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# Walking the

One of the great eighteenth- to nineteenth-century thinkers, Pierre Laplace, wrote a book about the motion of the planets. He called it *Celestial Mechanics*, and he presented a copy of the book, in person, to Emperor Napoleon. Someone had told Napoleon beforehand that the book never mentioned God. The emperor took the book and said, “Mr. Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on the system of the universe, and have never even mentioned its Creator.” Laplace, unflinchingly, responded, “I have no need of that hypothesis.”

This story is a metaphor for what’s been known as “the modern era,” an era in which logic, reason, and science have formed the foundation of all truth. According to this view, all reality can be reduced to formulas, to laws, and to scientific predictions. If it can’t be explained through logic, reason, and science, it isn’t real.

*Experience never should take away from the importance of correct biblical teaching.*

In recent years there’s been a backlash against this thinking. People don’t believe, and rightly so, that all reality can be explained in cold rationality alone. There’s something about us that

no formula, no test tube, and no scientific law ever could capture.

This backlash has spilled over into all realms of life, including religion; however, as with most reactions, it has in some cases gone too far, even to the point of pushing aside or ignoring the concept of doctrinal truth. What’s important, we’re told, isn’t teachings or doctrine but experience. What does your faith do for you now—that’s what matters. Instead of saying, “Here are compelling reasons to believe in Jesus Christ and His promise of salvation,” the trend (again, a backlash) is to say, “Our community of faith invites you to join us in our venture of trust and commitment.”

Now, this doesn’t have to be all bad. Did not Jesus say that His truth would have concrete and practical results in our lives (*John 8:32*)? Of

# Walk

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course. Truth is not just knowledge of doctrines and texts but something that influences the believer on a personal level. Truth affects the spiritual life and impacts how a person will relate to the challenges of daily living. There is a practical, life-changing aspect of our religion that never should be denied or denigrated. At the same time, the role of experience never should take away from the importance of correct biblical teachings.

This quarter we want to look at both aspects of our faith: doctrine and experience. In our study during this quarter we will focus on 13 essential themes of the Christian faith, 13 essential teachings. Each week's lesson will attempt to maintain a careful balance between a correct biblical understanding of these various elements of our faith and how they impact our daily experience. It's our hope that at the end of the quarter you not only will understand these themes better but also will have been enriched as far as your Christian experience is concerned. Each lesson is not just about truth but about "the truth as it is in Jesus."

After all, He is the One who is the Alpha and Omega of our faith. There may be 13 different themes, but they will have one focus: the One in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (*Acts 17:28*).

*Reinder Bruinsma, born in the Netherlands, has served in various offices in his long career in the church. Bruinsma is the author of almost twenty books, some of which have been translated into a number of languages, and was president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Netherlands when he wrote this Bible study guide.*

# 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.