

Education and God's Plan to Save Sinners



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1:26, 27; Isaiah 11:1–9; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 1 Kings 4:29–34.

MEMORY VERSE: “All Scripture is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live” (2 Timothy 3:16, ERV).



The Bible is God's invitation to sinners to know Him and understand His plan to save them from sin.

The Bible tells a long story about God and His people. Sometimes we see it as a love story that does not turn out as we expect. Other times we see it as the story about a Father and His misbehaving children. The children do what is wrong at first. But then they turn back to their Father.

This week, we are going to look at the Bible story in a new way. We will see that the Bible is the story about a Teacher and His students. The students keep failing their tests. But the Teacher is patient. He explains the students' lessons again and again until some learn them.

The Bible story about God and His people has a good ending. That is because of God's grace, or loving-favor. Many people have not understood the part that humans have in this story. They think that God wants humans to do too many things to be saved. But that is not what the Bible story is about. The Bible is God's invitation to sinners to know Him and to understand His plan to save them from sin. We cannot earn God's grace. But we can learn about grace. That is what Christians should teach each other, right?

A COPY OF GOD (Genesis 1:26, 27)

Read Genesis 1:26, 27 and Genesis 5:1, 3. What do these verses teach us about how God first made us? What happened to humans after sin?

Bible experts have been interested in the words “in His own likeness [a copy]” (Genesis 1:27, NLV) for hundreds of years. What does it mean to be made in God’s “own likeness”? Does it mean that God looked in a mirror and made humans look the same as Himself only on the outside? Or does it show us that God and humans have spirits and minds that are very much the same? The Bible does not give any exact explanation of the words “in His own likeness.” That has not stopped Bible experts from coming up with many possible explanations. But we can see one thing from the Bible. After sin, “the likeness” changed. That is why Ellen G. White wrote that God’s plan for education is to help us to be close to God again the way we were in Eden before sin (read *Education*, pages 14–16).

How can education make this happen?

First, we need to remember that God made us to feel close to Him the same way that children feel close to their parents. God made us as a copy of Himself. In the same way, human parents have children that look the same as they look (Genesis 5:3). God wants to raise us as His children. We belong to His family. So, “the likeness” also is a word picture. It helps us to see that God wants us to join as one with Him. We can do that only if we are in agreement with God. This joining is what happens in education, first at home between parents and children. Later, this happens at school when teachers take over the work of educating our children. God made us “in His own likeness” so that He can teach us and we can learn from Him. Then His “likeness,” or mind, will be shown in our thinking.

The story about our Savior is a story of education. It starts with His making us and goes to the time He becomes born as a Baby on this earth. Then the story continues from His time on this earth to the time when He will make everything new again. God is a Teacher. Heaven is a school we will not leave (read Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 301). Why should this idea make us do everything we can, as Christians, to offer the best education at home, in church, in school, and in college?



God’s plan for education is to help us to be close to God again the way we were in Eden before sin.

JESUS, THE TEACHER (Isaiah 11:1–9)



Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again to understand or enter the kingdom of God.

The Bible uses many words to show us who Jesus is. Jesus is the Son of God. He is God's Chosen One. He is the Son of Man. He is the Savior. He is the One who buys our pardon. He is the Lord and also the Lamb of God. But who is Jesus to the people who know Jesus best? These people followed Jesus during His public work for God on earth in Judea and Galilee. To them, Jesus is a Teacher. They named Him "Master," or "Rabbi." Both names mean the same thing: "Teacher."

Jesus' work as Savior is much the same as the work of teaching. What is more, Isaiah tells us that Jesus will do this work when He comes to this earth.

Read Isaiah 11:1–9. What do these verses show us about Jesus' work as a Teacher?

Isaiah 11 shows us one of the most surprising promises about the Messiah. The Messiah is the One that God chose to save us from sin. Isaiah 11:1–3 shows the coming Messiah as a Teacher. He is someone who brings knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. He gives good advice. These verses end with this surprising promise: "The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the sea is full of water." (Isaiah 11:9, ICB). Maybe it was these teachings from the Bible that caused Ellen G. White to say that "the work of education is the same as telling people about God's plan to save us." —*Education*, page 30, adapted.

Read John 3:1–3. Nicodemus named Jesus "rabbi." Nicodemus also said that Jesus' teaching gifts came from God because of the miracles Jesus did. Jesus accepted Nicodemus's words about His teaching as true. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again to understand or enter the kingdom of God. This shows that the gift of teaching people comes from God.

Yes, teaching is a gift from God. God chooses the ones He will give the gift of teaching to. Jesus accepted this gift from God. The people that Jesus taught understood that Jesus' gift came from God. The same thing happens today. Students are taught by those who have the gift of teaching. The students see that this gift comes from God.

Isaiah's special message promised that in the future the knowledge of God will go all over the earth. What part do we have in helping Isaiah's words come true?

MOSES AND GOD'S SPECIAL MESSENGERS (2 Timothy 3:14–17)

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–17. What do these verses teach about why the Bible is important in Christian education?

