sin is universal and leads to death.** “All have sinned,” and all are subject to death (Rom. 3:23, 6:23). Isaiah gives a grim prognosis of human depravity: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it” (Isa. 1:5–7, NKJV). The meaning is clear: the whole person—physical, mental, spiritual, emotional—is sin-polluted (Rom. 1:23–25; 7:23–25; 5:8, 12), and with us the entire creation groans under the weight of evil (Rom. 8:22). Thus, a depraved humanity, an estranged fellowship, and a groaning nature are witness to a universe in battle with the forces of sin.

**Consider This:** Sin is not simply a revolt; it is a refusal and a choice. What are we refusing when we
choose sin? To what extent has sin polluted the human race, and what is the only cure?

II. Sin: What Has God Done?

(Read John 3:16 with the class.)

In one mighty text, the Bible summarizes what God has done in order to deal with the problem of sin: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, NKJV). God’s giving of His Son to die on the cross was neither accidental nor an afterthought; it was conceived in His mind “even before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4-7).

God’s provision for the sin problem is both redemptive and surgical. It is redemptive in that God has provided for the redemption of humanity from sin through the Cross of Christ that reconciles God with the human (2 Cor. 5:19). It is surgical in that it looks forward to an end time when sin and its results will be completely wiped away from earth, giving way
for the creation of “new heavens and a new earth”
(Isa. 65:17).

Consider This: How does the Cross reveal to the universe both the true curse of sin and the true meaning of life?

III. Sin: What We Need to Do

(Read Ephesians 2:8 with the class.)

We can do nothing on our own to save ourselves. The doctrine that we can save ourselves by our good works or rituals is as old as sin itself. The Cross, not the fig leaf, is the solution to the problem. “The principle that man can save himself by his own works lay at the foundation of every heathen religion. . . . Satan had implanted this principle. Wherever it is held, men have no barrier against sin.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pp. 35, 36.

Christ alone is our Redeemer. To speak this truth is not a result of spiritual arrogance or doctrinal pride but is an acknowledgment of the uniqueness of what happened on the cross. God’s chosen way of
dealing with sin, through the manifestation of His
grace, cost the life of His Son. “Christ was treated
as we deserve, that we might be treated as He
deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He
had no share, that we might be justified by His
righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered
the death which was ours, that we might receive the
life which was His. ‘With his stripes we are
healed.’”—The Desire of Ages, p. 25.

Thus, it must be noted that God’s love and grace
have made possible our salvation through the Cross
is to believe and accept what God has done through
Christ. As sinners all we need to do is to come in
faith to the Cross. There we must see in Him our
Substitute. We must repent of our sins and acknowledge
that He died for us (Mark 1:15, Acts 3:19, 16:31, Rom.
5:8, 14:15). Through faith in Him, we have forgiveness
of sin and redemption (Eph. 1:7, 8), justification
(Gal. 2:16), and “righteousness and sanctification and
redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30, NKJV). Nothing essential to
a new life is spared, and we become the children of
God (Rom. 8:14). We receive the gift of eternal life (Rom. 5:21, 6:23, 1 John 2:25).

Consider This: Why is the doctrine of salvation by works so dangerous? How does it seek to undermine the theology of the Cross—that we can be saved only through Christ?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Every religion requires its followers to do good either as a means to gain salvation or escape a cycle or two in the process of reincarnation. But in Christianity, salvation cannot be earned by works. Ellen G. White writes that the robe of righteousness, “woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising.”—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 311. In Christ, God accepts us as we are, forgives our sins, empowers us to do good, and adopts us as His children. We sing, therefore, “In the Cross of Christ I glory.”

Application Questions:
How can you make that Cross central to your life?

What is the responsibility of the children of God to His other children, both within and outside the saving fold?

**STEP 4—Create**

*Just for Teachers:* **Redemptive experience makes it possible for us to have a transformed mind that can look at life and its environment from a perspective of holistic conformity with God’s original plan.**

*Activity:* In view of such a redeemed experience, how will you relate to those around you—to your neighbor who has a different faith, to your co-worker who often seems disagreeable, and to those who differ from you in culture, politics, or race?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Colossians 2:15

The Student Will:

Know: Describe the completeness of the victory of Christ at the cross over not only sin but over every other power and tradition that holds humanity in bondage.

Feel: Take joy in the triumph of Christ over all the powers of evil in the world and in his or her personal life.

Do: Unite with Christ, put on His armor and, in partnership with Him, fight for the salvation of souls.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Complete Victory

A. What sophistries of Satan did Christ unmask at the cross?

B. What deceptive philosophies, traditions, and social and political powers are still enslaving
earth’s inhabitants, and how does Christ’s victory offer the power needed to overcome these forces?

II. Feel: Joy in Victory
A. What assurance is possible for the believer who trusts in Christ’s triumph at the cross?
B. Though there are still battles to be won over evil, on what grounds can we be joyfully confident and praise God for the outcome of this cosmic war?

III. Do: The Battles of the Lord
A. How do Christians unite with Christ in the final struggles with evil forces?
B. Why is it important for Christ to use His friends and disciples as personal ambassadors and soldiers in the conflict here on this earth?

Summary: At the cross, Christ proved victorious over evil and demonstrated that Satan’s challenges to God’s government were based on lies.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: In the great controversy between good and evil, the cross is a symbol of victory over sin. Though the battle wages on toward its ultimate climax, the believer experiences growth within the context of the conflict, claiming victory in Christ.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson expounds the different aspects of what Christ accomplished on the cross. While His victory was complete over sin, the Christian, through a daily struggle with sin in its many, all-encompassing effects, yet occupies the field of battle.

In this opening section it is important to begin to examine the dynamics of this battle and to look at how it is possible to have victory in living the Christian life despite the warfare involved with sin.
Opening Discussion: There are many different types of challenges and battles. Some are applicable only to the individual experience. Many view addictive habits in terms of fighting a battle, and they communicate this with the expression “fighting a battle,” for example, against smoking. Other battles undergo corporate effort, as in the reality of warfare in defense of country and home.

Whether a battle is of an individual or corporate nature, the common goal of both is to obtain victory and win the challenge over whatever might be considered the enemy.

Looking into the general dynamics of battle, we note that there are always two opposing forces that are striving for mastery in order to win “the prize.” Included also is a battle plan or strategy, as well as the participants involved in war with each other.

A significant part of in putting together a battle plan is taking inventory in order to assess what is needed in terms of tools to win the fight. These tools, along with a plan of execution, are crucial for victory.
While strategy, the right warfare equipment, and the desire for victory are important, there are also other significant components that cannot be ignored. Interviews of victorious veterans of war indicate that the roles of faith, endurance, and partnership with one another are essential to the success of winning the battle.

Scripture portrays the spiritual battle between God and evil as having begun in heaven between Lucifer and Michael. A few weeks ago, one of the lessons stated that the first created humans yielded to the power of evil, and sin entered this earth’s history. Even so, God’s Word also reveals that a plan of battle against sin went into effect.

Today, we live on the other side of the Cross and Christ’s victory over evil, sin, and death. It is at this point that we must consider the importance of spiritual tools in the battle for our salvation in this great controversy between good and evil. Victory is possible with the spiritual warfare equipment of faith, endurance, and partnership with Jesus Christ, the Victor.
Questions for Discussion:

1. What is one Bible verse in this week’s lesson that gives encouragement to the believer in relationship to the battle against evil?

2. What is the significance of Christ’s victory on the cross, and what implications does this have for our daily life?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: The historical context of the letter of Paul to the Romans reveals Paul’s pastoral heart and also his teaching skill when striving to address, teach, and instruct the new church converts in matters that had to do with how they spiritually understood what it meant to live a new life in Christ. This instruction is specifically the theme of Romans 6. For step 2, please read each section of this chapter, discussing the different illustrations that Paul uses when addressing how to grow and live the Christian life in view of Christ’s victory on the cross.
Bible Commentary

I. Baptism, Death, and Life

(Read Romans 6:1-11 with your class.)

Romans 6 begins with Paul’s strong reaction to the wrong idea that it seems some in the early Roman congregation had suggested. The inference was that if grace was extended all the more each time that one sinned, then one should sin in order to have this grace abounding more. Paul uses the demonstration of baptism to refute this wrong conclusion and also to illustrate what a new life in Christ should look like.

In the early church, baptism was evidence of a personal confession of faith and also of the leaving behind of the former life that had been lived without Christ.

Paul uses this spiritual experience in the life of the new convert as a means to discuss more deeply how to think through the before and after conversion lifestyle and what implications this reflection has for the new believer in Christ.
Paul explains that baptism is a burying of everything that had to do with a former life. The action of baptism joins a believer with Christ. Just as Christ was resurrected from the dead “to the glory of the Father,” so now in baptism a burial of the old has taken place, and there is, as in resurrection, a newness of life.

Verse 11 puts forward the new attitude and way in which one needs to think about a new lifestyle: “In the same way look upon yourselves as dead to the appeal and power of sin but alive to the call of God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Phillips).

Consider This: What is wrong with the skewed idea that we should sin more in order to receive more grace? What does it mean to be dead to sin and alive in Christ? How do we enact this truth through baptism?

II. Weapons, Tools, and Instruments

(Read Romans 6:12–14 with the class.)

