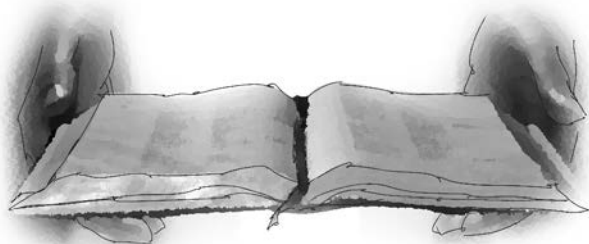


Disciples¹ and Scripture (the Bible)



SABBATH—DECEMBER 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 4:1–12; Matthew 12:3–8; Matthew 5:17–39; Luke 24:13–32; Acts 1:16–20.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘You study the Scriptures [verses] carefully. You study them because you think they will give you eternal life. The Scriptures you study give witness about me [Jesus]’ ” (John 5:39, NlrV).

ENGLISHMAN TERRY HERBERT PURCHASED A METAL DETECTOR² FROM A YARD SALE. He used the metal detector and found historical things made of silver. He also discovered old weapons decorated with gold buried in a farmer's field. The things that he found were thought to be worth over five million U.S. dollars.

We are like that treasure hunter. We are looking for treasure in rubbish. But, in our own search, we must be careful not to let things get in our way and make us miss the real treasure above: Jesus Christ. In the same way, Pharisees³ and Sadducees⁴ “studied” the Holy Writings. But they misunderstood their treasure map, Scripture (the Bible). So, they completely missed the point: Jesus.

Jesus used the Bible in His method of disciple-making.⁵ The writings of the prophets (special messengers) lead to the greatest treasure. These writings pointed to Jesus. So, when we miss Jesus, we miss the mark. All this means is that all our disciple-making work must be about Jesus and the things that He has done for us.

1. disciples—believers and followers of Jesus.

2. metal detector—a tool that helps a person find metals buried in the ground.

3. Pharisees—a group of Jewish believers.

4. Sadducees—another group of Jewish believers.

5. disciple-making—the process of making believers follow and obey Jesus.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 29**JESUS AND THE BIBLE
(Luke 4:1–12)**

Jesus is the perfect Example for all believers. For this reason, Jesus' level of interest in the Bible is very serious.

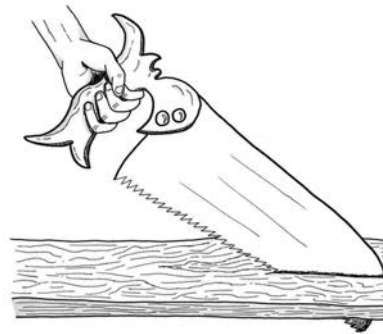
Read Luke 4:1–12 and Luke 4:16–21. What do these verses show us about how Christ feels about the Bible?

The story of Christ's temptations in the wilderness shows that Jesus used Bible verses to stop every one of Satan's challenges and invitations. The scrolls (Bible) were probably not available to Christ during His 40-day desert experience. So, this story clearly shows that Christ had memorized important parts of the Bible. The verses that Jesus used were from the writings of Moses. But He also quoted from other parts of the Bible (Matthew 21:42; Matthew 22:44). Clearly, Christ had a very great knowledge of the Bible.

Notice also that Christ understands that the Bible is more than just a tool for overcoming temptation and gaining personal holiness. In other words, Jesus knows that the Bible points to Him. During the temple visit recorded in Luke 4:16–30, Jesus quotes Isaiah. Then He declares that these verses point to Himself as being the One chosen to release people from their suffering and announce freedom from sin. Jesus understood that He fulfilled the prophecy (special message from God)

about the Messiah. So, Jesus used this fact in His ministry (work done for God) to point others to Him, too.

It is important to know the Bible. But that alone is not enough. Some of the most famous Bible scholars (thinkers) have not been believing Christians. So, we need to ask ourselves, How can we make sure that our study and reading of the Bible helps us to know Jesus better? How can the Bible show what Jesus has done for us? In other words, how can we make sure that Bible study changes our lives for the better?



