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The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of the Sabbath School Publications Board, a subcommittee of the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM), publisher of the Bible study guides. The published guide reflects the input of worldwide evaluation committees and the approval of the Sabbath School Publications Board and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).



EPHESIANS:

The Gospel of

***Jesus came
to tear down
the walls
that cause
hatred and
suffering.***

One man at the rear of the church waited in silence. He came late for the service, sat on the floor, listened to the sermon, and took seriously the invitation that all who have accepted Jesus could participate in the open Communion that Adventists celebrate. But he knew no one; no one knew him. He eagerly waited for someone to invite him. But he seemed poor, friendless, and on the wrong side of the caste line. His position seemed desperate to himself and embarrassing to the saints in that small church in a small town in a country where caste still defines community.

Which of the saints would offer to be the partner for this lonely man? Who would rise by stooping? The elders were busy organizing the details. The deacons were busy, fetching water from the only tap outside the church. And others . . . ? Levites and the priests are extremely busy people, not to be disturbed by trivia of this kind.

Suddenly Ravi Anandan went over to the visitor and walked with him to the basin. Ravi knelt on the cold concrete floor, cradled his partner's shoeless, dusty feet, and washed them in the clear cool water, which instantly turned a muddy brown.

One month ago Ravi would have done no such thing. He would not have allowed even the shadow of that man to come anywhere near him. Touching him would be touching the untouchable, and touching the untouchable is an act of religious impurity and social repugnance.

What happened? One month ago Ravi accepted Jesus. As he studied the New Testament, the image of the broken wall in Ephesians 2:12-16 moved him deeply. Walls or Jesus? It had to be one or the other, not both, for Jesus came to tear down those walls—walls that have caused and still cause so much hatred, misunderstanding, and suffering in this world.

Relationships

Ravi chose Jesus over those walls of which he was once so proud. The result? He would reach out and touch the untouchable.

That newness, that embrace, that unity in Christ is what makes the Epistle to the Ephesians a gospel of new relationships. It was John Calvin's favorite letter. William Barclay calls it "the queen of epistles." E. J. Goodspeed finds it "a great rhapsody of the Christian salvation."

We can study the Epistle for its theology, ecclesiology, or Christian sociology, but one thing we cannot escape: Paul's confidence in the new creation God has wrought in Christ and its ultimate triumph in the great controversy. From God's choice of us from "before the foundation of the world" (*Eph. 1:4*) to the battle "against spiritual hosts of wickedness" (*Eph. 6:12, NKJV*) to the promise that Jesus is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (*Eph. 3:20*), the Epistle resonates with the power of grace, prayer, and faith.

And it is with that spirit of prayer, of grace, and of faith that we must approach the study of one of the great love letters of the Bible, the book of Ephesians. It's our prayer, too, that when done, all who study not only will understand better what motivated Ravi to reach out and touch what he once deemed untouchable but also will experience for themselves the life-changing power of the gospel as it works in their hearts.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

The teachers comments demonstrate different methods of teaching the adult standard edition Bible study guide. Five parts make up the teachers comments:

- ▶ **Key Text, Lesson Aim, and Outline:** The key text is taken from the standard edition guide. The lesson aim is designed to (a) help class participants understand and know about the lesson material, (b) evoke an appropriate feeling about the lesson material that complements the lesson content and helps to internalize it, and (c) help class participants apply the lesson material to their daily lives. The lesson outline may not always follow exactly the material that appears in the standard guide. It may reflect additional perspectives as it attempts to stimulate class discussion.
- ▶ **The Commentary** follows the traditional teaching methods of Sabbath School. It explains Bible passages and provides appropriate information leading to spiritual applications.
- ▶ **The Inductive Bible-Study Method** emphasizes careful, methodical discovery of the meaning in a text. The teacher encourages and supports the learner's investigation and discovery, using distinctive approaches: (a) Study a text thoroughly and systematically before drawing a conclusion. (b) Look for textual meaning carefully and thoroughly, understand the passage in context, avoid misquoting the author. We must not develop opinions without biblical proof. (c) Share insights through group discussion as students examine a Bible passage together. (d) Apply the text to life today. (e) Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to class members during Bible study.
- ▶ **The Focus-on-Witnessing Approach** should be used in conjunction with other methods of Bible study to demonstrate how particular passages of Scripture can be used to encourage people to commit their lives to Christ and to nurture spiritual life once it has been awakened.
- ▶ **The Life-Application Approach** demonstrates how issues that grow out of Bible study can be shared in a small-group setting. This section uses an approach suitable for discussion in a small group in which interpersonal sharing and dialogue are key elements.

Use a combination of teaching methods. Within one class period it often is possible to draw from all five methods demonstrated in the teachers comments. Some teachers will prefer to focus on one method of teaching, drawing heavily on the material in the teachers comments.