

The Work of Elijah in the End Time



SABBATH—JUNE 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Malachi 4:5, 6; 1 Kings 16:29–17:24; 1 Kings 18:20–45; Matthew 3:2, 8; Luke 1:17.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I will send the prophet [special messenger] Elijah to you. He will come before the day of the LORD arrives. It will be a great [happening worldwide] and terrifying [full of trouble] day. Elijah will bring peace between parents and their children. He will also bring peace between children and their parents. If that does not happen, I will come. And I will completely destroy the land’ ” (Malachi 4:5, 6, NIV).



We must hold tight to God's promises at all times.

SOMETIMES our lives are wonderful. Sometimes they are not. Sometimes our families are strong. Other times they seem ready to break. That is why we must hold tight to God's promises at all times. We must hold them with our whole heart. In the end, God's promises are our only hope. They give us wonderful hope! The Bible is full of promises. We can trust in these promises when our families are strong and when they are about to break. We can trust in God's promises for ourselves, our loved ones, our family, and our church.

This week, we will study some Bible stories, promises, and experiences. We will look at the lessons they can teach us today. Whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever time of life you are in, you no doubt have worries, fears, and troubles. But there is good news. We worship a God who knows what our troubles are. He has an answer for every problem in our lives.

MALACHI'S SPECIAL MESSAGE (Malachi 4:5, 6)

Malachi tells us that Elijah will come before Jesus does (Malachi 4:5, 6). Now read about the coming of Elijah in Matthew 11:14, 15; Matthew 17:10; Mark 6:15; and Luke 1:17. What do these verses teach us about Elijah?

In the days of Malachi, God tells His people to come back to Him. “ ‘Come back to me, and I will come back to you’ ” (Malachi 3:7, ERV). How do God’s people answer? “ ‘How can we come back?’ ” (Malachi 3:7, ERV). Malachi is God’s special messenger. He tells the people that God will give them one more chance to come back to Him. They will have one more chance to change their hearts. Malachi asks them to remember the time of Elijah (1 Kings 18:37). Malachi says that Elijah will come again. Then Elijah will “ ‘help the parents become close to their children, and he will help the children become close to their parents’ ” (Malachi 4:6, ERV).

As time passes, the Jews start to believe that Elijah himself will come to tell the Jews that the Savior is coming (read Matthew 17:10; Mark 6:15). But Elijah is a symbol or word picture for John the Baptist (read Matthew 11:14, 15; Luke 1:17). John the Baptist comes before Jesus does. John does the work of Elijah. John tells everyone to get ready for the Savior to come.

What do you think the words “turn the hearts” mean in Malachi 4:6 (NLV)?

“Turn the hearts” can mean several things. (1) It shows that Jesus will help His people become one with God again. It helps us to see God as our Father, who turns away from His deep anger back to His children (Micah 7:18, 19). God calls His children to come back to Him (Isaiah 44:22; Malachi 3:7). (2) “Turn the hearts” also shows that God’s people will follow the faith of their fathers again. They will be loyal to God’s Special Agreement with His people. In the past, when the people obeyed God, God blessed the land and His people (Deuteronomy 4:29–31). (3) “Turn the hearts” also shows that family ties will be made new. The love between parents and their children shows their love for God. This love is part of God’s Special Agreement too. As God’s people show their love for their children, God will continue to bless their land (Proverbs 2:21).



The love between parents and their children shows their love for God.

TOGETHER AGAIN (1 Kings 16:29–17:24)

Queen Jezebel brought the worship of the god Baal to Israel. Jezebel came from the land of Sidon. She married King Ahab. Baal worship caused the people of Israel to sin a lot. They turned away from God's teachings. God taught His people to honor marriage, family, and the gift of sex. But Baal worship brought evil practices into the land. Soon God's people forgot God's teachings about marriage, family, and sex sins. They started to have sex with their own family members. Their daughters became prostitutes. Prostitutes are women who have sex for money. God's people also did other sex sins against God. So, God sent Elijah to warn His people to turn away from evil. Elijah's name means "Jehovah is my God." Elijah scolds the people for worshipping Baal.



