

“Let Brotherly Love Continue”



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Hebrews 13, Rom. 12:13, Eph. 5:3–5, 1 Pet. 5:1–4, Heb. 2:9, Heb. 4:16, Gal. 2:20.*

Memory Text: “Let brotherly love continue” (*Hebrews 13:1*).

Hebrews 13 presents the apostle’s concluding admonition: “Let brotherly love continue” (*Heb. 13:1*). He has affirmed throughout the epistle that we are of the household of the King–High Priest, Jesus, His brothers and sisters. The author does not conceive of the audience only as a group of individuals who work on their salvation in a one-on-one relationship with Jesus, but as a family, or household, saved together. Paul has characterized the work of Jesus for us as “brotherly love”: He was “not ashamed to call them brothers” (*Heb. 2:11, ESV*). Thus, believers should do for one another what Jesus did for them.

Throughout the letter, brotherly love involved “exhorting one another” so that no one would fall short of the grace of God (*Heb. 3:13; Heb. 10:24, 25; Heb. 12:15–17*). In chapter 13 it involves numerous elements: hospitality (*Heb. 13:2*), visiting and supporting prisoners and those who have been mistreated (*Heb. 13:3*), honoring marriage (*Heb. 13:4*), avoiding covetousness (*Heb. 13:5, 6*), remembering and obeying the leaders of the church (*Heb. 13:7–17*), and praying for the author himself (*Heb. 13:18, 19*).

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 26.

Caring for God's People

Read Hebrews 13:1, 2; Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; and 1 Peter 4:9. What was the role of hospitality in the early church?

Christianity was a wandering movement that often depended on the hospitality of both Christians and non-Christians. The instruction to “not forget” to show hospitality probably does not simply refer to the failure to think about taking someone in but about willful neglect.

Paul does not have in mind hospitality only for fellow believers. He reminds his readers that by entertaining strangers some have unwittingly entertained angels (*Heb. 13:2*). He probably had in mind the visit of the three men to Abraham and Sarah (*Gen. 18:2–15*). Offering hospitality implies sharing possessions with other people and suffering with them, which is what Jesus did for us (*Heb. 2:10–18*).

Brotherly love toward those in prison implied not only that believers remembered prisoners in their prayers but also that believers provided relief through material and emotional support. There was a risk of willful neglect of prisoners. Those who provided material and emotional support to those condemned by society identified themselves with them. In some sense, they became “partners” with them and made themselves vulnerable to social abuse (*Heb. 10:32–34*).

Paul's exhortation uses images and language to encourage the readers in regard to prisoners. First, the author evokes the readers' own support for their incarcerated brethren in the past. They had become “companions” or “partners” to those who had been “publicly exposed to reproach and affliction” (*Heb. 10:33, ESV*). Second, the language of “mistreatment” echoes the example of Moses, who chose “rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin” (*Heb. 11:25, ESV*). Finally, Paul captures the ideal of brotherly love. He reminds the readers that they “also are in the body” (*Heb. 13:3, ESV*). They share the same human condition and should treat others as they would like to be treated if they were in the same circumstances; that is, in prison. The people should, then, provide material and emotional support to prisoners, showing them that they are not abandoned.

What more can we do for those who are in prison, whether church members or not?

Covetousness and Sexual Immorality

Read Hebrews 13:4, 5; Luke 16:10–18; 1 Corinthians 5:1; Ephesians 5:3–5; and Colossians 3:5. What two evils are related in these passages?

Paul warns the readers against sexual immorality and greed because they are two grave threats to brotherly love. In fact, New Testament authors and ancient moralists noted a connection between them.

Paul's call to honor marriage implied the avoidance of anything that would belittle it. This avoidance included abstaining both from violation of the marriage oath and from unwarranted divorces (*compare with Matt. 19:9*). The exhortation to keep the marriage bed undefiled refers to avoiding the profanation of marriage through sexual relationships outside of marriage. The expression “fornicators” refers in the New Testament to every form of sexual immorality (*1 Cor. 5:9–11; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Eph. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:9, 10; Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:15*). In addition, Greco-Roman society was lax in regard to sexual ethics. A double standard was common: this allowed men license in their sexual relationships as long as they were discreet. Paul warns, however, that God will judge adulterers. Believers should not let social conventions establish their own ethical standards.

