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The Prophetic

For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (*Luke 7:28*).

No greater prophet than John? That would include, apparently, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, even Moses. Yet, according to Jesus, *John was the greatest of them all?* How fascinating, especially because, unlike Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Moses—John the Baptist had no writings in the Bible, and yet John was a greater prophet than all those who, at least before him, did!

The prophetic gift wasn't limited only to the prophets whose writing became Scripture.

The point? The prophetic gift wasn't limited only to the prophets whose writing became Scripture. No, the prophetic gift included those whose work for the Lord involved something other than writing books

of the Bible.

The whole question of the prophetic gift, and of inspiration in general, has been a source of discussion and debate throughout church history. How were the prophets inspired? How do inspiration and revelation work? How much, if any, of culture and personal views appear in the writings of the prophets? If these questions still generate discussion within Christendom after centuries of debate, we're hardly going to solve them all in the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* this quarter. But we sure will do our best to try.

Issues regarding the nature of the prophetic gift and inspiration have been especially important to Seventh-day Adventists. In the book of Revelation, God promised that there will be a special manifestation of the prophetic gift at the time of the end (*Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9*). Seventh-day Adventists believe that the gift of prophecy has been manifested in the ministry of Mrs. Ellen G. White (1827–1915). For seven decades she gave messages of counsel and warning to our

Gift

church; and though she died in 1915, her books, full of spiritual insights and counsel, have been a source of tremendous blessing to countless millions whose lives have been, and continue to be, spiritually and theologically enriched through them. We truly have been given a gift.

Yet, questions remain. What is the role of the prophetic gift? If we claim the Bible as our final authority, what authority (if any) should the Spirit of Prophecy have? How should these writings be interpreted? Though this gift has been a blessing, in what ways has it been misused?

More than three decades have gone by since we last studied in Sabbath School the topic of the gift of prophecy. Since then the church has grown from 2.5 million members to more than 15 million (as of this writing). And though questions about the Spirit of Prophecy (along with the prophetic gift in general) remain unanswered, we believe we've been given more than enough reasons to believe in this special manifestation of prophecy among us.

However, the real focus of this lesson isn't just on the gift but on the Gift-Giver. As we study the question of inspiration and revelation, we'll learn about the Lord who loves this world so much He gave of Himself, in the person of Jesus, as the sacrifice for our sins. Though God, though sinless, though the Creator Himself, He became a human being, and in that humanity took upon Himself the punishment for our evil as the only way that we, as sinners, could stand pardoned and justified before Him.

That's the God we serve, and that's the God we seek to reveal in this quarter's lessons.

Gerhard Pfandl, a native of Austria, has been associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference since 1999.

How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Practice, and Apply

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, practice, and apply. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Practice); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Apply).

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in “The Lesson in Brief” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Practice: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Apply: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (*James 1:22*). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.