

## The Dying Seed



### SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 10

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Philippians 2:5–9; Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Samuel 3:10; 1 Samuel 2:12–1 Samuel 3:18; 1 Samuel 13:1–14; Zechariah 4:6.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘For sure, I tell you, unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, it will only be a seed. If it dies, it will give much grain [food crop]’ ” (John 12:24, NLV).



The seed has no control over where it falls or how it falls to the ground.

**JESUS GIVES US A WORD PICTURE** about a wheat seed that dies. The dying wheat seed shows us what it means to give our lives fully to God. First, the wheat seed falls from the wheat plant. The seed has no control over where it falls or how it falls to the ground. The seed also has no control over the ground that covers it.

Second, the seed waits to grow. The wheat seed lies in the earth. But the seed doesn't know what will happen in the future. (It is only a seed of wheat, and of course, a seed can't think!)

Third, the seed dies. The seed must die to become a wheat plant. The seed gives up its safe place in the earth as a seed. The seed must “die.” That is, the seed must give up the past to become something new. Then the seed may change into a plant that makes more food for us to eat.

**SERVING GOD (Philippians 2:5–9)**

Read Philippians 2:5–9. What important message is there for us in these verses?

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Today, we are told to stand up for ourselves and make sure that we get our rights or the special things that belong to us by law as citizens. This advice is good and is often right. But sometimes God may ask us to give up some things so that we may serve Him better. Our giving up these things may not be easy and may cause us to suffer.

Look at how Jesus gave up things to do what God asked Him to do (Philippians 2:5–8). These verses show us three things that Jesus did to obey God’s plan for Him. Before Paul tells us what these three things are, he says: “Think the same way that Christ Jesus thought” (Philippians 2:5, CEV).

What three things did Jesus do to save us? First, “Jesus has always been as God is. But He did not hold to His rights [the special things that belong to Jesus] as God. He put aside everything that belonged to Him and made Himself the same as a servant who is owned by someone” (Philippians 2:6, 7, NLV).

Second, Jesus did not come to earth as a powerful person. “He became human by being born as a man” (Philippians 2:7, NLV).

Third, as a human Servant, Jesus did not live a long life of peace on this earth. No, “after He [Jesus] became a man, He gave up His important place and obeyed by dying on a cross” (Philippians 2:8, NLV).

**What part of Jesus’ behavior do we want to copy in our own lives? We all agree that as citizens we have rights. These rights are rights or special things that belong to us by law. We must protect these rights. Do you think that God may ask us to give up our rights to serve Him better? Explain. Now read Philippians 2:9. How does this verse help us understand why we need to give everything to God?**



**Jesus did not come to earth as a powerful person. “He became human by being born as a man” (Philippians 2:7, NLV).**

## FIRST, WE MUST “DIE” (Romans 12:1, 2)



**Paul says that if you want to know God’s plan, you must give Him everything first!**

Many people wish to know God’s plan for their lives. They say, “If only I knew God’s plan! When I do, I will give up everything for Him.” But we may continue to be confused about God’s plan after we make this promise. Romans 12:1, 2 explains why. In these verses, Paul talks about how we can know God’s plan. Paul says that if you want to know God’s plan, you must give Him everything first!

Read Romans 12:1, 2. In these verses, Paul says, “You will know what God wants you to do” (Romans 12:2, NLV) when you do these things:

1. You understand “God’s mercy” for you (Romans 12:1, NIV).
2. You give yourself the same as a living offering to God (Romans 12:1).
3. Your thinking changes completely (Romans 12:2).

When your thinking changes completely, then you can understand God’s plan for your life. But first you must die to your past. In the same way, Jesus suffered and died for us. We must die to our pasts, too.

**Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the parts of yourself that are not completely “dead.” What things do you need to give up so that the Holy Spirit can help you become a “living offering” for God?**

When self is not completely dead, God allows difficult experiences, tests, and suffering to show us our sin. Suffering also helps us understand why Jesus gave Himself for us. Elisabeth Elliot writes, “When we give to God the things we want the most, we start to understand the cross. . . . Our own experience of dying to self is much less painful or powerful than our Savior’s death. But our suffering gives us the chance to know Jesus. Our suffering is an invitation from Jesus. Jesus invites us to fellowship with Him.”—*Quest for Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1996), page 182, adapted.

**Read and pray over Romans 12:1, 2. Think about the things you need to give up. You want to be a living offering to God. How does Romans 12:1, 2 help you to understand better what Jesus suffered for you on the cross? How can thinking about Jesus’ sufferings help you fellowship with Jesus?**

## PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD (1 Samuel 3:10)

“The LORD came and stood there. He called as he did before, saying, ‘Samuel, Samuel!’ Samuel said, ‘Speak. I am your servant, and I am listening [paying attention]’ ” (1 Samuel 3:10, ERV).

Did the Holy Spirit ever talk to you, but you ignored Him? What happened next? Everything went wrong, didn't it? Maybe you thought to yourself later, “Oh no! Why didn't I pay attention?”