Have different members of your class read Romans 6:12–14 from different Bible translations (if available).
Notice the different words that are used in verse 13 for “weapon of wickedness” and “weapon of righteousness.” The Living Bible translation presents a very good reading of this passage: “Do not let sin control your puny body any longer; do not give in to its sinful desires. Do not let any part of your bodies become tools of wickedness, to be used for sinning; but give yourselves completely to God—every part of you—for you are back from death and you want to be tools in the hands of God, to be used for his good purposes. Sin need never again be your master, for now you are no longer tied to the law where sin enslaves you, but you are free under God’s favor and mercy” (vss. 12-14).

Discussion Question: How does the difference in wording between instrument, tool, weapon, or member contribute a new insight into how much of our life we are to give to God and how it should be lived?

III. Slaves of God

(Read Romans 6:15-23 with the class.)
Paul uses a strong and graphic illustration in his teaching of what it means to live a new life in Christ. In his historical context, as in many parts of the world, to be a slave meant that one did not own any part of one’s life. All attention was directed to the master in terms of service and time. A slave did not have any rights; rather, he or she was viewed as a possession of service to the master.

Of interest in this text is verse 16, “You belong to the power which you choose to obey, whether you choose sin, whose reward is death, or God, obedience to whom means the reward of righteousness” (Phillips).

In other words, referring back to baptism, those who choose to follow Jesus do so freely, choosing a new Master and new relationship of slavery and service to the Master.

Notice the vast difference in pay scale between serving sin and becoming slaves of righteousness. The Living Bible version expresses well this consideration: “In those days when you were slaves of sin you didn’t bother much with goodness. And what was the result? Evidently not good, since you are ashamed now even to think about those things you used to do,
for all of them end in eternal doom. But now you are
free from the power of sin and are slaves of God, and
his benefits to you include holiness and everlasting
life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift
of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”
(vss. 21–23).

Discussion: Ask class members to define in their own
words the difference between the wages of service to
sin and the “free gift” from the Master.

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Divide your class members into
small groups (ideally of 3–5 participants each).

Activity: Have your small groups design for a target
group a battle plan for living a new vibrant and
growing life in Christ; for example, the target group
could be young adults, new church members, or
grandparents, et cetera.

Make sure that in light of this week’s lesson,
you consider the enemy also in terms of principalities
and powers, and highlight the means of obtaining
victory in Christ.

Regroup once this first part of the activity is
accomplished and then ask one member of each small
group to share their group’s battle plan with the
group at large.

**STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** Writing supplies needed: paper or
note cards and writing utensils. Is there a Sabbath
School member missing from your group? Have your class
members all write words of encouragement on a card or
paper and either give or mail their note to that
member immediately. (Alternately, to perform this
exercise without supplies, and in instances where it
is more preferable or convenient to do so, visit, e-
mail, or phone him or her.) Practice being an
“instrument” of righteousness today.
Key Text: Romans 8:37

The Student Will:

Know: Describe the basis on which the followers of Christ may experience victory over the evil one.

Feel: Acknowledge the power of Christ available to the weakest soul who, through repentance and faith, claims His protection and strength.

Do: Submit to God, draw near to Him, and stand in His strength, resisting Satan’s wiles.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Assurance of Victory

A. What biblical examples demonstrate how followers of Christ have been victorious over the devil?

B. How may Christians draw on the promises of God for power and victory in times of temptation?

II. Feel: Perfect Hope
A. How was Christ victorious over Satan? In like manner, how may Christ’s followers utilize the same means to attain victory?

B. How may the children of God be confident in Christ’s ability to offer every power they need to resist the evil one? What hope and joy does this assurance provide?

III. Do: Stand Like a Rock

A. What must Christians do in order to meet the devil’s attacks?

B. Who should be the main focus of attention when trouble surrounds the child of God?

C. What promises for power and victory may be claimed daily?

Summary: Through submission to God and faith in the Father, Christ gained victory over Satan. In the same way, as His followers seek God’s power to overcome temptation through submission to God’s will and faith in His Word, even the weakest soul will be victorious.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Christ’s death on the cross offers the hope of a life reconciled to God, while also extending victory to the believer over the forces of evil.

Just for Teachers: This week’s study reflected on the principalities and powers of evil in relationship to the promises and biblical examples of victory. The latter are testimony to the fact that, with the power of Jesus Christ, victory over the forces of evil is possible.

Your goal in Step 1 is to encourage class members to think more deeply about the spiritual victories that have already been won in their lives. This is a time to gather hope and encouragement in recalling God’s work and His fulfilled promises on their behalf.

You will need a chalkboard or writing board for this section that will be visible to all your class members. (Alternately, if a chalkboard is not
available, record the opening activity on a piece of paper or simply discuss it with the class.)

Opening Activity: Draw a line down the middle of your chalkboard or writing board. At the top of the left column write the words “Principalities and Powers” and on the right column write the word “Victories.”

Now have your class members think back to their pre-conversion or pre-baptism lives. What were they spiritually struggling against? Make a list of these under the column “Principalities and Powers.”

At this point, ask your class members to recall the power of God in their lives and the ways this power was evidenced in victory. Write their responses under the column “Victories.”

Thought Question:

How do my responses influence my hope for victory over evil forces today?

STEP 2—Explore
Bible Commentary

Just for Teachers: No one suffered more than Jesus.

Suffering, as part of living the Christian life, is best understood in the context of the lives of biblical characters, such as Christ and Paul, who suffered persecution, hardship, and adversity while living out their faith.

Scripture makes known from Genesis to Revelation the consequence of sin and the open attack upon God’s people by instruments of wickedness. Even so, many times we forget and question our difficult circumstances; therefore, we are in constant need of being reminded through the promises in Scripture that living victoriously amid suffering is possible in Christ.

The goal of this section is to reflect more deeply on the topics of suffering and hardship in the life of the believing follower of Christ, as well as to reflect on the hope and victory that are made possible through faith.

Please read through all of the Scripture passages and encourage your class members to read from
different versions of the Bible for added insight and
meaning into the text.

I. Living and Suffering for Christ

(Read 1 Peter 4:12-19, 5:6-11.)

In the first text, 1 Peter 4:12-19, the apostle Peter
remarks, in verses 12 and 13, “Dear friends, do not be
surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as
though something strange were happening to you. But
rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of
Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is
revealed” (NIV).

Writing in apostolic times, Peter the disciple
knew firsthand that to identify with Jesus would
naturally result in persecution and suffering. For
those brothers and sisters in Christ living currently
in geographic locations and conditions where very
little persecution and trial has been experienced as a
result of being a follower of Christ, it is a surprise
when unexpected adversity and hardship occurs in their
lives.
Notice carefully Peter’s clarification and commentary (1 Pet. 5:8-11) on the topic of suffering, as paraphrased in The Living Bible: “Be careful—watch out for attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls around like a hungry, roaring lion, looking for some victim to tear apart. Stand firm when he attacks. Trust the Lord; and remember that other Christians all around the world are going through these sufferings too” (vss. 8, 9).

Suffering, therefore, is to be an expected occurrence in the life of Christians, given their common enemy. However, equally important is the promise of victory that Peter shares with the followers of Christ in verses 10 and 11: “After you have suffered a little while, our God, who is full of kindness through Christ, will give you his eternal glory. He personally will come and pick you up, and set you firmly in place, and make you stronger than ever. To him be all power over all things, forever and ever. Amen” (TLB).

Please turn your attention now to 1 Peter 5:6, 7. Note Peter’s words that offer great comfort and guidance during times of trial and affliction: “Humble
yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that
he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety
on him because he cares for you” (NIV).

Consider This: Have your class members paraphrase 1
Peter 5:6, 7. What does this verse tell us about God?

II. Keeping Eternity in View

(Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–17 with your class members.)

The apostle Paul is an exceptional example of
suffering for Christ, and experiencing many forms of
hardship; as such he is an authoritative voice on the
subjects of suffering, faith, and victory in Christ.

Notice carefully the contrasts he draws forth in
verses 8 and 9. He speaks of being afflicted in every
way, but not crushed; intensely perplexed, however,
not driven to despair; persecuted but not feeling
forsaken by God; struck down, however, but not
destroyed.

Note the word always in verse 10. Reflecting on
this word gives evidence that Paul endured this kind
of suffering as a daily, usual experience in the
course of his life and ministry. Observe, in verses 10 and 11, how the apostle Paul keeps in view the life and death of Jesus in relationship to his own spiritual experience.

How is Paul able to endure and live through such intense, constant suffering? Read again verses 13 and 14. "But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—‘I believed, and so I spoke’—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence" (NRSV).

Paul had eyes of faith that viewed life from a broad eternal perspective and not from a short-term momentary outlook. This spiritual lens gave Paul an attitude of generosity, as expressed in verse 15, “Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God” (NRSV).

It is in verses 16-18 that Paul displays faith in abundant measure and places suffering in its rightful place. "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being
renewed day by day. For this slight momentary
affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of
glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what
can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can
be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is
eternal” (NRSV).

Therefore, Paul bears witness to the importance
of focusing our attention on eternal realities.
Consequently, he shows us how to place actual present
circumstances, suffering, and afflictions within their
proper context in view of “the eternal weight of glory
beyond all measure.”

Consider This: How did Paul keep from losing heart in
the face of his continuous daily struggles? How can
keeping in mind the life and death of Jesus help us to
endure affliction in our spiritual journey?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: This exercise will provide
opportunity to work with the themes of opposing power,
God’s power, suffering, and victory. Please allow
enough time to read through the Scripture narrative
and work through the responses.