The Torah is the name for the first five books of the Old Testament. The word “Torah” has the same meaning as “the Law.” That is because there are many laws in these books. But Torah really means “teaching.” When most people think about “the law,” they think it means rules we must follow for God to accept us. But that is not what “the law” means. The law teaches us how to follow the Special Agreement, or Covenant, with God.

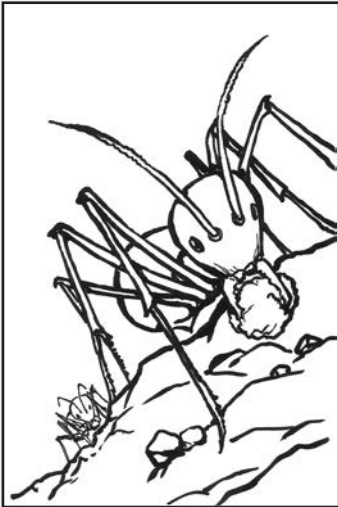
The next two parts of the Hebrew Bible are the books of the prophets, or God’s special messengers. The books of the prophets show how well God’s people learned the information that He taught them and how well they followed Him. The final part of the Old Testament is called “the writings” in Hebrew. It is full of examples that show the experiences of teachers and their students. Some teachers and students are a success. Some have less success. Examples of people who had success in learning their lessons are Esther, Ruth, Daniel, and Job. Some of the people who failed to learn their lessons are Job’s four friends. The book of Psalms is a songbook. Even so, it has at least three psalms that teach us lessons: Psalm 1, Psalm 37, and Psalm 73.

In the New Testament, we have the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospels give us many lessons that teach us spiritual truth. An example is the parables, or stories, of Jesus. Many of Paul’s letters start with a strong announcement of the Good News. But they end with lessons about daily life for Christians. The book of Revelation is full of Bible teachings. We see an example of this in Revelation 5:1–5. In these verses, we see a closed book that only the Lamb can open. The Lamb is Jesus, who is our Expert Teacher. The closed book shows the future of Jesus’ church. The knowledge in this book will help Christians who are living in the end times.

Not all teachings in the Torah can be used in our time. As an example, look at Deuteronomy 17:14–20. These verses talk about choosing a king. Today, of course, we do not pick kings to serve in our church. So, how do we decide which teachings in the Bible we should use for our time?



The Lamb is Jesus, who is our Expert Teacher.

WISE MEN AND WOMEN (1 Kings 4:29–34)

We can learn much from the ants. The ants save in the summer so that they will have enough food for winter.

Today, we clearly understand the meaning of the words for “school,” “study,” and “education.” But these words are not used much in the Bible. One word that is used a lot more in the Bible is “wisdom” or “wise.” The Old Testament talks about wise men and women (2 Samuel 14:2; Proverbs 16:23).

Read 1 Kings 4:29–34. What do these verses teach us about why wisdom is important?

The Bible tells us that King Solomon is a very wise man. He wrote about animal and plant life in the Bible. He also wrote many proverbs. Proverbs are wise sayings. He was an educated man (1 Kings 4:29–34). He wrote many parts of the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. These books are filled with his wise teachings and the wise teachings of other teachers during Bible times (read Proverbs 1:1; Proverbs 25:1; Proverbs 30:1; and Proverbs 31:1).

The Bible tells us that wisdom is something that we learn from parents and teachers, often when we are young (Ecclesiastes 12:1). But a person learns wisdom his or her whole life. Wisdom is not just spiritual teachings. Wisdom also includes lessons for everyday life. An example is Proverbs 6:6–8. These verses show us that we can learn much from the ants. The ants save in the summer so that they will have enough food for winter.

Wisdom is more than advice about everyday life. It also has a spiritual side to it, as we said. Wisdom starts with faith in God. It follows important rules (Proverbs 1:7). Wisdom helps us to be responsible in life. Wisdom helps us to be a blessing to people too. Wisdom does not answer all the questions we have. But it helps us to be happy with what we know. At the same time, wisdom causes us to continue to search for what we do not know. Then we will learn to know God better and to trust in His love. Jeremiah 18:18 tells us that the work a wise teacher does is important in God’s eyes. The work of a teacher is equal to the work of a religious leader and a special messenger. Teachers, religious leaders, and special messengers all give messages from God to His people. They do this by teaching the law, giving advice, and sharing special messages from God.

How can we learn wisdom? How do we share wisdom with new members? Why is this so important to do?

EDUCATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH (1 Corinthians 2:1–16)

We see one of the most wonderful rules about teaching in the life of Jesus. Jesus, the Expert Teacher, gets ready to leave His students. They have been with Him for 3 1/2 years. That is almost the same amount of time that we go to high school or college. At the end of that time, students are expected to be ready to manage life on their own.