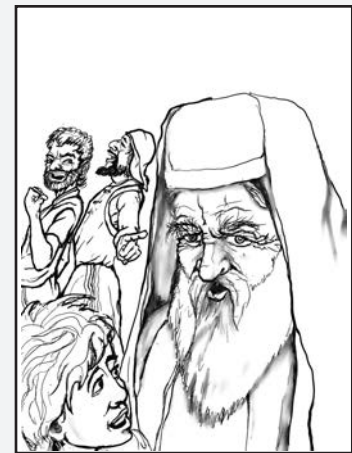
1 Samuel tells the story about an old man, his two evil sons, and a little boy. The old man's sons do not pay attention to the Lord. But the little boy does. God gives the two sons strong warnings to stop doing evil. But the two sons do not change.

**Read the story about the two sons in 1 Samuel 2:12–1 Samuel 3:18. Compare the ones in this story who pay attention to God with the ones who don't. How are they different?**

Eli's sons don't care about God or about serving Him. They have their own plans. When Eli learns what God wants, he talks to his sons. But then Eli doesn't do anything else to punish them. His sons are not ready to give their lives fully to God and to His plan for their lives. Young Samuel is completely different from these bad men.

Preacher Charles Stanley explains that it is important to pay attention to what God says. Stanley says: “The Holy Spirit . . . does not only share information with us. The Holy Spirit also talks to us to get us to answer. The Holy Spirit knows when all our attention is on our own plans. When we care only about what we want, we will not pay attention to anything God says. At these times, the Holy Spirit often says nothing. He waits for us to hear Him. Then we will be ready to obey.”—*The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), pages 179, 180, adapted.

**How willing are you to hear and obey God? What things keep you from obeying Him? What do you need to do in your life to help you to be more willing to obey Him?**



**The old man's sons do not pay attention to the Lord. But the little boy does.**

**TRUSTING SELF MORE THAN GOD (1 Samuel 13:1–14)**

When Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, she doubted God. But there was more to her sin than doubt. Eve believed that she was smart enough to decide for herself what was good. She trusted her own wisdom. When we trust our own wisdom more than God's, we cause or start many problems.

The story about King Saul shows us the mistakes Saul made when he trusted himself. We can see the disaster that so often happens when we trust self. Samuel put oil on Saul to show that God chose Saul to be king (1 Samuel 10:1). Then Samuel gave Saul some important rules and advice to follow (1 Samuel 10:8). But Saul didn't obey.

**Read the next part of the story in 1 Samuel 13:1–14. What does Saul do that leads to his bad end?**



**Saul judges what is happening with his own eyes without waiting for God.**

Saul did three things that caused him to depend on himself soon after he became king. The problem is that none of these three things is bad by itself. But each of these things shows us that Saul acted on his own without God's help or permission. Let's look at what happened.

1. Saul says, " 'I saw' " (1 Samuel 13:11, NLV). Saul sees his army run away. Saul also sees that Samuel will not be there to help him (1 Samuel 13:11). Saul feels a lot of pressure to do something. So, he judges what is happening with his own eyes without waiting for God.

2. Next, Saul says, " 'I said' " (1 Samuel 13:12, NLV). Saul announces that the Philistines will beat Israel's army. What Saul sees with his own eyes causes him to have the wrong idea about what is happening.

3. Finally, Saul says, " 'I felt.' " Saul feels that it was right to kill animals and offer them to God (1 Samuel 13:12, NIV). Here we see that Saul's thoughts cause his feelings to change for the worse.

All of us have had the same experience as Saul. We depend on what we see. That leads us to depend on our own human thinking. And that leads us to depend on our own human feelings. Then we act on those feelings.

**Why do you think it was so easy for Saul to follow his own ideas right after God told him what to do? If we know we are weak humans, why do we trust in ourselves? What can we do to learn to trust the Lord's commands more than our own ideas and feelings?**

## SUBSTITUTES (Zechariah 4:6)

We must not depend on our own wisdom and strength. We must depend on God's. We also must not depend on things that make us feel good. When some people get very sad, they go shopping for something to make them happy. When some people don't feel they are worth much, they work hard to be famous. When other people have trouble in their marriage, they look for someone else to give them love. When we do that, we are trying to feel better without God.

We can use many things to help us feel less stress and to feel better about ourselves. But these things often do not solve our problems. These things do not teach us how to do better the next time the stress comes. The problem is that we often do not depend on God Himself.

People often replace God with three substitutes:

**1. Human thinking or past experience.** We may depend on human thinking or experience when we need God's wisdom.

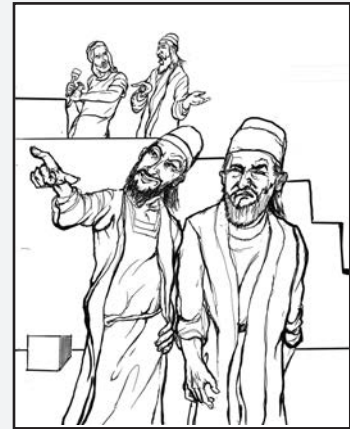
**2. Paying no attention.** We may choose to pay no attention to our problems and not think about them at all. What we really need to do is ask God for His help to solve our problems.