You will need paper and writing utensils for each
class member. You will also need a chalkboard or
writing board that may be viewed by your class
members. Make four columns and write the following
headings in each column:

WHO (list the persons in the story)
WHAT they did
HOW they responded verbally
WHAT implications do you find for your life in
view of suffering and victory?

(Alternately, if you do not have the supplies
available, simply divide the class into groups and
discuss their responses to the questions listed
above.)

Activity: Divide your class members (ideally) into
groups of 3–5 persons. Have the small group members
take turns reading through Acts 5:12–42. They will
then write down their responses to the questions
listed on your writing board.
When your group members have finished working through this passage, have them come together again and share their responses.

**STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** It is important to review and evaluate what we have learned by creatively expressing the spiritual insights that have touched our hearts and lives. It is worthwhile to acknowledge how far-reaching the examples and words of the individuals portrayed in Scripture are—how they continue to inspire, encourage, and contribute to our spiritual growth and faith. This understanding is necessary in order to live a life of victory in Christ.

**Activity:** Team up your class members into pairs and have them create and write down (if supplies are available) an imaginary conversation with Peter and the apostles. Have them begin this conversation with the words: “Peter and apostles, today you have strengthened my faith by . . .”
1 TE-4Q-2012-The Lesson in Brief

2

3 Key Text: Ephesians 6:13

4

5 The Student Will:

6 Know: Describe how each piece of the armor that
7 God provides is essential for life as a soldier
8 in His army.
9
10 Feel: Sense the honor that the Lord confers on
11 His soldiers by choosing them to fight for His
12 cause.
13
14 Do: Put on the armor of God, relying wholly on
15 His protection and power through prayer.
16

17 Learning Outline:

18 I. Know: The Whole Armor
19 A. How are the girdle of faith, breastplate of
20 righteousness, footgear of the gospel, shield of
21 faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the
22 Spirit each critical pieces of the armor God
23 provides?
B. What kinds of attacks from dark forces are thwarted by each piece of armor?

II. Feel: Honored to Fight on God’s Side

A. How did Christ utilize the same armor that He provided to His “soldiers”?

B. Why is it an honor to participate with the Son of God Himself in the battle over evil?

III. Do: Suiting Up

A. Though the armor is God’s and provides His protection, what is the soldier’s duty in standing firm against the evil one?

B. What important part does prayer play in the suiting up and wearing of God’s armor? Why is the role of prayer so important?

Summary: Through His armor of truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and His Word, God provides protection and both offensive and defensive strategies in the battle against Satan. His soldiers are called to put on this armor and stand firm against Satan, relying through prayer on God’s strength.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The armor of God is something we put on when we first accept Christ. It is vital to protect ourselves by putting on the spiritual armor daily as part of a dynamic and ongoing relationship with Christ.

Just for Teachers: This lesson should be used to develop a full understanding of each part of the spiritual armor that Paul introduces in Ephesians. Once the class understands the different parts and functions of that armor, it is important to learn how to use it most effectively. Studying Jesus’ example can help us to learn this and can also prepare us to anticipate the types of attacks that Satan is likely to wage.

Opening Bible Reading—Putting on the Whole Armor of God: Ask your class to turn to Ephesians 6:11-18, the basis of this week’s lesson, which talks about the
armor of God. Invite a member to read the passage, keeping in mind that Paul wants to encourage the Ephesians to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. In verses 11-13, Paul transitions into the giving of practical advice on exactly how to do that. As a veteran of spiritual warfare, Paul’s counsel to his fellow soldiers was to put on the armor of God. Yet, this was not a new idea. Among the earlier epistles, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul refers to the breastplate of faith and love, and to the hope of salvation as a helmet. And in Romans 13:12, we read that the day is at hand for putting on the “armor of light” (NIV). However, Ephesians fully develops this concept.

It is helpful to remember that as he wrote this epistle, Paul was chained beside, or directly to, a Roman soldier. Day in and day out, he no doubt looked at his captor’s breastplate, helmet, leather shoes, shield, sword belt, and sword. It is easy to imagine that under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul’s mind compared what he saw his jailors wearing to what Christians needed to wear in order to successfully engage in warfare against the devil.
Discuss: Based on the passage above, why is it important to have our spiritual armor on all the time? Why is it vital to understand that “wearing the armor of God” is an active and dynamic state of living and being in Christ? In what way is putting on the armor a daily choice instead of a one-time thing?

STEP 2—Explore

Overview: Ephesians 6:12 speaks directly to the type of battle that we are facing. It says that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the worldly forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. We engage in a predominantly hidden spiritual battle facing a real, yet invisible, enemy.

Just for Teachers: The three primary goals for this section are to (a) understand and put on all the aspects of God’s armor, (b) identify how Satan specially targets the converted, and (c) develop
skills and habits that allow us to successfully fight against him.

First, encourage your class to explore the nature of the armor of God. As the Bible notes, we know that a spiritual battle cannot be fought in the flesh in order to gain the victory. We must use spiritual weapons. Reading further in Ephesians, we see what these weapons are:

A belt, which is the girdle of truth,
A breastplate, which is righteousness,
The helmet of salvation, a gift of God,
The gospel of peace, which are the shoes covering our feet,
The shield of faith, our key defense,
And the sword, which is the Word of God.

Bible Commentary

The Whole Armor of God

(Review Ephesians 6:11-18 with the class.)
Once we are clad in the armor of Christ, we must stand ready to do battle. But what can we expect in the war we will fight with the devil? There are two important sources we can look to in order to understand the conditions we should expect. The first source is the Bible, and the second is what we know about war from the human experience. Both sources provide information about the circumstances, facts, and conditions that we should not only expect but that we should prepare and be ready for when they occur.

Let us first explore what we can learn from human experience. Although we know that Satan will be the losing general in the struggle of good versus evil, we also know that he is cunning and smart and should never be underestimated. Similarly, we can see from looking at human examples that some of the best generals have been on the losing side of war. If you look up General Erwin Rommel, nicknamed the “Desert Fox,” you will read of a general who outsmarted a better-supplied, larger British army many times over in the North African campaign of World War II. Among some of his tactics he used was the positioning of a small number of tanks with propellers to swirl up dust
several miles on the horizon away from the British so that they were convinced the attack was coming from that direction. The British then positioned their anti-tank guns in such a way as to repel an advance from Rommel from that direction. Suddenly, however, the real tanks and army struck a blow from the rear, and the battle was over before it began. What this example reveals to us are the kinds of tactics that we should expect. Satan is a master of misdirection, stealth, and subterfuge. Any good general will try to outmaneuver and outsmart his opponent, and Satan is an expert at pointing people in the wrong direction.

The second, and most important, source to consult when seeking to understand the type of challenges we will face is the Bible. Here we see stories unfold that reveal to us what a spiritual battle is and what the devil’s tactics are. The adversary always wants to wage the battle in conditions that are optimal for his success and our failure. And there is one central strategy that Satan uses time and again that is always successful—he strives to divert our awareness away from his methods and to assign the blame for the evil that he causes to other people. In Genesis 3:1-5, we
see this begin in the Garden of Eden with the serpent. In tempting Eve to fall, Satan convinces her that God’s motives are those in question and suspect, not his, and that it is God who wishes to withhold divinity, knowledge, and immortality from Adam and Eve.

**Consider This:** How does Satan make use of diversion, misdirection, and stealth in his attacks against us? According to the Bible, what sources of protection does God give to us? List the different pieces of the spiritual armor of God and their functions. How does each one protect us from the arrows of fear, doubt, impurity, wrath, impatience, greed, et cetera?

**STEP 3–Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** Encourage your class to look in more detail at other scriptures in order to see the spiritual battle unfolding in the Bible. Look especially at the example of the life of Jesus, specifically, where the devil unleashes the full
potential of his attack. Most of these attacks came through people. The list is impressive and includes:

a. Jesus’ family—some of whom thought He was crazy (Mark 3:21); even His own brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:3–5).

b. The Jewish nation—“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (John 1:11, NIV).


Imagine the insidious nature of being doubted and undermined by those closest to you on a regular and consistent basis. By way of example, the lesson mentions the temptation of Christ, as recorded in Matthew 4:10. In all these examples, we observe how Jesus used the Word of God as a weapon against the tempter. What other examples show Jesus using various parts of the armor of Christ to protect Himself from Satan? For example, without the protection provided by the shield of faith, sustained by His constant
communion ("praying always"—Eph. 6:18) with His heavenly Father, we can surmise that Jesus would not have gained the victory.

We can be certain that Satan will use those same tactics against us that he used against Jesus; he will attack, oppose, ridicule, and cause us to be forsaken by those closest to us whenever we want to execute and do God’s will.

Inductive Questions:

Consider the tactic of temptation and false counsel. Have you ever received counsel that presented an easier way to do something? It sounded good and was the result of true human affection. Yet, it had only one flaw: it opposed God’s will. How do we defend against this type of attack? What roles do prayer and study play in this defense? How do those two things help to perfect our ability to wield the sword of truth?

STEP 4—Create
Just for Teachers: Individually and together, encourage your class members to search out truth from the Word of God. In this way, they can strengthen their faith and struggle not against one another but with one another against those forces identified in Ephesians 6:12. Our goal is to stand united in the truth that is revealed in the Bible, as well as stand within the community of believers among whom there is also strength in numbers. At the same time, we know that one of Satan’s key strategies is to turn us against one another.

