

Life



SABBATH—APRIL 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:7; Psalm 139:13, 14; John 1:1–3; John 3; John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 2:1–5.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I have come so they can have [eternal (forever; without end)] life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way’ ” (John 10:10, NIV).

TODAY PEOPLE LIVE MUCH LONGER than in past generations. This is true with people in highly developed nations. And that is good. It is one thing to live a long time. But what kind of life will this be? Sometimes doctors do everything they can to keep a person alive on machines, even if the person cannot live independently.

But the way we live life is not limited to what a person can do physically. It is more than that. What do we do with the years that we have been given? Do we live with a purpose and in peace with others? Do we have good relationships with other humans and with our Creator (God)? These are important questions for all who have been given the gift of life.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Life is a gift that only comes from God. Now that we have this life, what does it mean for us? How are we to live it? Because it is a gift, we are responsible to God for taking good care of our lives. That includes taking good care of our souls as well as our bodies. At the same time, our belief in Jesus brings us into relationships with other believers. And we become part of a new family, both in heaven and on earth. All of them should influence (effect) the kind of life we have here now.

SUNDAY—APRIL 19**THE GIFT OF PHYSICAL¹ LIFE
(Psalm 139:13, 14)**

How did life begin? Some people point to life evolving without God's help. Others argue for God's role in life evolving over millions of years. During this period, "simple" forms of life somehow made their appearance and grew into more advanced forms, including humans (men, women, or children). But this belief creates more questions than it answers. (Nothing in the Bible even hints that God used evolution² to create us.) Meanwhile, several well-known thinkers have in recent years argued that this theory (idea) is in deep trouble. But even the strongest supporters of evolution must admit that life remains as great a mystery (secret) as ever.



**Despite what we know,
life largely remains a mystery.**

At the same time, those who believe in God as the Creator of this

world and of all the universe³ do not have all the answers. But the belief that God is Creator makes far more sense than a belief that human life happened from chance.

According to Genesis 2:7 and John 1:1–3, what does God make known to us about the beginning of life?

Life, in general, is strange and unknown. We have a lot of knowledge about the beginning and growth of human life. But each new parent who holds a newborn child in his or her arms knows that this new life is really a gift. It is the basic Christian belief that life (and human life) is very special and holy.



**Every new life born in this
world is a gift.**

1. physical—of the body.

2. evolution—the belief that we became humans (men or women) by slowly changing from a lower form of life to a higher form of life.

3. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

What words does David use in Psalm 139:13, 14 to describe the miracle of human life and the wonderful design of the human body?

Everybody knows the words of the well-known song that says God has “the whole world in His hands.” This song speaks to each one of us as persons. No matter who we are or where we are, God holds us in His hands. We owe our physical life to Him, all of it—from beginning to end.

What difference does it make that God is the Creator of all life, including our own? How should our belief in the beginning of life influence our views about things such as the death penalty, abortion, and euthanasia?⁴



God gave His people manna in the wilderness. He always provides for our needs and well-being.

This truth becomes even clearer in the ministry of our Lord (Jesus). Even a light reading of the Gospels⁵ tells us that Jesus’ understanding and practice of religion was very practical (useful).

In what ways did Jesus show interest in His own physical well-being and the people’s around Him? Read the following verses and study what advice each verse has for us today.

- Healing (Mark 5)
- Rest (Mark 6:30–32)
- Feeding (Mark 6:33–43; especially verse 34)
- Sabbath (Luke 4:16)

In what other areas did Jesus show His care for the physical well-being of people?

How we treat our body deals with

4. euthanasia—the killing of hopelessly sick or injured people in a fairly painless way.

5. Gospels—the first four books of the New Testament that tell the story of Jesus’ life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

MONDAY—APRIL 20

THE HEALTH OF OUR BODIES (Mark 6:30–32)

We owe our life to our Creator. So we should be careful with what God has entrusted to us. There is enough proof in the Bible that God is interested in our being well. He showed His care for the people of Israel often. He gave His people many laws about healthful eating and cleanliness. He gave them manna in the wilderness. God took care of Elijah when there was famine in the land. These are just a few of many examples of God’s care for our physical well-being.

stewardship.⁶ All our things we own, our time, our talents, our body, are God's property. So, we are required as faithful stewards to care for these gifts. But care for our body also is related to the Bible view of the human person. Many Christians believe that we are an immortal (never dying) soul that lives in a mortal⁷ body of flesh and blood. But the Bible teaches that we are a unity (joined together as one) of body, soul, and spirit, which cannot be separated. Our religion deals with our entire person. It influences all parts of life.

The Bible shows that some foods are not fit to be eaten (for example, read Leviticus 11). But God's kingdom is not to be limited to a question of what we eat and drink (Romans 14:17). How do we keep the right balance in diet and in all areas of healthy living?

TUESDAY—APRIL 21

SPIRITUAL LIFE (2 Corinthians 5:17)

How do you understand the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:17? How are we a "new creature"⁸ in Jesus?

Many do not know, but all people on this earth are God's by birth. This life we all share in this world is very tem-

porary (lasting a short time). Sin has brought loss and death to every human and to all life on the planet. Nothing is safe from the crushing results of sin.

But the good news is that we have a choice whether this life is all we have or whether we will accept the wonderful gift of eternal (without end) life.

This eternal life means that we need to experience a new life in Jesus. The Bible uses several examples to describe this important experience. The best example is that of a new birth. This example is used to picture the turning point after a person accepts the gift of eternal life in Christ. When this happens, the "old person" dies, and a "new person" is born.