But Jesus knows better. So, He gives His followers what we name “continuing education” today. For Jesus’ followers, this will be extra teaching from the Holy Spirit. The Bible also names the Spirit as the One who comforts us and is a Helper. “Helper” comes from the Greek word “parakletos.” God will give the Spirit to Jesus’ followers as a gift. This gift will not be taken away from them after it is given (John 14:16, 17). The Spirit also is named the Spirit of Truth. True, the Holy Spirit is not named Educator, or Teacher. But the Holy Spirit teaches us. He helps us to search for the truth and find it.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–16. What is Paul saying in these verses? Why is it so important for education?

Paul starts by telling the church in Corinth that he talked only about Jesus and His dying on the cross (1 Corinthians 2:2) when he first comes to Corinth. Paul does not give the Corinthians clever words of wisdom. He preaches only the Good News. The Corinthians continue to study Paul’s words (1 Corinthians 2:6). After these new Christians learn Paul’s lessons, Paul will come back to teach them wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:7; 1 Corinthians 2:10). The Spirit of God will join with the spirit of the learner. Then He will help them in their studies.

How deep will that study be? How much can people learn who are led by the Spirit? Paul gives us the answer at the end of the chapter where he ends with a quotation from Isaiah 40:13, NIV: “Who can ever understand the Spirit of the LORD? Who can ever give him advice?” The answer? No one can. At the same time, Paul says that “we have been given Christ’s way of thinking” (1 Corinthians 2:16, ERV). Paul shows us that Spirit-filled Christians can join with the mind of God. Then they can have any amount of learning and understanding that God wants to give them to help them to be saved (1 Corinthians 2:10–13).



The Holy Spirit is our Teacher. He helps us to search for the truth and find it.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Jesus asked His followers to share the Good News. That started a mighty work on the whole earth. Then Jesus' followers went everywhere and made new followers for Jesus. They taught them everything that Jesus taught them. They baptized these new followers. These new believers came from different countries. They spoke different languages. As they came up out of the water, they started their education as Christians. This is not surprising. These new believers had so much to learn.

Christians are always learning. We learn because we want to become better people. The Christian life and faith fill every part of daily life. There is so much to learn. Because of this, the New Testament is filled with both the Good News about Jesus and the teaching that Christians need to learn. A good example of the announcement of the Good News is 1 Corinthians 2:2. The teaching starts in 1 Corinthians 4 and continues on and off in the rest of the letter. What must Christians learn?

They must learn about work, rest, good behavior, how to get along with people, church and worship, money management, taking care of the poor, being good citizens, advice, family, marriage, raising children, food and how to cook it, clothing, and old age and how to get ready for the end of life and to be ready for Jesus. To be a Christian means to learn something about all these things and more. We cannot understand these things on our own. We must learn them together with God's help.



Christians are always learning. They must learn about food and how to cook it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How important is Christian education to the work that we do in sharing the Good News with people?
- ② What did Ellen G. White mean when she wrote, "Heaven is a school" (*Education*, page 301)?
- ③ Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–16 again. Look at what Paul tells us about what God shows to us with the help of His Spirit. Think about Paul's words that the leaders and the wisdom of the age will end. Paul said that a long time ago. How true are his words today? What will happen to some of the "wisdom" from our age?

WAKING UP FROM THE DEAD IN INDONESIA

Two student Bible workers are excited when their manager, Sungbae Gee, arrives at their jungle village. Their village is located on the island of Papua in Indonesia.

“Pastor, we have a wonderful story to tell you!” says Santos. Santos is 22 years old. He is a student from the University Klabat on the faraway island of Sulawesi. “We prayed for a dead eight-year-old girl. Then she woke up from the dead!”

Sungbae Gee flew in a small airplane to the island of Papua. Then he walked two days and a night to reach the village. Sungbae is a South Korean Bible worker who comes to the island of Papua to guide the student Bible workers in their work. But first, Sungbae wants to hear about the dead girl.

The student Bible workers tell him that something awful happened a few days ago. They found the villagers crying and singing at the one-room hut of the village chief. The villagers cried for Naomi, the village chief’s daughter. Naomi died two hours earlier. She lay on the hut floor. A witch doctor led the villagers in a song.

The student Bible workers started to cry. They deeply wanted the villagers to turn away from their dead tree gods and animal gods and trust in the living God. Santos and his friend sat next to Naomi’s dead body. Santos gently picked her up and wrapped his arms around her. “Dear God, please show a miracle to the villagers,” he prayed. “We gave them Bible studies. Show them that You are more powerful than trees and animals.”

The student Bible workers prayed for two hours. They held Naomi’s body and cried. They sang a song about Jesus. The name of the song was “Because He Lives.” The villagers were touched by the tears, the prayers, and the song. All of a sudden, Naomi woke up from the dead. She turned to her surprised mother. “Mommy, I am hungry,” she said.

Naomi’s father, the village chief, was surprised. With his own eyes, he saw something more powerful than his animal gods and tree gods.

The village chief gets all the villagers to come together for Bible studies when Sungbae arrives. All 57 adult villagers give their hearts to Jesus.

“It was a miracle,” says Sungbae. Today Sungbae is the president of Pakistan Adventist College. “Maybe some people think that waking up from the dead only happened two thousand years ago. But these miracles can happen today when we put full faith in God.”

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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