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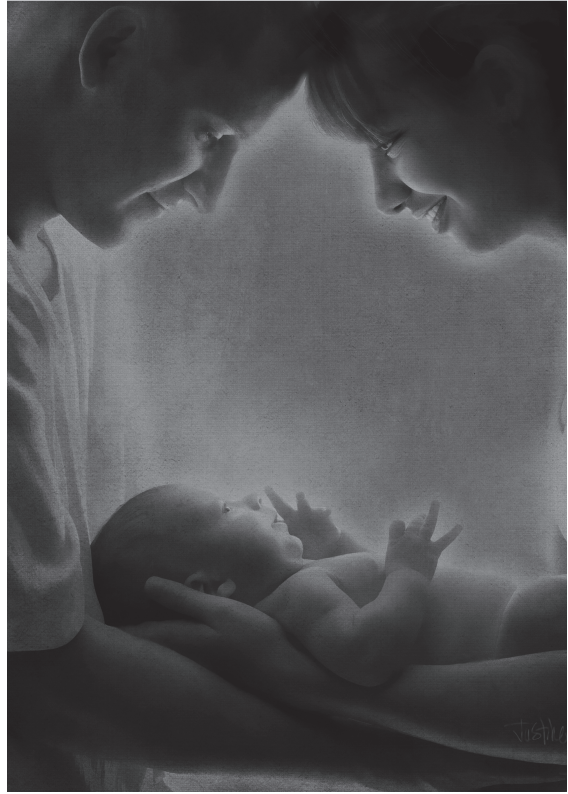
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## The Seasons of Life



**T**he sixth day of Creation had come to an end. During the first five days, the world had been transformed from chaos to a thing of perfect beauty. Darkness was replaced by light. The waters were pushed back as God commanded them. “ ‘This far you may come, but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!’ ” (*Job 38:11, NKJV*). The dry land sprouted into a canvas of colors and fragrances. Birds of all kinds and varieties flew about while fish and sea mammals swam and splashed in their aquatic home. Land animals of all types and species ran, jumped, or hung from tree limbs, depending on how the Creator had created them. Then, finally, humans were made in God’s own image, unique beings in all the earthly Creation.

As God prepared for the first seventh-day Sabbath on earth, He looked on Creation and declared it all “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*).

If only that were the end of the story—a perfect world, with perfect people, existing forever. Just think: Adam and Eve have many children, and then grandchildren and great-grandchildren, whom they watch grow for an endless number of generations, each one bringing even more joy to the first couple and to God, as well. It’s a scenario that we—existing in and knowing only a fallen world—can barely imagine.

And that’s because our imaginations have been formed in a world radically different from the one God first created. How different are the two worlds, the world before sin and the world after? Here’s one example. As Adam and Eve, wrote Ellen

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White, “witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead. The death of the frail, delicate flowers was indeed a cause of sorrow; but when the goodly trees cast off their leaves, the scene brought vividly to mind the stern fact that death is the portion of every living thing.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 62. We don’t have that reaction to a falling leaf because, having lived only in a world of sin, we have come to take death and suffering as inevitable parts of the cycles of life.

And that’s what this quarter’s lesson is about: the cycles of life, at least for us now, in this fallen world. And we are going to look at these cycles in the one place most of us cycle through them, and that is within the framework of family.

Humans were created, in Eden, in the context of family; first a husband and wife, and then children who had more children, and thus we have the history of our world even to the present day. Indeed, many of the earliest Bible stories—from Adam and Eve, the patriarchs, the Davidic dynasty—all unfolded within the context of family and family relationships. All through the Bible, in one way or another, families help form the framework of events that unfold. Which isn’t surprising because, again, as we cycle through these seasons of life, we, too, do so to one degree or another against the backdrop of family.

Despite all the forces working against the family, both today and in the past (for instance, the practice of polygamy in biblical times hardly added to family stability), and despite attempts to redefine exactly what a family is, the concept of a family endures. And it should. It’s where we get started, and it is often the greatest force for good or evil in shaping our lives and how we respond to challenges we face as we cycle through the stages of life.

And just as each individual is different, each family is, as well. Hence, this quarter’s lessons point to principles, based on Scripture, that (it’s our hope and prayer) can help make for stronger families at every stage of life.

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in one way or another,  
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# How to Use This Teachers Edition

**“The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. He constantly seeks higher attainments and better methods. His life is one of continual growth. In the work of such a teacher there is a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his [class].”**

—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.

To be a Sabbath School teacher is both a privilege and a responsibility. A privilege because it offers the teacher the unique opportunity to lead and guide in the study and discussion of the week’s lesson so as to enable the class to have both a personal appreciation for God’s Word and a collective experience of spiritual fellowship with class members. When the class concludes, members should leave with a sense of having tasted the goodness of God’s Word and having been strengthened by its enduring power. The responsibility of teaching demands that the teacher is fully aware of the Scripture to be studied, the flow of the lesson through the week, the interlinking of the lessons to the theme of the quarter, and the lesson’s application to life and witness.

This guide is to help teachers to fulfill their responsibility adequately. It has three segments:

- 1. Overview** introduces the lesson topic, key texts, links with the previous lesson, and the lesson’s theme. This segment deals with such questions as Why is this lesson important? What does the Bible say about this subject? What are some major themes covered in the lesson? How does this subject affect my personal life?
- 2. Commentary** is the chief segment in the Teachers Edition. It may have two or more sections, each one dealing with the theme introduced in the Overview segment. The Commentary may include several in-depth discussions that enlarge the themes outlined in the Overview. The Commentary provides an in-depth study of the themes and offers scriptural, exegetic, illustrative discussion material that leads to a better understanding of the themes. The Commentary also may have scriptural word study or exegesis appropriate to the lesson. On a participatory mode, the Commentary segment may have discussion leads, illustrations appropriate to the study, and thought questions.
- 3. Life Application** is the final segment of the Teachers Edition for each lesson. This section leads the class to discuss what was presented in the Commentary segment as it impacts Christian life. The application may involve discussion, further probing of what the lesson under study is all about, or perhaps personal testimony on how one may feel the impact of the lesson on one’s life.

**Final thought:** What is mentioned above is only suggestive of the many possibilities available for presenting the lesson and is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive in its scope. Teaching should not become monotonous, repetitious, or speculative. Good Sabbath School teaching should be Bible-based, Christ-centered, faith-strengthening, and fellowship-building.