Nowhere in the Bible is this new birth experience described more clearly than in John 3. Read the part in John 3:1–21 that describes Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus. What does it tell us about the nature of this new birth? What is your own understanding of the new birth?

The new life of the follower of Jesus has turned around from a self-serving life to a life of faithful service in the kingdom. The newly born spiritual (godly) person needs to feed on the right kind of spiritual food. He or she also must grow over time. Peter encourages us to "grow in the grace⁹ of

6. stewardship—how we manage our health, money, time, talents, and property.

7. mortal—not eternal (without end); can die in due time.

8. creature—the new person we become when we give our lives to Jesus.

9. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Get to know him better” (2 Peter 3:18, NIV).

Suppose someone asked you, “Have you been born again?” How would you answer? What does your answer say to you about your walk with Jesus?



Just as we must feed our body healthy food, the newly born spiritual person needs to feed on the right kind of spiritual food.

WEDNESDAY—APRIL 22

SOCIAL LIFE (Philippians 2:1–5)

People need other people. Of course, there are moments we like to be alone. We need private time for prayer and quiet study. Some people need more private space and private time than do others. But we feel sorry for people who are always alone. We feel sorry for those who do not have enough social skills to establish ties of friendship and who always fail to enter into meaningful relationships.

The Bible pictures people as parts

of different social groups. The family, groups of friends, and church are strong groups. The Bible points to Jesus’ Father as the Father of all peoples. This means we all are brothers and sisters (Acts 17:26). Living in relationships is a very important part of human life. When Adam was created, God quickly created a partner for him. Family life was a God-planned model (example) for human happiness. The Bible often points to the great value of true friendship and the blessings of belonging to a wider community (group).

According to Philippians 2:1–5, what is the key to the success of our social relationships? How well do you live these principles (rules) yourself?

The different parts of our Christian life are joined together in our membership to the body of Christ: the church. The church is more than a place where people who share same thoughts and interests meet and enjoy fellowship. For many people the church is the most important point of their social life. This has both positive and negative results. Without Christian friends we have few role models. Being with others who also serve God and also have accepted a Christian lifestyle will help us to remain faithful. They also will encourage us to grow in our Christian relationship. But if we have no friends outside the circle of fellow believers, we will have few opportunities (chances) for witness

(sharing Jesus). In many parts of the world friendship evangelism¹⁰ is the most successful method (a way of doing something) of church growth.

Studies have shown that most new Adventists lose all their non-Adventist friends within seven years. Is this true for you? What are the reasons? Why is it worth taking time and energy to build friendships with non-Adventists, or even with non-Christians?

THURSDAY—APRIL 23

FULL LIFE (John 10:10)

John 10:10 is Jesus' famous statement that He has come to give us life "to the full" (NIV). Other Bible translations speak of "abundant [plentiful, spiritual] life."

Here is a list of important parts of this "full" life. Add other parts to that list and find support from the Bible for these different parts:

1. It is a life full of what we can do.
2. It is a life with a purpose.
3. It is a life of inner peace.

As we grow in our Christian life, we believe more and more that Christ does offer us life "to the full." But we often have a hard time explaining this

to those who have not given themselves to Christ. For them the Christian life appears to be rather boring. They do not like the idea that it seems to bring all kinds of rules and limits. But Christians have learned that not all experiences make our lives richer. Many things might carry a minus sign rather than a plus sign.

What are some kinds of experiences we are all better off without? Why?

Life "to the full" does not always mean that we have good health, good looks, a good education, and a nice job. Strong, loving relationships may be part of a full life. But there is more to a full life than these things. Life "to the full" is the kind of life that has meaning. It is a life that gives inner peace. Its happiness does not depend on worldly things. It is a life that is connected to God. This kind of life will be eternal (forever; without end).

Why does all this talk of an "abundant life" sound very good? What about those who seem to have an "abundant life" but do not know Jesus and do not seem to be very interested in knowing Him? According to 2 Corinthians 4:18, how do we understand this experience when we all know Christians who are suffering terribly now?

10. evangelism—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

FRIDAY—APRIL 24

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White’s famous book *Steps to Christ* focuses on our life in Christ. One special chapter is chapter 8: “Growing Up Into Christ” (pages 67–76). “A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no special, exciting feeling, but there should be peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself. It is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength. Your lack of knowledge is connected with His wisdom. Your weakness is joined with His power. So you are not to look to yourself. You are not to let the mind think about self, but look to Christ. Let the mind think about His love, about the beauty and the perfection of His character.” —Page 70, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ When people cannot take care of themselves or have an illness that is life threatening, the question often asked is whether they are worth keeping alive. Should the life they live be described as only physical? Or are other parts of a life also important, or even more important? How does our understanding of the beginning of life influence our answer?

❷ For many people the threatening thought of death robs life of all meaning and purpose. Sooner or later we will all be dead and every memory of us forgotten. So what can this life mean? How has Jesus answered that question for us and removed this thought?

❸ What parts of your modern culture¹¹ rob life of its full meaning? What kind of Christian teachings are being pushed forward that make life seem less than it should be? How can we as Seventh-day Adventist Christians answer these challenges?

❹ In what ways can our health message and principles of better living work with the promise of an “abundant [spirit-fulfilling] life”? Might we fail to meet the full ideal of this promise? If so, how?

SUMMARY: This week’s study has been about the “full” or “abundant” life found in Jesus Christ. It is a life lived in a responsible way by taking care of our bodies as best as we can. It is also a life lived in relationships. This is because God made humans to live in fellowship with others. Most of all, it is a life totally renewed in Jesus. This is the kind of life that will be changed and will be growing in God’s grace.

11. culture—the way people live, dress, think, eat, and get along with one another.