“Love of money” was one of the main categories of vices in the Greco-Roman world. In fact, in another letter, Paul referred to “love of money” as the source of all evils (*1 Tim. 6:10*).

The defense against this vice is an attitude that Paul encourages in several epistles. First, they should “be content” with the things they had (*also 2 Cor. 9:8; Phil. 4:11, 12*). Furthermore, Christians should believe and embrace God's promise that God would “never leave . . . nor forsake” them (*Heb. 13:5*). This promise was given in several places and moments to His people and is available to us today (*Gen. 28:15; Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; 1 Chron. 28:20*). Believers, then, are invited to respond to God's promise with the words of Psalm 118:6: “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” (*ESV*). This reference to Psalm 118 is appropriate because the psalmist expressed there his confidence in God, despite the suffering inflicted upon him by unbelievers.

What are the ways that contemporary society undermines sexual purity and, at the same time, feeds the human love of money? In what practical ways can we strengthen our defenses against these two dangerous vices?

Remember Your Leaders

Read Hebrews 13:7–17. What should be our relationship with our leaders?

Hebrews 13:7–17 contains an exhortation to respect and obey the leaders of the congregation. It begins with an invitation to “remember” those leaders of the past who spoke the Word of God to them, and it closes with a call to “obey” the leaders in the present (*Heb. 13:17*). The leaders of the past are most likely those who first preached the Word and founded the congregation. The call to “remember” them does not simply refer to a mental exercise of recollection or to an external tribute honoring them. Paul explains that they are to “remember” them by considering the outcome of their conduct and by imitating their faith.

For Paul, the greatest act of remembrance and praise is emulation. In this way, Paul has added the founding leaders of the congregation to the list of faithful heroes whom believers should carefully consider. This list includes the heroes of faith of Hebrews 11, and Jesus, the consummate Example of faith, in Hebrews 12. The author further notes that Jesus is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (*Heb. 13:8, ESV*). He stands in stark contrast to false teachers who change with time and whose teachings become “various” and “strange” (*Heb. 13:9, NKJV*).

The call to remember the leaders in Hebrews 13:7 is restated in more forceful terms at the end of the section. Believers are exhorted to obey the leaders, because they watch out for their souls. The leaders are described here as pastors who are in charge of the spiritual well-being of the congregation, their flock, and who will give an account to God for their spiritual state (*see also 1 Pet. 5:1–4, 1 Cor. 3:10–15*). Certainly, too, the idea should apply to all our church leaders, as well as at all levels of the denomination today.

The context also suggests that these leaders are undershepherds who serve under Jesus, “the great Shepherd of the sheep” (*Heb. 13:20*). The combination of care and faithfulness from the leaders and obedience or trust from the members will result in joy. This may mean that the leaders will be able to serve the congregation with “joy,” or that they will give an account of the congregation to God with joy and not with grief.

What can you do to strengthen or improve the leader-member relationship in your congregation, as well as around the world?

Beware of Diverse and Strange Teachings

Compare Hebrews 13:9; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 4:16; and Hebrews 6:19, 20. Where is grace obtained? How are our hearts strengthened?

The relationship between false teachings and foods, touched on in Hebrews 13:9, probably does not refer to the distinction between clean and unclean foods.

Why?

First, Paul does not seem concerned in the epistle with the distinction between clean and unclean foods. We know from Acts 15 that the early Christian church affirmed both that believers are saved by grace (*Acts 15:7–11*) and that they should continue to observe some food regulations (*Acts 15:19, 20*). The distinction between clean and unclean foods and other biblical regulations are not opposed to grace. In fact, Paul argues that the new covenant has put the law in the heart (*Heb. 8:10–12*). What the author makes very clear, however, is that animal sacrifices and the Levitical priestly mediation in the sanctuary have been superseded by the superior sacrifice and priestly mediation of Jesus (*Heb. 8:4, 5; Heb. 10:1–18*).

Second, the context suggests that Paul is criticizing the audience not for abstaining from certain foods but for partaking of them with the hope of somehow obtaining grace or merit (*Heb. 13:9*). He is probably warning against participating in Jewish ritual or cultic meals that were celebrated as an extension of the animal sacrifices in the temple and which were supposed to provide spiritual benefits, or grace. But grace is not mediated through these meals; grace comes only through the sacrifice and priestly mediation of Jesus Christ. Believers “have an altar” (*Heb. 13:10*), the cross of Christ, from which they can eat (*John 6:47–58*).