Spiritual food for thought: Encourage the class to be introspective. Within each individual’s own family, group of friends, and church community, is there anyone against whom they harbor hard feelings? Do they harbor bad memories, hurts, and unresolved pain? Encourage the class to consider these examples silently or through sharing. Ask them what aspects of the Sword of Truth can help in their circumstances. Encourage your class to turn to the Bible to find out what counsel Jesus gives to the community of believers to avoid infighting and internal strife. For example:
• In John 13:34, 35, Jesus, as our General, commands us to “love one another.”

• We are also instructed in Luke 17:3, 4 to embody a spirit of forgiveness. The devil knows that if we do not forgive, we will not be forgiven.

• What are other examples?

  If Satan can cultivate a spirit of vengeance, the root of bitterness will spring up inside us. When that happens, it will destroy our faith and spirituality, stripping us of our armor of light.

**Activity:** Lastly, ask your class to turn to Luke 22:31–62 where we find Peter’s denial of Jesus. What can we learn from the example of Peter about losing focus and getting chinks in the armor that we wear? In this chapter we find Peter to be distracted by things of the world, issues of self-interest, and a desire for recognition and position.

**Note:** The example of Peter perhaps shows the greatest weapon in Satan’s arsenal of weapons. The person he uses to distract us from Jesus and to shed the protective armor of God is none other than self.
Ask the class, of all the battles that Satan has waged, which has been the hardest for you?

What can we learn from the lesson about how to let Jesus take and have full control as the key to securing a victory over Satan?

What battle tactics did our own Savior use in order to win the battle of the ages?
Lesson 8

TE-4Q-2012-The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: 1 Timothy 3:14, 15

The Student Will:

Know: Recognize the purpose and function for which the church was designed, understanding that Christ is its foundation and Head.

Feel: Cherish unity of mind and heart, as well as the diversity that brings strength to the church family.

Do: Practice servant leadership.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Called to Mission

A. Who is the head of the church? How does this make a difference when considering criticism of the church body and governance?

B. How has Christ modeled the mission and leadership style that He is calling the church to provide?
C. What functions is the church to perform, and how does church governance support these functions?

II. Feel: Called to Unity

A. Christ constantly stressed the unity between the Father and Himself. Why is unity with God and with one another so important for His church to promote and experience?

B. How do the many parts of the church support and strengthen one another?

III. Do: Called to Service

A. How should church members emulate Christ’s example of servant leadership?

B. What daily acts of servanthood may followers of Christ perform?

Summary: Christ is the Head of the church and serves as the best example of mission, unity, and service through His self-sacrificing life on this earth. His life was one of perfect unity with the Father, culminating in His atoning death on the cross. What He has done offers salvation to the lost and victorious living to His disciples.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Becoming a member of the church implies both individual and corporate belonging. Therefore, the mission of the church to seek the lost and make disciples remains and applies equally in commission to the individual member as it does to the worldwide church.

Just for Teachers: This week’s lesson examines the church from the aspects of its nature, mission, unity, and governance, thereby giving us a very good framework for disciple making.

In this first section we want to connect the overall concept of church to the actual church experience of the church member. First, we will review the unique status of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its challenges, then we will probe a little deeper into the actual dynamics of actively belonging.
Opening Discussion: The Seventh-day Adventist Church movement today is an exciting place to be. We are experiencing an influx of multiple new members in many countries. We are witnessing many last-day events taking place before our very eyes, giving us evidence that we are now coming close to the awaited time of Jesus’ second coming. The advent is upon us, and many of us are recalling scriptural prophecy, as well as the Spirit of Prophecy writings.

The global nature of the Seventh-day Adventist Church creates a beautiful mosaic of diversity, as well. While the denomination is well over a century old, its new members bring in fresh life and keep the sense of mission active.

Church membership is composed of individuals with free will who live out their spiritual choices and lives individually and corporately. Complicating this diversity, certain geographic locations and circumstances evince that perhaps the influence of current culture and the cares and busyness of life have resulted in lower-than-might-be-expected regular study of the Bible.
Another challenge for the church is that of membership retention, both in rapidly growing areas and with the youth and young adult members in the more established venues.

How then do we continue to grow spiritually from the standpoint of both the individual and the corporate church?

It is time to reflect more deeply on the relationships that we share with one another within the local church structure. These relationships are key to the role of the church and its mission.

Activity:

Questions:

1. Share in a sentence or two how you became a follower of Christ and a church member.

2. Who has played a key role in your continued active participation in church life? How have they influenced your spiritual growth and walk with Christ?

STEP 2—Explore
Lesson 8

Bible Commentary

I. Equipping the Church

(Read Ephesians 4:1-16 with your class.)

Historical context tells us that the book of Ephesians is what we call a “prison epistle”; it is thought to have been written by Paul while he was incarcerated. Ephesians portrays that Paul gave much serious thought to this new entity, the church, coming into being. We find that in this epistle he refers to the church as the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the bride of Christ. Our Scripture passage, in chapter 4, speaks to the unity and purpose of the church.

Notice the gifts given to the church as described in verse 11: “Some of us have been given special ability as apostles; to others he has given the gift of being able to preach well; some have special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust him as their Savior; still others have a gift for caring for God’s people as a shepherd does his (TLB).
It is very significant to consider why Jesus Christ gives these gifts to individual members who make up the church. Paul sets forth three reasons: first, (read vss. 12, 13), “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (NRSV).

Second, Paul addresses the very real process of spiritual growth. Note verses 14–16, “We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (NRSV).

Last, Paul places focus on how the church membership should function together. Observe verse 16, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (NRSV).

This passage sets forth Paul’s framework for both the individual member and the corporate church.
structure. It entails both the process of individual spiritual growth and corporate mission.

Let us review, then, the three purposes for the gifts that Jesus gives to the church. First, to equip is to prepare people for service. Second, to nurture spiritual growth and knowledge is to prevent against being spiritually misled. Finally, it is for the edification of the church.

These three purposes entail one threefold goal, found in verse 13: unity of faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity in Christ.

Paul’s concluding metaphor of the body so brilliantly encompasses his vision for the church: unity, maturity, and harmony. As the body is joined together with ligaments, it is well-built with each part working rightly, promoting growth nurtured by love.

Consider This: What metaphors does Paul use to describe the church? What spiritual qualities do those images suggest about the church and the intimate relationship that Christ wishes to have with us?
For what purpose are the spiritual gifts given to the church? What metaphor, or word picture, does Paul use to explain how the church should work together as a whole? How does this illustration encompass Paul’s vision for the church?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: This section is designed to connect the goals of the church framework as described in the previous section with practical application in the spiritual-life experience of the church member. As an overview to the following reflection on discipleship, read Matthew 28:19, 20 with the class.

Reflections on Biblical Discipleship. There is no doubt that many of us are asking, how do we relate with one another and with the overall church structure in order to have the individual and corporate-church experience that the apostle Paul defines and describes in Ephesians? This question is at the heart of discipleship and disciple making.
Turning to Matthew 28:19, we review the beginning words, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” (NIV). How are disciples made? The Gospels portray both the model and method of discipleship by showing how Jesus discipled the 12 men He had chosen to continue His ministry when He returned to the Father.

The discipleship model and method that Jesus utilized was not a curriculum or a program; rather, it was a life-to-life investment of time and relationship within a lived experience in the process of discipleship.

Experience was also key to how Jesus instructed His disciples and empowered them for future ministry. As He shared His everyday life of teaching, preaching, and healing, these settings became like a classroom session with His disciples. As Jesus shared relationship and ministry experience with His disciples, they were at once becoming like their Master while being confronted with the cost and commitment necessary to follow Jesus.

Discipleship at its core is fundamentally a relational process. Leroy Eims observes, “Disciples
cannot be mass produced. We cannot drop people into a ‘program’ and see disciples emerge at the end of the production line. It takes time to make disciples. It takes individual personal attention.”—The Lost Art of Disciple Making (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 45, 46.

Jesus’ method of discipleship reveals that it is a smaller group that provides the setting where there might be honest and open interchange. This context makes it possible to have individual response and observation that elicits correction, inspiration, and a desire to become like the Role Model.

It is by close proximity, life-to-life contact, that change begins to take place in the life experience and spiritual understanding of a disciple. This process of spiritual growth is called transformation.

Implications: In meeting the challenge of member retention, it is to be noted that new church members who are part of a discipleship relationship with at least two other members in the church are likely not to leave. Rather, they experience encouragement,
equipping, and are challenged to reproduce more
disciples.

It is time to bring discipleship into the
everyday life of both existing and new church members
in the form of shared intentional relationships that
invest time and experience in the life of another. It
is time to grow disciples together. It is time to
mature in Christ. It is time to become part of the
commission. It is time for the church to fulfill its
mission!

Inductive Questions:

1. Based on the passage from Matthew, how did Jesus
   encourage, equip, and challenge His disciples?

2. What can we take from His methods of discipleship in
   our own disciple-making endeavors?

STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Please provide paper and a writing
utensil, if supplies are available, to each student
for this exercise. Alternately, to do this activity
without supplies, have students select someone to pray
for and then break away in small prayer bands of two
or three to pray for this person and the individuals
chosen by the others in their prayer group.

Activity: Ask your class members to write down the
name of one individual in their local church for whom
they would like to pray and to follow this by
investing their time and life with them. They might
want to take this one step further by inviting this
person into a discipleship friendship.
Lesson 9

TE-4Q-2012-The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Acts 2:38

The Student Will:

Know: Describe the spiritual transformations and truths symbolized by baptism, footwashing, and the Lord’s Supper.

Feel: Sense the sacred nature of these Christ-ordained services through personal experience.