Elijah tells the widow to use her last pieces of wood, oil, and flour to feed him.

What did Elijah do to turn God's people back to Him? How did he bring new life to families? Read 1 Kings 16:29–17:24 for the answer. Compare these verses with Luke 4:25, 26. How are these verses the same?

Elijah tells King Ahab that no rain will fall on the land. Ahab gets very mad at Elijah. The king wants Elijah dead. But God protects Elijah. God sends Elijah to the home of a widow who lives in Zarephath. Zarephath was in the land of Sidon, near Queen Jezebel's hometown. Elijah gives the widow a big test. He tells her to use her last pieces of wood, oil, and flour to feed him. She chooses to trust God. So, she helps Elijah. Her faith becomes a powerful story. Later, Jesus Himself praises her faith (Luke 4:26). God blesses the widow's oil and flour so that they do not run out for many days. The woman learns that Jehovah is a God of love. Then something sad happens. Her only son gets sick and dies. The false religions of the day taught that God punished people for their past sins by killing their children. The widow believes that God let her son die to punish her for her past sins.

Elijah woke up the widow's son from the dead. How did this miracle change the widow's spiritual experience with God? Read 1 Kings 17:24 for the answer. What can we learn from the widow's words to Elijah?

THE PEOPLE TURN BACK TO GOD (1 Kings 18:20–45)

Read 1 Kings 18:20–45. What is happening in these verses? What important rule does this story teach us? How can that rule help us solve problems in our families?

Elijah stands on Mount Carmel. He wants his people to turn back to God and their faith. He wants them to enter into their Special Agreement with God again. Then God can heal them, their homes, and their land.

Baal's religious leaders fail to get their god to answer their prayers. Now it is Elijah's turn to pray to his God. It is evening. This time of day helped the people to remember God's plan to save them (read Exodus 29:41). Elijah tells the people, " 'Come here to me,' " (1 Kings 18:30, NlrV). These words help us think about the way Jesus welcomes sinners to come to Him (Matthew 11:28). God never stops working to bring His lost children back to Himself.

God's altar is old and broken. So, Elijah fixes it. God's altar is a word picture for family-worship time. Family worship is a chance to talk to God in prayer. It also is a chance to talk about Jesus together. It gives us a chance to accept God's saving gift again. And it gives us another chance to think about Jesus' teachings.

Elijah asks God to show the people that He accepts them again. First Kings 18:37, ICB, says: " 'Lord, answer my prayer. Show these people that you, Lord, are God. Then the people will know that you are bringing them back to you.' " We cannot turn our hearts to God. We can only answer His love. God gives us His love freely.

Fire falls from heaven. It does not fall on the sinners. It falls on the animal on the altar. This animal shows us Jesus. It is a word picture of His death on the cross. "Christ [Jesus] had no sin. But God made him become sin. God did this for us so that in [with] Christ we could [can] become right with God" (2 Corinthians 5:21, ICB). Then the people praise God. The false religious leaders do not answer God's invitation to come back to Him. So, Elijah puts them to death. Then rain falls upon the dry land.



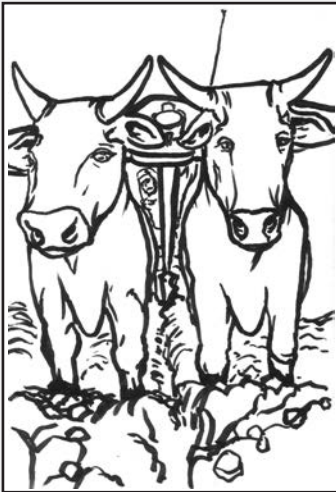
God never stops working to bring His lost children back to Himself.

JOHN TURNS HEARTS AT THE JORDAN RIVER (Matthew 3:2, 8)

Before Jesus' first coming, the angel Gabriel announces that John the Baptist soon will be born. Jesus Himself says that John is the Elijah that Malachi promises will come (Matthew 11:14; Matthew 17:12, 13). The writers of the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke also say that John the Baptist is the "messenger" that will get people ready to meet Jesus (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27; compare Malachi 3:1).