The Bible is more than just a tool for overcoming temptation.

MONDAY—DECEMBER 30**THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE
(Luke 24:44)**

Read Matthew 5:17–20; Matthew 12:3–8; Matthew 15:3–11; John 10:34–37; John 17:14–19; and Luke 24:44. What do these verses tell us about what Jesus thought of the Bible?

Whenever Christ had a debate with the religious leaders, He did

not depend on philosophy (study of truth) or personal authority. Instead, He depended on the teachings of the Bible. When He judged between right and wrong, Jesus based His argument on solid Bible truth. When His enemies challenged Him on doctrine (teachings), Jesus directed them to certain verses in the Bible. When He dealt with worldly matters, Jesus pointed listeners to God's leading in the Bible. Christ understood that His mission was to do the things that the prophets (special messengers) of the Old Testament had said He would do.

There is often a big difference between Christ's great understanding of Scripture and the common attitude (thoughts and feelings) often shown by people who claim to be "Christians" today. Some churches judge the Bible as interesting. But they do not believe that the history it tells is true. Everything—the six-day Creation, the Exodus, even the return of Jesus—has been called myth.⁶

The principles (important rules) for discipleship⁷ are clear. Why would anyone want to give his or her life to a cause based on nothing but myths? Instead, people with real problems need a real Savior. Otherwise, the gospel becomes a false gospel or decorated with false gold. From a distance, some people might be fooled. But, upon closer examination, the false will become unacceptable. The only safe course, then, is to follow Christ's example of honoring and obeying the Bible.

Death is no myth. It is not just

a symbol. It is one of the hardest realities (facts; truths) that we all face. Think deeply about what death means in the Bible in comparison with what the Bible teaches. For example, the resurrection (return to life) of Jesus or His second coming should not be treated as just a symbol or a myth. Why must we never let ourselves get caught up in this kind of trap?

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 31

PUBLIC PREACHING (Matthew 5:17–39)

Jesus pulled people toward Himself in different public places with His preaching. Scripture played an important part in Christ's public statements. His preaching and sermons included many quotes from the Bible.

Read Matthew 5:17–39. In what ways do these verses show how Christ made use of the Bible for public preaching?

While Christ was in the world, the ordinary Israelites' relationship with the Bible was very legalistic (focused on, or looking only at, rules). The Israelites depended on the Bible for rules and guidance about religious matters. They believed that they would receive a reward of eternal life if they were good or righteous (holy). But Jesus overturned their legalistic ideas. He substituted heart-based religion for

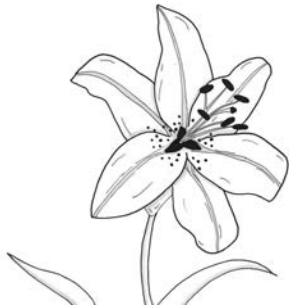
6. myth—false story.

7. discipleship—the practice of accepting Jesus and following Him.

a system of false principles (rules).

Christ-centered religion is rooted in a change of heart that leads to right actions. Strange as it may seem, some of the Pharisees had ignored a living relationship with God by trying to be “perfect.” Jesus recognized this weakness. So, as a cure, He encouraged listeners to accept Him as Savior and Master. With Jesus as their Leader, people became more noble. A person just has to read the Sermon on the Mount if he or she wants to understand how noble Jesus’ moral teachings were.

“As something strange and new, these words fall upon the ears of the wondering listeners. Jesus’ teaching is very different from all they have ever heard from priests or rabbis. They see nothing to flatter their pride or to feed their hopes. But this new Teacher has a power that keeps them very interested. The sweetness of God’s love flows from Him as the sweet smell from a flower. . . . All can feel that here is One who reads the secrets of the soul. But they also know that He is the One who comes near to them with great love and mercy.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 6.



God’s love flows from Him as the sweet smell of a flower.

It is easier than we think it is to be legalistic, judgmental, and critical (faultfinding). How can we protect ourselves from falling into these common practices?