Do: Participate wholeheartedly in the communal expressions of faith provided for in the services of baptism, footwashing, and the Lord’s Supper.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Ordained by Christ

A. Why are the services of baptism, foot washing, and the Lord’s Supper defined as ordinances rather than sacraments?

B. Of what internal transformations do these ordinances serve as symbols?
C. What truths of Christ’s work in behalf of His people do these ordinances illustrate?

II. Feel: Sacred Experience

A. How does personally experiencing baptism, footwashing, and the Lord’s Supper differ from mentally accepting the doctrine regarding these services?
B. As we look forward to His second coming, what is the value of submitting to Christ’s request that these sacred rites be observed in remembrance of His sacrifice?

III. Do: Communal Expressions of Faith

A. How do these sacred communal rites build up church bonds and shared worship experiences? Why must we not neglect these opportunities to share in these expressions of faith?
B. What can Christ’s followers do in order to more fully experience the benefits of these ordinances?
Summary: Baptism, footwashing, and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances outlined by Christ as symbols of sharing in His suffering, accepting His death on our behalf, and sharing in a new life of service and commitment.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The ordinances of baptism, footwashing, and the Lord’s Supper are symbolic acts that commemorate important spiritual events central to the life of the believer.

Just for Teachers: Ask your class to comment on the role of rituals in their lives. At an individual level, family level, community and national level, what are the rituals that they engage in? What is the purpose of those rituals?

Opening Activity:

Whether or not we are conscious of it, we all have quotidian rituals that define our daily lives—waking up at a certain time every morning and taking the dog for a jog before heading off to work, reading the newspaper, et cetera. This week’s lesson deals with a different type of ritual—spiritual ones that are given to us in order to help us feel connected to God.
Consider with your class the way in which the ritual of footwashing is a theme that runs throughout the Bible. Explore some of the following examples with your class and ask them to draw upon Scripture for other examples:

- The first mention of footwashing in the Bible is one of hospitality in which Abraham says to traveling strangers, "'Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree'" (Gen. 18:4, NKJV).

- In the story of Lot, we also read of footwashing in which Lot offers travelers (angels) entering Sodom to "'turn in to your servant’s house, and spend the night, and wash your feet'" (Gen. 19:2, NKJV).

- Other examples follow in the story of Laban and Rebekah (Gen. 24:32), a Levite and his concubine (Judg. 19:21), Abigail and David (1 Sam. 25:41, 42), et cetera.

- God commanded the priests to wash their hands and feet with water prior to entering the Holy or Most Holy Place or before offering sacrifices on the altar (Exod. 40:30-32).
Discuss: What functions did the act of footwashing serve in the Old Testament examples? Encourage your class to reflect on this act as one of hospitality, welcome, cleanliness, and service, among other things. As a practice that extended back throughout the great stories of Scripture, of which the disciples were well aware, there was a deep cultural understanding and tradition of footwashing. How did Jesus’ act of washing His disciples’ feet both confirm and draw on those meanings and, at the same time, broaden them (for example, through enacting servant leadership)?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: Encourage your class to observe how the three spiritual ordinances studied this week—baptism, footwashing, and the observance of the Lord’s Supper—are interconnected rites, which, when practiced, reaffirm the core elements of living a sanctified life. Together, these three symbols constitute a virtuous cycle of salvation, acceptance of that salvation, receipt of forgiveness, and renewed acts of discipleship.
I. Baptism: The Entrance to Discipleship

(Read John 3:5 with the class.)

The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 deals with the indispensable need to receive the eschatological gift of the Spirit, or, as John says, to be born out of the Spirit. Concretely, this indwelling takes place through the ordinance of baptism. The recipient of the new birth needs to be born of “water and the Spirit” (3:5, NKJV). In Christ’s dialogue with Nicodemus, the question is answered of how a person receives a part or share in Christ’s inheritance. It is conditioned on “being born again” from “above” at baptism. Baptism is the next logical step of faith after accepting Christ, for “he who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16, NASB). Jesus points to baptism as the entrance to discipleship. This emphasis is in harmony with His command to baptize those who accept Him as Lord and
Savior (Matt. 28:16–20). Baptism teaches the necessity of repentance, forgiveness, and of making the important decision of accepting Jesus as the Redeemer-King.

In John, baptism is symbolic as an essential requirement in the cleansing from sin. In the water of baptism, the believer is cleansed from sin. By connecting the water and the Spirit, Jesus expresses two great principles experienced by the believer—water stands for the cleansing that wipes out the sins of the past, while the Spirit stands for the strengthening power of Christ that gives the believer victory.

Consider This: How is baptism a symbol of the soul cleansed from sin and in receipt of the Spirit of God?

II. Footwashing

(Read John 13:1–17 with the class.)

Footwashing is a means of reconciliation with God and humanity. It is a constant reminder that humankind is in great need of continued cleansing from post-
baptismal sins and stands in constant need of God’s 
love and grace, which issue forth in forgiveness,
justification, and sanctification. At the same time,
the ordinance of footwashing is a reminder to treat
our fellow believer in the way that Jesus treats us;
to forgive and be reconciled so that a community of
love, unity, and fellowship will be created and
maintained that reflects the love of God. Thus,
footwashing, correctly understood and practiced, will
be the means to accomplish, or at least greatly
contribute to bring about, that kind of community.

During the Last Supper (John 13:2-4), Jesus
waited, presumably, to give an opportunity for one of
the disciples to wash the feet of the group. When this
didn’t happen, Jesus rose and proceeded to engage in
an act of utter humility and love. In taking the role
of a slave, He foreshadowed the role that He would
play in His death on the cross and, in so doing,
enacted the entire plan of redemption. Also, by
washing His disciples’ feet, Jesus teaches an eternal
principle that His kingdom is based on self-
sacrificing love and service and that the way to glory
is the path of humility, service, and even death for
others and to self.

Consider This: Why is footwashing a constant reminder
that each disciple needs daily forgiveness and
purification? How does it also show that the soul
needs the regenerative power of the Spirit in order to
lead a sanctified life?

III. The Lord’s Supper

(Read John 6:53, 54 with the class.)

Observing the Lord’s Supper is central to our
understanding of the necessity of Christ’s sacrifice
for our salvation. John, in chapter 6:53, 54, notes
that Jesus said to His disciples, “‘Truly, truly, I
say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man
and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.
He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal
life, and I will raise him up on the last day’”
(NASB). In the ordinances of baptism, footwashing, and
communion, we see the complementary aspects of water
and blood—both of which are symbols of how we are
saved and cleansed from sin. Ellen G. White, in Early Writings, comments that the blood and water represent forgiveness and the gift of life.—Page 209.

Consider This: How is the observance of the Lord’s Supper a symbol of Christ’s ultimate act of sacrifice for our salvation?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Spend some time discussing with your class other ways that the Lord’s Supper is symbolic, not only of Jesus’ death and sacrifice on the cross but also of His ongoing attempts to feed and nourish us. Consider the following points and then answer the questions that follow:

1. Through the eating of a meal, we are “partaking” of food that becomes part of us. In the act of Communion, Jesus symbolically becomes part of us, and we become part of Jesus. As the Bible says, “‘Abide in Me and I in you’” (John 15:4, NKJV). Jesus is the heavenly Manna that we need to eat
spiritually and partake of by faith on a daily basis
so that we become one with Him.

2. Food and drink are necessary to sustain life, and,
as such, the bread and wine of the Last Supper (the
body and blood of Jesus) are necessary for our
spiritual life. Jesus is both the “bread of life”
and the “water of life.”

3. Eating provides enjoyment and pleasure. As the Bible
says, “Taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps.
34:8, NKJV).

4. Food provides us with the strength to carry out the
duties and responsibilities of our daily life.
Similarly, when we partake of Christ in the Lord’s
Supper, we are given spiritual strength and insight
to carry out our Christian privileges and duties.

Thoughts/Applications/Inductive Questions:

Reflect on the layered dimensions of the Lord’s
Supper. Why does God use a meal (the Last Supper) as
an ordinance? What is He trying to teach us?

STEP 4—Create
Just for Teachers: Now is a good opportunity to review what has been covered in this week’s lesson. Everyone should understand the meaning and important aspects of each of the ordinances.

However, as with so many other rituals that are oriented around hugely meaningful events and have deep significance, these three ordinances risk losing meaning when we take them for granted.

Brainstorm: How can churches and pastors and the larger community celebrate these events so that they don’t feel so rote and ritualistic? How can individuals prepare to engage in them so that their hearts and minds are open to experiencing these rites in the meaningful way in which God intended us to experience them?
Key Text: 1 John 2: 3, 4

The Student Will:

Know: Compare and contrast the roles of the law and the gospel in the great controversy.

Feel: Reverence the overwhelming gift of the life of the Creator on the sinner’s behalf in answer to the righteous claims of the law.

Do: Rest from labor on the Sabbath in recognition of the Creator’s work in both the making and the redeeming of humanity.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Law-Giver and Savior

A. What important role does the law play in salvation?

B. What does the gospel provide that the law cannot?

C. Why did it take the Creator to meet the requirements of a just and righteous law?
II. Feel: Gift of Life

A. How does it feel to realize the impossibility of meeting the requirements of a law that is as righteous as God Himself?

B. How does it feel to know that the requirement was met by the Creator Himself, as He laid down His life to take the death penalty that sinners deserve?