In Hebrews, “grace” comes from the throne of God (*Heb. 4:16*). This grace, mediated through Christ, is an “anchor,” “sure and steadfast,” that is fastened to God’s throne itself (*Heb. 6:19, 20; compare with Heb. 4:16*). It is this grace, which we receive through the sacrifice of Christ, that provides stability and assurance to our hearts. When the heart has been “established” in this way, it will not be “carried about” by new doctrines (*Heb. 13:9*), nor will it “drift away” from God (*Heb. 2:1, NKJV*).

Dwell on Christ’s complete sacrifice. Why, then, is the idea of anything that we do “adding” to this sacrifice contrary to the gospel and the grace that is found in Jesus?

Go to Jesus Outside the Camp

Compare Hebrews 13:10–14, Mark 8:34, Matthew 10:38, Luke 14:27, and Galatians 2:20. What does it mean to go to Jesus outside the camp?

The place outside the gate was the most impure of the whole camp. The carcasses of the sacrificial animals were burned there (*Lev. 4:12*). Lepers also were excluded from the camp (*Lev. 13:46*), and blasphemers and other criminals were executed there (*Lev. 24:10–16, 23; 1 Kings 21:13; Acts 7:58*). These regulations presupposed that the presence of God was within the camp. Anything that was impure was cast outside because God was unwilling to see any “unclean” or “indecent” thing in it (*Num. 5:3, Deut. 23:14*).

Jesus suffered on the cross outside Jerusalem (*John 19:17–20*). This emphasizes the shame that was cast upon Him (*Heb. 12:2*). He was officially condemned as one who had “blasphemed the name” and, therefore, was repudiated by Israel and executed outside the wall (*Mark 14:63, 64; see Lev. 24:11, 16*). Jesus was cast outside the camp as a “shameful,” “unclean,” or “indecent” thing (*Heb. 12:2*). Paul, however, exhorts believers to follow Jesus outside the gate, enduring the shame that He endured (*Heb. 12:2; see Heb. 13:13*). This also was the path Moses followed, who chose to bear “the reproach of Christ” instead of the treasures of Egypt (*Heb. 11:26*).

Paradoxically, however, Hebrews suggests that God’s presence is now outside the camp. The action of following Jesus outside the camp means not only “bearing His reproach,” or shame, but also going “forth to Him” (*Heb. 13:13, NKJV*) just as those Israelites who “sought the Lord” went “outside the camp” in the desert when Moses removed God’s tent from the camp after the golden-calf controversy (*Exod. 33:7, NKJV*). This account suggests that the rejection of Jesus by unbelievers also implied the rejection of God, as Israel did in the golden-calf apostasy (*Exodus 32, Exodus 33*). Thus, the path of suffering and shame also is the path to God.

Paul invites readers to follow Jesus as “the author and finisher” of their faith (*Heb. 12:2*), implicitly inviting them also to consider their present sufferings a momentary discipline that will yield “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (*Heb. 12:11*). They are leaving behind a corrupted city, or camp, in search of “the city that is to come,” whose architect is God (*Heb. 13:14, ESV; Heb. 11:10, 16*).

**What does it mean for you to follow Jesus “outside the camp”?
What are those aspects of the life of faith in Jesus that may bring
“reproach” or “shame” from those around you?**

Further Thought: “After the descent of the Holy Spirit, . . . [believers] rejoiced in the sweetness of communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth’s sake. In their daily association with one another, they revealed the love that Christ had enjoined upon them. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts. . . .

“But gradually a change came. The believers began to look for defects in others. Dwelling upon mistakes, giving place to unkind criticism, they lost sight of the Saviour and His love. They became more strict in regard to outward ceremonies, more particular about the theory than the practice of the faith. In their zeal to condemn others, they overlooked their own errors. They lost the brotherly love that Christ had enjoined, and, saddest of all, they were unconscious of their loss. They did not realize that happiness and joy were going out of their lives and that, having shut the love of God out of their hearts, they would soon walk in darkness.