Look at John's message in Matthew 3:2, 8; Matthew 14:4; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14. What was John's message about? How did he "turn the hearts" (Malachi 4:6, NLV) of the people back to God and to each other?

A farmer plows hard ground to get it ready for planting seed. In the same way, John got people's hearts ready for Jesus. John told the people that sin was wrong. He told them to turn away from sin and back to God. John's work shows us that we need to see our sin. Then we will see how much we need a Savior. John's message turned people to a holy God. It showed them their guilt and their deep need of God's mercy and forgiveness. We must say we are sorry for our sins. We must empty our hearts of all pride. Then we must look to God for help to change our behavior. John the Baptist showed the people that their belief that Abraham was their father was not enough to save them. They needed something more. They needed the faith that belonged to Abraham.



A farmer plows hard ground to get it ready for planting seed. In the same way, John the Baptist got people's hearts ready for Jesus.

How did the message of John the Baptist get the people ready to meet Jesus? Read John 1:35–37 and John 3:27–30 for the answers.

God showed John that Jesus was the Lamb of God. John told the people that Jesus was the Lamb (John 1:29, 36). This Name, the Lamb of God, turned the people back to the Lord. Andrew and John were two of John the Baptist's followers. They left John the Baptist's side that day and became Jesus' followers. The Elijah message that John the Baptist preached shows people the need to turn away from sin. That message shows us Jesus, who saves us from sin.

Let us say that John the Baptist is coming to your house today. What do you think he will say to you?

THE WORK OF ELIJAH IN THE LAST DAYS (Luke 1:17)

As Adventists, we see ourselves doing the work that John the Baptist did. John's job was to announce the first coming of Jesus. This news is named the Elijah message. John told the people to turn away from sin and to change their lives. As Seventh-day Adventists, we see ourselves doing the same work before Jesus' Second Coming.

Read Luke 1:17. Pray as you read these verses. Ask God to help you understand these words. How do they show the Seventh-day Adventist message and the work God gave our church to do?

God our Father turns the hearts of His children back to Himself. He turns the hearts of His children to each other. Jesus' death on the cross makes these changes in human hearts possible. The Elijah message tells people to believe this wonderful news (2 Corinthians 5:18–21; compare Ephesians 2:11–18). The Elijah message also tells God's people to let God fill them with His loving-favor.

The people on this earth need to see God's love so badly. They need to see an example of people who are not selfish. They need to see an example of people who care about other people and are loyal to God. God can help Christian families to be an example of His truth and love to the people on this earth. At the same time, we also must remember something important. This message we have for everyone on the earth also is for you and me. So, we need to let God's truth and love live in our hearts. Without God's truth and love, we will not be able to share His message with other people. We can preach the most wonderful sermons. But they are not enough. The people on this earth need to see that we and our families have turned our hearts to the Lord. They need to see the love that we preach about. John changed lives because God's power changed his life. He lived what he preached. We can do what John did. But only if we work together with God. Jesus makes us part of the family in heaven (Ephesians 3:15). He makes us children of God again. God asks His children to be His witnesses on earth. Large or small, our family can show the people on this earth the power of the Good News about Jesus.

What can you do to show the people around you how much you love and care about them?



Large or small, our family can show the people on this earth the power of the Good News about Jesus.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Ellen G. White, “Carmel,” pages 143–154, in *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*; “The Voice in the Wilderness,” pages 97–108, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Our message must be clear. It must be as clear as John’s message was. He scolded kings for their sins. He always preached the truth. He did not worry about the danger to his life. We must do our work for God with the same loyalty and faith that John showed when he preached.”—Ellen G. White Comments [ideas], *The SDA Bible Commentary [explanation]*, volume 4, page 1184, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 As a class, talk about the Elijah message. How important is this message to your local church? What can you do to help your church understand this message? How can you help them share this message with other people?
- 2 Ask for class members to share their experiences about the time they turned their hearts back to God. What changes happened in their lives? How did this experience change their lives and the lives of their families?
- 3 We see ourselves as doing the same work as John the Baptist. What happened to John the Baptist? What should we expect to happen to us?
- 4 What is the Bible’s idea of a good family? As a class, make a list of important Bible rules for having a good family. What have you learned from this Bible study guide that can help you know what these Bible rules are? Share your ideas with the whole church.
- 5 As a parent, what promises does the Bible give you for your children? What if your children turn away from the Lord? What promises can you trust in while you ask God to turn your children back to Him?