**3. Avoiding God.** We may choose to run away from our problems and to avoid God. What we need to do is communicate with God and ask Him for His strength.

Zechariah helps us to understand what to do when Satan tries to get us to replace God with one of these substitutes. After many years away from home, the Jews left Babylon and started to build the temple in their own land. But people tried to stop the Jews from building the temple (read Ezra 4–6). So, Zechariah came with a message of encouragement to Zerubbabel, the leader of the work.

**Read Zechariah's message in Zechariah 4. What does God mean in Zechariah 4:6? What does the Holy Spirit have to do with rebuilding the temple? What does this answer teach us about the connection between the Holy Spirit and the everyday things we do in life?**

God does not stop the troubles that His people have as they rebuild the temple. God does not remove the stress from Zerubbabel. God will not always keep us from suffering. But when suffering and troubles come, God may use them as tests to teach us to depend on Him.



**People tried to stop the Jews from building the temple.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Eli and His Sons,” pages 575–580, and “The Presumption of Saul,” pages 616–626, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Eli failed to do his duty as a father. He failed to punish his children for their sins. Every father and mother in the land can see Eli’s mistakes as a parent. Eli spoiled his sons and refused to punish them. So, Eli’s sons became very evil. Both Eli and his sons were guilty in God’s eyes. Eli was guilty because he did not punish his sons for their evil behavior. His sons were guilty because they sinned and were not sorry for the evil they did. So, God refused to accept any offerings or killed animals they offered Him for their sins.”—Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance*, page 276, adapted.



“Eli failed to do his duty as a father.”

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Talk in class about what Jesus gave up in heaven to come to earth. What does Jesus on the cross teach us about what we need to give up? How does giving up things save other people? In what ways can we copy the love that Jesus showed us on the cross? How can we show this love to other people?
- ② Many people are afraid about what will happen if they give their lives fully to God. What advice can you give to someone who depends on himself or herself and not on God? What can you say to help remove the fears of someone who is afraid because he or she can’t know or control the future?
- ③ As a class, pray for people you know who have a hard time trusting God. Pray that they will see that trusting God gives us peace. How can God use you to help other people know His love? How can you show them that God is willing to take care of all their needs?

## PART 12: FATHER IS BAPTIZED!

The day came for Father to get baptized. Father drove with Mother and Junior to the church in Manaus, Brazil. About 400 people filled the church. Mother and Junior sat down on the front row. Pastor Sergio Alan A. Caxeta greeted them. Pastor Sergio was one of the local presidents of the Adventist Church in Brazil. Pastor Sergio was going to baptize Father. The pastor asked Mother how she felt. "Fine," she said happily.

Pastor Sergio confessed to Mother he had felt a little afraid of baptizing Father. But then he prayed that afternoon. "Lord," he said, "please help me. I don't feel strong enough. Please give me Your peace so I can baptize Eduardo." After he prayed, all doubt and fear left Pastor Sergio's heart.

Pastor Ricardo Coelho was at the church, too. Pastor Ricardo was the pastor of the church that Father and his family went to in Manaus. Dilma Araujos dos Santos and her son Clifferson also came for the baptism. Father and his family first learned about the Seventh-day Adventist faith from Clifferson and his mother. Father greeted Dilma and Clifferson. Then Father started to go downstairs to put on the special clothes for his baptism.

When Father went down the stairs, a man ran up to him. Father looked at the man's eyes. The man's eyes rolled back in his head. Then the man fell on the stairs and started twisting and shaking. "I've been ordered to kill you!" the man screamed.

The man hid a small knife in his pocket. In the past, Father used the same type of knife to kill animals at the Candomblé temple. But before the man pulled out his knife, Pastor Ricardo and several other male church members grabbed the man and led him to a backroom. There, they found his weapon.

A short time later, Father walked into the pool. Church members sang a hymn when Father went under the water.

After the baptism, Pastor Ricardo told the church about the attack on Father's life. Pastor Ricardo invited a doctor named Luiz to come up front. Dr. Luiz often came to church but hadn't accepted Jesus. Pastor Ricardo asked Dr. Luiz to share some news about the man with the knife. Dr. Luiz told church members, "I'm a heart doctor. I checked the heartbeat of the man with the knife. The man's heart pumped too fast. No human heart can pump that fast and live. I now know that the war between God and Satan is real. I saw the war happen right here. Praise the Lord that nothing bad happened. God is in control!"

Because of Father's baptism, Dr. Luiz and the man with the knife gave their lives to Jesus.

Your 13th Sabbath Offering will help build eight churches in South America. Four of these churches will be built in Brazil, where Father (Eduardo Ferreira dos Santos) and his family live.

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**"I've been ordered to kill you!" the man screamed.**