“John, realizing that brotherly love was waning in the church, urged upon believers the constant need of this love. His letters to the church are full of this thought. ‘Beloved, let us love one another,’ he writes; ‘for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 547, 548.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Christian life often is considered the personal, individual relationship between Jesus and the believer. This is, however, only one aspect of the Christian life. Why is it important to remember that God is leading us as a group? What are my responsibilities to the group? What can I expect from the group?
- 2 What are the best indicators that brotherly love is strong in a congregation? Be prepared to create a list in your Sabbath School class.
- 3 What is *true* brotherly love? What are its characteristics, causes, and results? How would you differentiate it from *false* brotherly love?

Narrow Escape!

By SAENGSURIN PHONGCHAN

God loves me a lot.

When a friend moved away to Australia, I agreed to visit her parents every once in a while back here in Thailand. It wasn't easy to find the parents' house. I had to look up directions, and I learned that the house was quite some distance from my own. For my first visit, I filled my backpack and several bags with groceries. Carrying the food, I hailed a three-wheeled *tuk-tuk* taxi to take me to the bus station.

Partway through our trip, the *tuk-tuk* driver suddenly said, "I can't take you. Can I call you another *tuk-tuk*?" He didn't give any reason for his change of heart. What could I do? A second *tuk-tuk* picked me up, but the driver took me to the wrong place. I got into a third *tuk-tuk*.

It took nearly two hours to reach the bus station. I was fuming in frustration when I arrived. Why had it taken two hours and three *tuk-tuks* for the usual short and simple trip to the bus station?

"Where are you going?" the ticket seller asked me.

I was so upset that I couldn't talk to anyone, not even to the ticket seller.

"I'll talk to you later," I said, turning away.

After calming down, I bought a ticket and boarded a minivan.

During the trip to the house of my friend's parents, we passed a wrecked minivan on the side of the road. Our driver stopped to see if he could help. Returning to the minivan, he somberly told us that several passengers had died in the crash.

"This is the minivan that left right before us on this route," he said.

At that moment, I realized that I should have been on that minivan. I only missed the minivan because of the many delays in reaching the bus station.

My friend's parents were relieved to see me. They had heard about the crash. "We were so worried because we thought you were on that minivan," the mother said.

"God is so good," I said. Then I told my story about the delays to the parents, who were not Christians.

"The God or angel who protects you is really great!" the father exclaimed.

Yes, God loves me a lot.



Saengsurin Phongchan was principal at the Seventh-day Adventist school in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, that received part of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago. Thank you for your offering that helped the school, Adventist International Mission School—Korat, expand into a high school at a new site.

Part I: Overview

Key Texts: *Hebrews 13; Rom. 12:13; Eph. 5:3–5; 1 Pet. 5:1–4; Heb. 2:9; Heb. 4:16; Gal. 2:20.*

Lesson Themes: Paul concludes his letter with several admonitions for his audience to “let mutual love continue” (*Heb. 13:1, NRSV*), to “show hospitality to strangers” (*Heb. 13:2, NRSV*), and to “remember those who are in prison . . . [and] those who are being tortured” (*Heb. 13:3, NRSV*). Paul also admonishes his readers to ensure that “marriage be held in honor” (*Heb. 13:4, NRSV*), to “keep your lives free from the love of money” (*Heb. 13:5, NRSV*), to “obey your leaders and submit to them” (*Heb. 13:17, NRSV*), and to “pray for us” (*Heb. 13:18, NRSV*). Throughout the letter, Paul repeatedly calls on his audience to “exhort one another every day” (*Heb. 3:13, NRSV*), “to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together” (*Heb. 10:24, 25, NRSV*), and to see “that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled” (*Heb. 12:15, NRSV*). The letter, as a whole, is a “word of exhortation” (*Heb. 13:22, NRSV*).

While Paul encourages his audience to practice mutual love, he does not expect a certain emotional sentiment. Rather, he exhorts them to specific actions, such as showing hospitality, sharing with those who are imprisoned, practicing faithfulness in marriage, and shunning greed. Similarly, when Paul exhorts his audience to remember their leaders, he is not interested in an exercise in recollection. Rather, he wishes that in showing their faithfulness to God, they would obey, submit to, and respect their leaders. Finally, Paul warns his audience not to follow strange teachings but to follow the Master Teacher, Christ.

Part II: Commentary

Strange Teachings and Foods: In *Hebrews 13:9*, Paul warns his audience: “Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them” (*ESV*). This verse constitutes one of the more difficult texts in the book of *Hebrews*. What makes this verse difficult is the vague reference to its historical background. Because we cannot pinpoint exactly the precise situation to which the whole discourse was addressed, we should avoid drawing conclusions that are too strong.