III. Do: Sabbath Rest

A. How does keeping the Sabbath honor Creation, Redemption, and the new earth?

B. How does the act of keeping the Sabbath (and other laws) honor the Law Maker?

Summary: The law teaches the need of a Savior, because it is impossible for us to meet the demands of the law’s exacting requirements for salvation.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Typically one does not relate the words law and obedience with love and belonging. However, the word heart brings them all together as the location where God and child meet in full expression of all these words.

Just for Teachers: In this section we want to introduce the concepts of law, obedience, and practical ideas about how the law relates to the personal life. We also want to make sure that we reflect on the God who gave the law.

Opening Discussion: This week’s lesson examines the topic “The Law and the Gospel,” setting forth not only the necessity of the entire moral law but also stressing its relationship to God’s grace, as extended through Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions:
How would you describe a law-abiding citizen?

Is there someone you know who reflects God’s law? If so, what characteristics does he or she display?

What does God’s law reveal about God?

STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary

Just for Teachers: The goal of this section is to delve more deeply into the concepts of law, love, and obedience.

I. Law, Heart, and Belonging

(Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.)

The prophet Jeremiah lived during a time of continual political and moral crisis in Judah. As God’s prophet, he presented messages to both Judah and Jerusalem, time and time again, of warning, judgment, and destruction.
A talented writer with a brilliant poetic gift, Jeremiah’s deep emotion and insights are communicated in a manner that express God’s heart of mercy, ever calling His people to turn away from idolatry and the outright forsaking of His law.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 is one of the most profound passages in Scripture, bringing together both the Old and New Testaments with the introduction of the words new covenant.

It is important to read Jeremiah’s words in order to experience their full impact: “The days are surely coming, say the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more” (NRSV).

Notice the deeply relational phrases in this passage; “I took them by the hand,” “I was their husband,” “I will write it on their heart,” and “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” All these phrases communicate both love in action and a law of love that expresses the belonging of all that we are to the God who gives all that He is to us.

Consider This: Notice also the intimacy of knowing and generosity of grace contained in the concluding words of this passage. Which words in particular describe the intimacy that God wishes to have with us? Which portray His generosity toward us? What do these words, when taken together, reveal about God’s character?

II. Obedience and Conquest

(Read 1 John 5:3-5.)

How do we actualize commandment keeping in our everyday lives? Notice what 1 John 5:3-5 states:
“For loving God means obeying his commands, and these commands of his are not burdensome. . . In fact, this faith of ours is the only way in which the world has been conquered. For who could ever be said to conquer the world . . . except the man who really believes that Jesus is God’s Son?” (Phillips).

Observe the connection between obedience, love, and belief. Jeremiah establishes the fact that love is at the center of the new covenant. In this passage, John is asserting that loving God is expressed by obeying His commands. Note his commentary on this process, “and these commands of his are not burdensome.” Why does John make this statement and how does he clarify this view?

Note the following reasons that he sets forth: because the child of God loves and obeys God, his or her faith and belief in Jesus Christ enables him or her to overcome the world. Therefore, the significant component of conquering faith is belief that Jesus is God’s only Son.

In this context that presupposes love for God the Father and love for God the Son, obedience to God’s commands is not burdensome or obligatory. Rather, the
child of God will live the reality of Jesus’ words, “‘For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light’” (Matt. 11:30, NRSV).

In summary, there is no doubt that what we believe about God influences and shapes our understanding of love. This understanding, in turn, impacts our response to God’s law.

Consider This: What is the relation between law and love in the writings of John? How does this compare with the teachings of Jeremiah, studied in the previous section?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for the Teacher: Storytelling is a powerful tool that allows for listeners to discover for themselves insights and implications. This process inherently contains the potential to allow information to travel from the head to the heart, influencing the actions. You may wish to make a copy of this paraphrased story and have different members in your class read it aloud to the group.

The great and mighty King Nebuchadnezzar builds and erects a towering gold statue, placing it on the plain of Dura. He invites all of the elite leaders and governors to the dedication ceremony.

At the sound of many instruments, all who are gathered for this great display are instructed to fall down and worship the image of gold. Those who do not will be thrown into a blazing furnace.

A group of young men named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow. They know that the king’s display is nothing more than an idol, and they also know that by bowing down and worshiping it they would be going against God’s command, in Exodus 20:4, 5, “‘You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them’" (NIV).

The king-pleasing astrologers cannot scurry to the king fast enough. They inform him of the violation of the king’s command, declaring, “‘Shadrach,
Meshach, and Abednego . . . pay no attention to you, O
king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the
image of gold you have set up’ ” (NIV).

Nebuchadnezzar’s anger blazes up like the heat of
his furnace. He summons the three young men before him
and asks why they refuse to comply with his commands
to worship the statue, adding ‘‘but if you do not
worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a
blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue
you from my hand?’ ” (NIV).

Standing before the king, they respond, ‘‘O
Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves
before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the
blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us
from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.
But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king,
that we will not serve your gods or worship the image
of gold you have set up’ ” (NIV).

How could one ever forget what happens next? The
king throws them into the fiery furnace; however,
their faithfulness is rewarded and God meets them
there.
Nebuchadnezzar is impressed, declaring, “‘Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God’” (vs. 28, NIV).

And then he promotes them!

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego actualize the truth of the words of Jeremiah, “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:33, NRSV).

Discussion Questions:

Ø Where do you find the concepts of law, obedience, and love connected in this story?

Ø What implications might this story hold for you in your spiritual journey?

STEP 4–Create
Just for Teachers: Please provide paper and writing utensils for this exercise, if possible. Alternately, discuss and share the traditions below.

Activity: This week’s lesson also highlighted Sabbath and the law. Write down three Sabbath traditions that you practice which result in the enjoyment of the keeping of the Sabbath law. Share these with your class members. In turn, ask them to add to the list by sharing the traditions of Sabbath keeping that have been meaningful in their own experience. How have these traditions expanded their understanding of their love for God and God’s love for them?
The Student Will:

Know: Outline the Christian’s responsibilities regarding time, talents, and other personal and material resources, and his or her responsibilities toward family and community.

Feel: Sense the generosity and benevolence that Christ’s example of self-sacrifice calls forth.

Do: Give to others as generously as God has gifted him or her.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Interested, Sympathetic, and Supportive

A. What riches has God given to Christians, and how are they owed back to Him?

B. What are the guiding principles of stewardship that guide the Christian’s responsibility regarding gifts of possessions and relationships?
II. Feel: Source of Every Good Thing

A. What examples has Christ provided of self-sacrificing generosity?

B. What response does Christ’s benevolence call from His followers, and how can these emotions and resulting actions guard against selfishness and covetousness?

III. Do: Giving

A. How do Christians give back to God, family, community, and the world at large in ways that complete the circle of benevolence?

B. How does the cultivation of the beauty and sanctity of marriage reflect a Christian’s relationship with God?

C. What are the civil responsibilities of Christians in their neighborhoods, nation, and in the global community?

Summary: God has given gifts to His children and has demonstrated in the life of Christ the unselfishness that characterizes His nature. His children are called to reflect His benevolence in
their use of His gifts of personal and material resources, family, and society.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Practical Christianity encompasses living and managing our everyday lives in a manner that reflects our love for God and those around us.

Just for Teachers: In this first section, our goal is to assist the class members to reflect on what encompasses practical Christian living.

Opening Discussion: What does the term practical Christianity convey to you? This week’s lesson highlights topics ranging from employer/employee relations, civic duties, Christian marriage, self-worth, tithing, and stewardship, and relates them to practical Christianity. Reflecting on the various topics taken together, the lesson poses the question, How do we practice our Christian and spiritual experience in our everyday life and dealings?
Discussion Question: How would you define a Christian lifestyle and what makes it Christian?

STEP 2—Explore

Bible Commentary

Just for Teachers: It is essential to delve more deeply into the relationship between God and our possessions and the implications that this relationship poses for our faith and giving within the context of our daily experience.

I. Don’t Forget!

(Read Deuteronomy 8:11–20 with your class members.)

Scholar J. A. Thompson states, “Deuteronomy is one of the greatest books of the Old Testament. Its influence on the domestic and personal religion of all ages has not been surpassed by any other book in the Bible. It is quoted over eighty times in the New Testament and thus it belongs to a small group of four Old Testament

In Deuteronomy, the speeches of Moses encompass the background history of Israel, followed by attention to the ceremonial law with matters of worship, clean and unclean foods, and tithes. Furthermore, civil ordinances, as well as various laws on marriage, parents, and disobedient children, are addressed.

It is also in Deuteronomy 8 that Moses reminds the children of Israel of God’s past mercies toward them. He tells them, “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, . . . a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees . . ., a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing. . . . You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you” (vss. 7-10, NRSV).

Note carefully the strong admonition that follows: “Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have
built fine houses and live in them, and when your
herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and
gold is multiplied, and all that you have is
multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the
LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of
Egypt, out of the house of slavery. . . . Do not say
to yourself, ‘My power and the might of my own hand
have gotten me this wealth.’ But remember the Lord
your God, for it is he who gives you power to get
wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he
swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today” (vss.
11-18, NRSV).

The value of these words is not only a reminder
to the children of Israel of their indebtedness to God
for everything, but the far-reaching import of the
words is significant to our historical time and life
experience, as well.

Jesus echoes Moses’ words about possessions. In
fact, He talked about wealth, money, and possessions
more than any other topic. He did so in connection to
everyday life, addressing the money spent in the
marketplace and by the family.
Why? It seems that Moses’ admonition had been forgotten. This same danger is posed when, today, in our forgetfulness of God as Provider, we instead attribute to money a godlike power that makes one think that he or she is in control and autonomous.