We must do our work for God with the same loyalty and faith that John the Baptist showed when he preached.

MIKE TUCKER

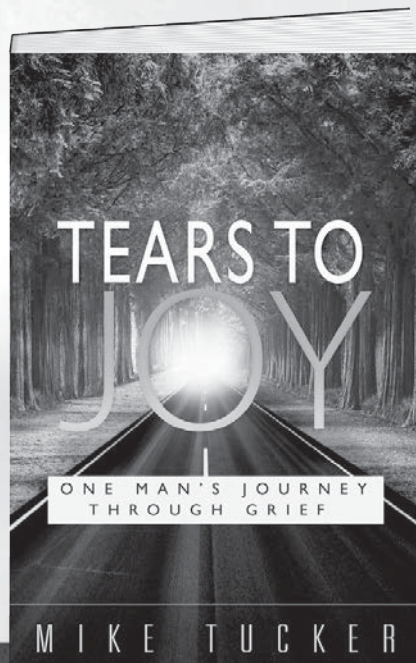
Tears to Joy Mike Tucker

If you have ever lost someone you love, you know how deep the wound cuts. In *Tears to Joy*, author Mike Tucker shares from his heart his struggles through the heartache of grief after the death of his wife. In sharing his story, Mike also shares research and material that he found helpful and reliable in the process of recovery. While Mike's experience may differ widely from yours—everyone's grief journey is different—there are inevitable similarities. And it is in the areas of similarity that you will find the greatest help in dealing with your loss. It is the author's hope that in the midst of your sorrow, *Tears to Joy* will bring you courage as you navigate through life's most difficult journey.

ISBN 978-0-8163-6363-6 • US\$14.99



**eBooks are available at
Adventist-eBooks.com!**



Three ways to order:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Local | Adventist Book Center® |
| 2 Call | 1-800-765-6955 |
| 3 Shop | AdventistBookCenter.com |



AdventistBookCenter.com



AdventistBookCenter



@AdventistBooks



AdventistBooks

JENNIFER JILL SCHWIRZER

13 Weeks to Love

Jennifer Jill Schwirzer

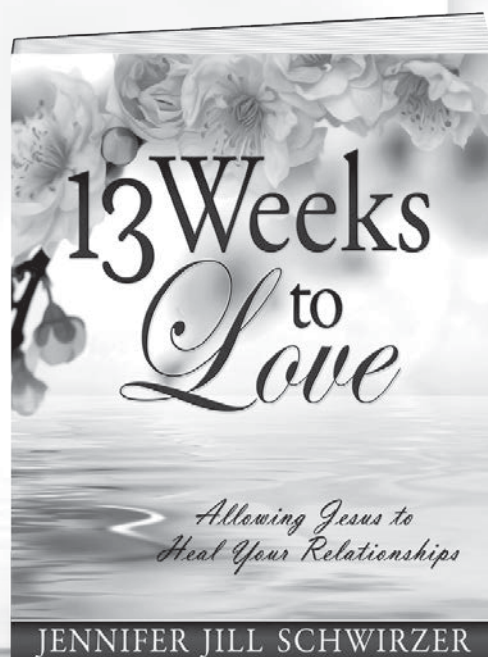
In *13 Weeks to Love*, author and speaker Jennifer Jill Schwirzer shows how to live God's love and how doing so fulfills the purpose for which He created us. God is love and we, as His image bearers, possess the capacity for love.

Because love is fundamental to life itself and because it's all we'll really care about in the end—let's care about it now. Let's make it our first study, our science, our song.

ISBN 978-0-8163-5617-3 • US\$15.99



**eBooks are available at
Adventist-eBooks.com!**



Three ways to order:

1 Local	Adventist Book Center®
2 Call	1-800-765-6955
3 Shop	AdventistBookCenter.com



AdventistBookCenter.com



AdventistBookCenter



@AdventistBooks



AdventistBooks