In the verse prior to the one just quoted, we are told that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (*Heb. 13:8, ESV*). In contrast to Christ’s constancy stands the admonition not to be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. The metaphor of “carried away” (*Heb. 13:9, NRSV*) evokes images of wind and water, which carry things away. The use of this figure calls to mind the nautical metaphor used by Paul in Hebrews 2:1: “so that we do not drift away” (*NRSV*). There, Paul was keen in warning his audience to pay attention to what they heard from those who witnessed Christ. At that time, the audience was in danger of drifting away from Christ. Here, Paul reminds his audience of those stalwart teachers and leaders and calls for the imitation of their faith (*Heb. 13:7*). While leaders come and go, Christ is constant. Spiritual errors, however, have not ceased. That is why the audience is in danger of being carried away by the instrument of deceptive teachings. Those teachings seem to be in opposition to what they’ve heard from their teachers and leaders and are described by two adjectives: “diverse and strange” (*Heb. 13:9, ESV*).

Paul tells his audience that the strengthening of the heart happens by grace, not by food. The antithesis between food (which is fleeting) and grace (which is permanent) is a comparison often employed by Bible writers to show the difference between this temporary existence and something much better. Paul, for example, states: “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*Rom. 14:17, NRSV*). Likewise, Paul admonishes the Christians in Corinth: “ ‘Food will not bring us close to God.’ We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (*1 Cor. 8:8, NRSV*). Actually, food very often brought division in the early church (*Rom. 14:1–3*), as well as today.

What is the particular problem Paul addresses in Romans 14:1–3? Some scholars contend that members of the faith community in the church at Rome advocated eating meat offered to idols, something similar to the problem the church in Corinth faced (*1 Corinthians 8 and 1 Corinthians 10*). Comparing Hebrews with 1 Corinthians clearly shows that Paul uses much more forceful language with regard to food offered to idols (*1 Cor. 8:12*) than he does in Hebrews (“it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods” (*Heb. 13:9, ESV*)). So, most likely, the issue in Hebrews is not food offered to idols.

A more likely option inspiring the warning in Hebrews 13:9 would be dining on the food of temple sacrifices. What speaks in favor of this idea? Let us consider three scriptural possibilities. First, the immediate context seems to allude to the consumption of foods connected to Jewish sacrificial meals. Paul states, “We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat” (*Heb. 13:10, NRSV*). Here, Paul is alluding to the Old Testament priests who ate from cultic meals at the tabernacle.

Second, the very same word “food” is used in Hebrews 9:9, 10, in which we read: “gifts and sacrifices . . . deal only with food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body imposed until the time comes to set things right” (*NRSV*). Here, Paul makes the same point that he makes again in Hebrews 13:9: ceremonial sacrifices cannot perfect the conscience; rather, they deal with food and drink and various ceremonial washings. That is the reason the audience should not follow strange teachings, because these ceremonial sacrificial meals are useless even for those who practice (literally, “walk in”) them. Christians participate in a sacrifice far superior to any sacrificial meal (*compare Heb. 13:10–12*).

Third, the Greek term “food” (in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament) is used in Malachi 1:7, 12 with reference to sacrificial foods on the altar. Priests offered polluted food, defined as blind, sick, and lame animals, as sacrifices (*Mal. 1:7, 8*). In sum, all three reasons—the immediate context, the further context, and the Old Testament context—seem to point to the fact that the strange teachings about food relate to Jewish sacrificial meals.

Obey and Submit to Your Leaders: Within democratic or representative political systems of governance, an exhortation to obey and to submit to the leaders sounds rather authoritarian. Should a claim like that be made today? If so, how should we as members of a worldwide church respond to it?

Several New Testament books contain important instruction on church leadership and so it should not be surprising that the book of Hebrews does also. Church leaders are mentioned three times (*Heb. 13:7, 17, 24*). In verse 7, they are referred to as “those who spoke the word of God to you” (*Heb. 13:7, NRSV*). These individuals most likely were the missionary evangelists of Hebrews 2:3. Because of their preaching and teaching, the audience is confronted with “the word of God” as “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (*Heb. 4:12, NRSV*).