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 1

PERSONAL MINISTRY (John 13:18–20)

There are many examples of Christ’s public ministry (work). Christ’s personal meetings with common and famous members of society also are interesting. These stories offer special examples of how important the Bible was to Christ’s ministry.

Read John 13:18–20; Luke 10:25–28; and Luke 24:13–32. Why did Jesus quote (use) these verses? What results came from these small-group meetings about the Bible?

Christ often quoted the Bible when He called believers to become His disciples. This clearly suggests that Jesus got His authority from the Bible, not from His popularity. We can see how Jesus used the Bible as He worked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

“Beginning at Moses, the very Alpha [beginning] of Bible history, Christ preached from the Bible all verses about Himself. If He had first made Himself known to them, their hearts would have been satisfied. In the fullness of their joy they would have hungered for nothing more. But they needed to understand His

role from the prophecies of the Old Testament. Their faith must be established [founded] upon these prophecies. Christ did not do any miracle to make them believe. But it was His first work [duty] to explain the verses. They had looked upon His death as the final destruction of all their hopes. But now He showed them from the writings of the prophets that His death was the very strongest proof for their faith.

“In teaching these disciples, Jesus showed the importance of the Old Testament as a witness to His mission.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 796–799.

Study Luke 24:32 more deeply. Look at the phrase (wording) that states their “heart[s] burn[ed] within.” What does that mean? When was the last time your heart burned within you about the truths that we have been given? If it has not burned in a long time, is it because your heart has grown cold? If so, how can you change?



Jesus showed the importance of the Old Testament as a witness to His mission.

THURSDAY—JANUARY 2

THE NEXT GENERATION

(Matthew 12:15–21)

There is no doubt that Jesus makes the Bible very important. He never questioned the authority and truth of a single Bible verse. But for many hundreds of years, and even today, people do just that.

Read Matthew 12:15–21; Mark 1:1–3; Acts 1:16–20; Acts 3:22–24; and Romans 10:10, 11. What do these verses tell us about how the earliest Christians looked at the Bible? What lessons can we learn from them about the Bible?

Jesus Himself had used the Holy Bible as proof that He was the Messiah. The earliest Christian writers continued to do so. They even said that God showed Himself to the people through the Bible. So, personal experience, miracles, and other witnesses for Christ were definitely important. But the Bible is the main witness for Jesus, and it has no equal.

Christ’s earliest followers depended on the Bible for the church’s mission (special work done for God), its everyday practices (customs; habits), and its spiritual discipline. We know this because prayers for God’s leading are found in church councils (read Acts 15). The Bible touched every part of the life of the early church. How important, then, is it that we feel the same way about the Bible?

How can we all learn to make the Bible a very important part of our faith? How can we use it to point us to Jesus? How can we let the teachings of the Bible influence the way we live and how we work with others?



God shows us who He is through the Bible.

FRIDAY—JANUARY 3

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “Bible Teaching and Study,” pages 190–192, in *Education*; “The Walk to Emmaus,” pages 795–801, in *The Desire of Ages*; “Thessalonica,” pages 221–230, in *The Acts of the Apostles [Teachers and Leaders]*.

“Christ in His ministry [work] had opened the minds of His disciples to these prophecies. . . . Peter in preaching Christ had given his proof from the Old Testament. Stephen had followed the same course. And Paul also in his ministry used the Bible to foretell the

birth, sufferings, death, and return to life of Christ. By the inspired [God-given] words of Moses and the prophets, Paul clearly proved that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. Paul also showed that from the days of Adam it was the voice of Christ that had been speaking through Bible leaders and prophets.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 221, 222.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What are some useful ways you can combine the Bible with your daily routine? How can you use the Bible in your personal witnessing?
- ② Why did Jesus depend more on the Bible than on miracles and personal popularity? What happens if music, the health message, social events, or anything else replaces the Bible as being a very important part of our faith?
- ③ How dependent on the Bible must today’s Christians become? Measure how important the Bible is in the life of your church and its work.
- ④ Think about the fact that we cannot find an example in the Bible where any of its writers ever question Bible truths. Why should that be so important to us today, at a time when so many Bible thinkers seem to challenge the truth of the Bible at every level?