**Consider This:** Money exists in the realm of things that can be worshiped. But according to Moses, why did God give His people the power to acquire wealth? What is the connection between a failure to keep the commandments and a worship of money? How is obedience to the law a safeguard against the worship of mammon?

**II. Faith and Trust**

Today in many countries, cultural myths abound in regard to wealth and possessions. These myths communicate that things bring happiness and that having a little more money is the answer. However, biblical truth states that the goodness of life is not reflected in the abundance of one’s possessions and that the one who loves money will never have enough.
This truth takes us to the core of practical Christian living in regard to faith and trust. In what do people typically have faith when making decisions about how they will earn, give, and spend their money? The cultural response to this question is in their own ability, job, home, insurance, investments, pensions, children, education, and possessions.

In whom does the Bible say to place our trust? The reply is GOD.

Therefore, a Christian lifestyle will be one lived with values other than consumerism. It will be faith-based and also generous in giving.

Consider This: What are the biblical principles that should shape our attitudes and practices toward our use of money? What does the Bible say is the true source of happiness? Why can’t the source of true joy be found in material things?

III. Tithes and Offerings

Returning tithe and giving offerings is a powerful antidote to the danger of forgetting God and
succumbing to the pull of culture and its myths about possessions and money. In faithfully and regularly tithing, we are participating in the act of worship that positions God in His rightful place, which is first in our lives and in all of our everyday dealings.

_Faith and Finance: Financial Planning With a Faith Factor,_ a North American Division Stewardship Department resource, states, “As we tithe, we place God first. We acknowledge Him as the Owner of everything we have in our hands. We admit we are stewards-managers.”—Page 36.

This very useful resource also introduces “Simple Steps for Joyful Tithing.” They are as follows, in abbreviated and adapted form (pp. 36, 37):

**Step 1: Accept our relationship with God.**
First we must recognize that true worship can come only from a heart in tune with God. So, the first step is to accept our relationship with God.

**Step 2: Accept God as Creator.**
As Creator, He provides for all our needs. We acknowledge this truth in the act of worshiping Him by putting Him first in the returning of our tithe. By
Seeking His kingdom and His righteousness first, we make a choice to live a new life. In this way, tithing is a tool that helps us to change our priorities.

Step 3: Surrender our ownership and accept His. We worship God with our tithe to remind us that everything belongs to Him and that we need His help to manage the 100 percent for His honor and glory. In this way, we accept our responsibility to carefully oversee all the gifts that He has placed in our care.

Step 4: Recognize God’s care, guidance, and love. The tithe we return to God reminds us that He cares for us—that He is intimately involved in all the details of our lives, and, that before we tithe, He has already provided for all our daily needs.

Step 5: Accept that we are to be holy to God. Because He is Owner and we belong to Him, He makes us holy—and He wholly sets us apart for His special use. In tithing, we can recognize that we are completely His, and every part of our lives belongs to Him. Thus, our tithe becomes a confession that we, too, are “set apart” for God.

Step 6: Reconsecrate our lives to God.
When we accept tithe as holy, that it belongs to God, we recognize the blessing that is ours in handling that which is holy. To do this well, we must bring our tithe to Him in the context of our daily walk with God. Tithing then becomes an opportunity for complete reconsecration of our lives to God.

Consider This: How does tithing provide us with a tool to worship God? In what way does it help us to place Him first in our lives in every way? How is tithing a tangible recognition of our incredible relationship with Him?

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: Please divide your class members into small groups (of three to five each, if possible) and have them discuss the following questions. Then reassemble and invite them to share their answers.

Activity: As Creator of all things, God has never transferred the ownership of His creation to people. When we acknowledge this truth, then every spending
decision also becomes a spiritual decision. The pertinent question then becomes not “Lord, what do You want me to do with my money?” but rather, “Lord, what do you want me to do with Your money?”

How can we consistently remember and become aware of God’s ownership?

How can we move beyond intellectual recognition of God’s ownership and transfer this information to our hearts and everyday actions?

In addition to returning tithes and giving offerings, where else and what else, in terms of God’s gifts to me, might I be able to give?

**STEP 4—Create**

Just for Teachers: Provide paper or 3 x 5 cards and writing utensils, if supplies are available. Alternately, this exercise can be performed without the supplies by simply discussing the answer to the activity question. Divide your class into small groups
(of three to five each, if possible). Have the group members work together on this activity and when finished invite each small group to share with the class at large.

**Activity:** Within your small group, create and write out the epitaph of a faithful steward. How might it read?

**Concluding Thought:** Epitaphs are guilty of often praising too much or saying too little. Part of the problem with epitaphs is their brevity—they are short by necessity. After all, a headstone has limited real estate on which to inscribe much more than the name and birth and death dates of the deceased. The other problem is the tendency to sentimentalize the qualities of the dead—to gild the worst sinner with saintly qualities never legitimately possessed, perhaps, in an effort to erase painful memories or disappointments that he or she caused when alive.

Whatever the case, an epitaph doesn’t always provide the most accurate insight into the deceased’s character. In light of these thoughts, consider the
epitaph you have written. How can you endeavor to ensure that it is neither exaggeration nor understatement? Or, put another way, how can the principles that you’ve learned this week help this truth to be lived out in your life now—and not to be mere bloated inscription on granite when you are six feet under?
The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Acts 3:19-21

The Student Will:

Know: Describe the ongoing work of Christ that builds on the cross and culminates in the judgment and Second Coming.

Feel: Cultivate the alert watchfulness and faithfulness of those who expect to see their Master at any time.

Do: Follow Christ behind the veil of the sanctuary as He mediates on our behalf before the throne of mercy.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Christ in the Sanctuary
   A. How does Christ’s work as High Priest build on what He did at the cross for us? How does this work culminate in judgment and the Second Coming?
B. How have the earthly-sanctuary activities helped to explain current last-day events in the heavenly sanctuary?

II. Feel: The King Is Coming

A. What is the proper attitude that Christ’s followers should have regarding the signs of the last days?
B. What deceptions must be guarded against?

III. Do: Following the High Priest

A. What part do Christ’s followers play as their High Priest intercedes with the Father on their behalf?
B. After the cleansing of the heavenly temple, what comes next in the great controversy, and what are the followers of Christ to do?

Summary: After ransoming His beloved on the cross, Christ intercedes on their behalf as their heavenly High Priest. He cleanses the heavenly sanctuary and then returns to take His people to live with Him.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: The second coming of Christ is not a fairy tale but a reality. Without it, our faith in Christ is vain.

Just for Teachers: To motivate faith in the second coming of Christ and other related last-day events of redemptive history, have a senior class member read the following imagined narrative. Then discuss the implications of the story.

Story to Read: “As an early teen, I became a charter member of the church at Thessalonica. When Paul came to our town, the gospel message challenged every philosophical and belief system we had ever known. Plato was out, Jesus was in. Idols were gone, the God incarnate in Jesus became our Sovereign. We received the Word heartily (1 Thess. 1:6). Our faith was known everywhere (1 Thess. 1:8), even as we turned to serve
a living and true God and to wait for Jesus’ soon return to establish His kingdom (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

But as things turned out, everything was not rosy in our church. Satan was stirring up trouble. He caused some saints to doubt and question. One of the great truths that the apostle Paul brought us is that Jesus, who came and died for our sins, is in heaven and will soon return to take us home. We lived in that awesome hope. But Satan was busy, sowing seeds of doubt. Some elderly believers were beginning to die, and members began to ask: Is the second coming of Christ real? What will happen to those who are dying, one by one, without seeing the Son from heaven? Doubt attacked faith. We all were in a state of worry. Against such doubts and worry, Paul wrote us a beautiful epistle. In the climax of the epistle, he assured us: ‘For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air’ (1 Thess. 4:16-18). I live and am ready to die with that hope in my heart.’
Questions to Ask:

1 Have you ever doubted the Second Coming? If so, why?
   If not, why not?
2 It has been almost two thousand years since Paul wrote those words. On what basis can we say that those words are still trustworthy?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: Of the many assurances Jesus gives to His disciples, John 14:1–3 is one of the finest. Despite the grief that the shadow of the Cross brings to the disciples, Jesus does not leave them without comfort. Two reasons for His comforting assurance may be cited: first, Jesus will turn the instrument of death into a means of triumph and rise victorious over sin; second, Jesus will go to the Father and return to take the disciples home. The lesson today deals with the second part; it is important to lead the class in a faith-renewing discussion and study of this topic.
Commentary: No other founder of any philosophy or religion has left to his followers a promise as significant and meaningful as the one Jesus left. “I go” to my Father, Jesus said to His disciples, and immediately assured them, “I will come again” (John 14:1-3). The time between His going and returning is known as the last days. Among the last-day events, three are for our study this week: the ministry of Jesus in heaven, the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the saints.

I. Last-Day Events: The Heavenly Sanctuary

(Read Hebrews 7:22-28 with your class.)

The Cross is the ultimate solution to the problem of sin. For the death that Jesus “died, He died to sin once for all” (Rom. 6:10, NKJV). There is no further sacrifice needed. Having offered Himself as the “once for all” sacrifice, Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary to perform His mediatorial ministry (Heb. 7:22-28). The book of Hebrews teaches that the earthly sanctuary is a model of the heavenly (Heb. 8:5, 9:23-26). The earthly sanctuary taught the procedures—the
daily sacrifices, the priestly duties, the annual
services of judgment—to be followed in dealing with
sin, thus showing God’s people the seriousness of sin
and the cost of salvation. All these were an earthly
shadow of a heavenly reality (Heb. 8:5). The heavenly
reality is what Christ is doing for us in the heavenly
sanctuary (Heb. 9:9-15), “after He had offered one
sacrifice for sins forever” on the cross (Heb. 10:12,
NKJV). When the ministry in heaven, including the
cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:23)
typified by the annual Day of Atonement is over,
Christ will return to the earth for “the second time”
to take His children home (Heb. 9:28).