Three verbs draw attention to these leaders: “remember;” “consider;” and “imitate” (*Heb. 13:7, NRSV*). As the letter indicates, Paul has provided his audience with both negative (*Heb. 4:11*) and positive examples (*Heb. 11:4–38*) for avoidance and imitation, respectively. At this juncture, readers are supposed to consider the outcome of their leaders’ way of life. This contemplation implies that the leaders’ objectives have been accomplished. Thus, the audience now can review the course of their leaders’ efforts and imitate their faithful conduct.

Later in the chapter, we see reference again to leadership and how church members should relate to them: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an

account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you” (*Heb. 13:17, NRSV*). The authority of the leaders resides in faithfully executing the function of their office, “for they are keeping watch over your souls” (*Heb. 13:17, NRSV*). When leaders take their responsibilities seriously, they help their members avoid being carried away by all kinds of strange teachings and the consumption of foods that will not benefit even those who ingest them. At the same time, good leaders are aware that leadership demands accountability, as illustrated by the two servants in Jesus’ parable (*Matt. 24:45–51*).

Finally, Paul urges his listeners to obey and submit to their leaders so that their duty can be done with joy and not with sighing. Joy recalls the attitude with which the audience accepted the plundering of their possessions (*Heb. 10:34*). Such joy is the very reason that Jesus endured the cross and disregarded its shame (*Heb. 12:2*) and the consequence of paternal discipline (*Heb. 12:11*). The work of leaders is made joyful when their members submit to, and obey, them. When that is not the case, their work is made arduous. According to Paul, under such conditions the leaders groan, and the church reaps no benefits. Thus, a successful collaboration between leaders and members requires trust and benevolence.

Part III: Life Application

If church leadership has been abused in the past under certain circumstances, or in parts of the world in which political regimes make church governance difficult how can we find the harmony between leaders and members that Hebrews talks about?

1. Why is there so much aversion to authority in some cultures?

2. Should leadership be followed only if a person agrees with the leader? Discuss.

3. What criteria does Paul give us in Hebrews 13 for following leaders?

Notes



Lined area for writing teacher comments, consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

Genesis, our study for this quarter by Jacques Doukhan, reveals to us our true origins, that we are beings purposely and perfectly made in the image of God in a perfect world. Genesis also explains the Fall, that is, why our world is no longer perfect and why we as humans aren't as well. Genesis, however, also comforts us with God's promise of salvation in a world that, in and of itself, offers us nothing but suffering and death.

With its dramatic stories of miracles and judgments witnessing to God's holy presence, Genesis is awe-inspiring. But Genesis is also a book with moving human stories of love (Jacob and Rachel) and hatred (Jacob and Esau), of birth (Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's sons) and death (Sarah, Rachel, Jacob, Joseph), of murder (Cain, Simeon and Levi) and forgiveness (Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers). It is also an instruction book with lessons on ethics (Cain, Babel), on faith (Abraham, Jacob), and on the hope and promise of redemption (crushing of the serpent, Promised Land).

During this quarter, we will not only read and study the book of Genesis, but we also will enjoy its beautiful stories and learn to walk better with the Lord of Creation, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Lesson 1—The Creation

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The God of Creation** (*Ps. 100:1–31*)

MONDAY: **The Creation** (*Gen. 1:31*)

TUESDAY: **The Sabbath** (*Gen. 2:2, 3*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Creation of Humanity** (*Gen. 1:26–29*)

THURSDAY: **The Duty of Humanity** (*Gen. 2:15–17*)

Memory Text—*Genesis 1:1*

Sabbath Gem: Our Creation, like our Redemption, is a gift from God. How profound it is that both Creation and Redemption exist in the seventh-day Sabbath commandment.

Lesson 2—The Fall

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The Serpent** (*Rev. 3:1, 2*)

MONDAY: **The Forbidden Fruit** (*Gen. 3:1–6*)

TUESDAY: **Hiding Before God** (*Gen. 3:7–13*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Fate of the Serpent** (*Gen. 3:15*)

THURSDAY: **Human Destiny** (*Gen. 3:15–24*)

Memory Text—*Genesis 3:15*

Sabbath Gem: Amid the tragedy of the Fall, hope is found in Genesis 3:15. This verse contains “The First Gospel Promise.” Despite the Fall, God made a way of escape for us all.

Lessons for People Who Are Legally Blind The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on CD to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services for the Blind, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097. Phone: 402-488-0981; email: info@christianrecord.org; website:www.christianrecord.org.