Consider This: What is the relation between the
earthly and the heavenly sanctuary? How does the
earthly sanctuary show the seriousness of sin? How did
the earthly service typify the heavenly?

II. Last Day Events: The Second Coming

(Read Matthew 24:5-7 and 25:37-39 with the class.)
Christ’s promise “I will come again” (John 14:3)

resolutely affirms a second coming as distinct from a first. Hebrews underscores this distinction clearly:

“Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb. 9:28, NRSV). The mission of the Second Coming is not to atone for sin but to gather into His eternal kingdom those who “are eagerly waiting for him.”

The Olivet discourse of our Lord (Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) specifically speaks of the Second Coming in terms of a universal gathering of His disciples “from the ends of the earth” (Mark 13:27, NIV) into the kingdom of God. It is the harvest time (Mark 4:29, Rev. 14:15). His coming will be preceded by various signs, including false Christs (Matt. 24:5), wars and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6, 7), famines and earthquakes (Matt. 24:7), and worldwide proclamation of the gospel (Matt. 24:14). Just prior to His coming will be a great tribulation (Matt. 24:21) and a spiritual apathy and deterioration (Matt. 25:37-39, Luke 17:28-30). These and other signs are given not to work out a chronological timeline as to when Jesus
will come but to keep God’s people in a state of preparedness. Watchfulness and readiness are the Christian’s perpetual response to the promise of the Parousia.

**Consider This:** What is the mission and purpose of the Second Coming? How does it differ from the first? What are the signs of Christ’s second coming within the church and in the world? How are they meant to prepare us for His soon return?

**III. Last Day Events: The Resurrection of the Saints**

*(Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.)*

In the trauma of death, Christians must not “grieve as others do who have no hope” *(1 Thess. 4:13).* A Plato may see in death a release from the pain and corruption of life and a doorway to a new life. A Seneca may issue a call to self-discipline in the face of death. A Hindu may see in death the endless possibility of reincarnation. But not the Christian. To him or her, grief must be placed within the perspective of Christian hope, and that hope is
anchored in the certainty that the “dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16, NKJV). There lies the Christian’s answer and comfort to the problem of death.

But when will the dead in Christ rise? Paul’s answer is clear: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven... And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17, NKJV). The Greek word for “meet,” apanteesin, is packed with power and significance; it connotes the return of a conquering hero. The Hero of all ages, the King of kings, the Sovereign of the universe is returning, and His subjects will meet Him in the air. Jesus, the Sovereign of the cosmos, the Lord of heaven and earth, is arriving to take His own. That is our “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13).

**Consider This:** Based on the authority of Scripture, what is the biblical understanding of when the dead in Christ will rise? How does a knowledge of the Greek
word for “meet,” in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17, enhance our appreciation of what will transpire at the Second Coming?

**STEP 3—Apply**

**Just for Teachers:** Today’s lesson brings out many areas of truth, peculiar to Seventh-day Adventists. As you lead out in the lesson, make sure you emphasize these unique areas of last-day events.

**Application Questions**

1. Why is our faith in vain if the Second Coming is not real?
2. What does the Second Coming mean to you personally? Can you recall an experience during which you found this doctrine a blessing to you?

**STEP 4—Create**

**Just for Teachers:** Make sure that your class understands that without the second coming of Christ,
the first coming has no meaning, so far as final victory over evil and death is concerned. The Cross assures the decisiveness of the victory over the evil one. It was through the Cross and the Resurrection that the decisive battle was won.

**Activity.** Ask various class members to read aloud the following passages and share what the text means to them: Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 11:26; 15:54, 55; Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Peter 1:3, 5; 4:7; 2 Peter 3:12.
Lesson 13

TE-4Q-2012-The Lesson in Brief

Key Text: Revelation 21:4

The Student Will:

Know: Describe the judgment that precedes the millennium, the millennium itself, and those events that culminate in the creation of the new earth.

Feel: Sense the sweeping drama of earth’s closing events and God’s power that ushers in eternal peace and joy.

Do: Rejoice in the liberation of the cosmos and the promise that God will dwell with His people.

Learning Outline:

I. Know: Judgment and Settlement

A. What are the three types of judgment that precede the creation of the new earth?

B. What will the saints be doing during the millennium? Why is this activity an important
part of the closing events of the great

controversy?

II. Feel: Shock and Awe

A. How do the dramatic scenes of the closing of
earth’s history affect the wicked?

B. How are the righteous affected by the display
of God’s power which reveals His holiness to the
nations and saves them?

III. Do: Every Knee Shall Bow

A. How does God cause every knee to bow in the
final scenes of earth’s judgment? Why is this
event significant?

B. What comfort and joy can Christ’s followers
take in the promises of the new earth?

Summary: In the end, God will save the righteous, allow
the saints to review His judgments, and execute
the final sentence on all evil. Then He will
bring about a new heavens and a new earth and
dwell with His people in peace and joy forever.
STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Through the hope presented by the biblical teaching of the millennium and new world, we gain fresh insight into God’s commitment to remove sin, vindicate His name, and make all things new in our individual lives.

Just for Teachers: Spark discussion about the millennium by asking class members the following questions. But first, as a prelude to discussion, remind class members that if God can change an entire world of decay and sin into a beautiful paradise, then surely He can do the same in our individual lives.

Opening Questions for Discussion:
What kind of discussions would most likely take place during the millennium in regard to the tragedies that have darkened human history?
In what sense do these tragedies encourage us to hope beyond this world?

What kind of surprises do you think will take place during the millennium?

If God can change this world with all of its history of evil, in what further ways can He change our lives, the products of shameful history and evil?

STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: This section provides opportunities to explore examples of the connection between the condition of the earth and the condition of humankind. Thus, establishing the encouraging truth of God’s ability to change and renew an entire world will serve as an illustration of His regenerative power and desire to change and renew our own hearts.

Bible Commentary
I. Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust

(Review Genesis 2:7, 3:19, and Ecclesiastes 3:18-20, 12:7 with the class.)

The connection between humanity and the earth begins with creation itself. The Bible tells us that God formed man from the dust of the ground. Humanity is dust or earth, plus breath or life from God. In fact, the very name Adam carries the idea of red or ruddiness in reference to clay. While the English in Genesis 2:18 and 19 transitions from the words “the man” to “Adam,” the Hebrew words remain the same. It was after the animals were referenced as being formed from the dust that the word Adam became not just a description of the origin of humanity but also the proper name of the father of our race. We see that after the fall of man, God declares that Adam would return to the ground, or adamah in Hebrew, for out of it he was taken.

II. Disobedience’s Effect Upon Dominion

(Review Genesis 1:26-28 and 3:17, 18 with the class.)
The Bible tells us that when God created humankind in His image, it was His intention to allow man to have dominion over everything that God created the previous six days. This intention is clear from the topographical references used in Genesis 1:26-28, “of the sea,” “of the air,” and “over all the earth.” When man is overcome by temptation in the Garden of Eden and God describes sin’s consequences, He states to man that “cursed is the ground for your sake” (3:17, NKJV). The ground, referring to the earth, was under Adam’s dominion and, in fact, was not cursed because of itself but because of the disobedience of its lord, Adam. Adam’s choice did not simply affect His relationship with God but apparently with the earth, as well.

Consider This: Why did God curse the earth as a consequence of sin? The phrase “for your sake” implies something done for someone as opposed to against them; this suggests that even as the earth was cursed, God designed a blessing to come forth from it. What was the nature of the curse, as a consequence of sin, and
how was that curse ultimately meant to lead to a
blessing for the fallen race?

III. The Whole Creation Groans

(Review Romans 8:18–23 with the class.)

The apostle Paul composes some of the clearest and
most compelling statements regarding the connection
between the condition of humankind and Creation. By
reminding us of the incomparable glory that shall be
revealed in us, Paul poetically suggests that the
Creation groans for deliverance.

STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: The Bible’s clear teaching on the
connection between Creation and humanity encourages us
to look upon God’s interaction with nature as an
illustration of what He is able and willing to do in
our individual lives. Use the following questions to
help the class practically learn to let God make all
things new in their individual lives.
Application Questions:

1. How can we become better acquainted with the things that need to become new in our lives?

2. What lessons can we learn from Jesus’ references to nature in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) that will help us to cooperate with God as He seeks to make things new in our lives?

3. As Solomon was, surely many of us are puzzled about many things in the world. How can we practically live meaningful lives, even as these questions go yet unanswered?

4. What promises in Scripture can we memorize and rest upon in prayer so as to aid us in our journey to “all things new?” How can parents, Sabbath School teachers, and pastors make this hope more central to their teachings?

STEP 4—Create
Just for Teachers: These activities are intended to help class members to accept the millennium and heaven as realities and to speak of them as such.

Activity:

Suggestions for group or team activities:

Encourage the class members to imagine and discuss what their first seven days might be like in heaven. Have them speak of the first Sabbath worship service, what it will be like to speak with their guardian angel, who they will want to meet from the Bible and why, and the experience of sitting on a throne and judging with Jesus, et cetera.