

Contents

1	The Great Controversy: The Foundation—September 29–October 5	5
2	Revelation, and the God Revealed in It—October 6–12	17
3	Mankind: God’s Handiwork—October 13–19	29
4	Salvation: The Only Solution—October 20–26	41
5	Growing in Christ—October 27–November 2	53
6	Victory Over Evil Forces—November 3–9	65
7	“Arming” for Victory—November 10–16	77
8	The Church: In Service to Humanity—November 17–23	89
9	The Church: Rites and Rituals—November 24–30	101
10	The Law and the Gospel—December 1–7	113
11	The Christian Life—December 8–14	125
12	Last Things: Jesus and the Saved—December 15–21	137
13	When All Things Become New—December 22–28	149

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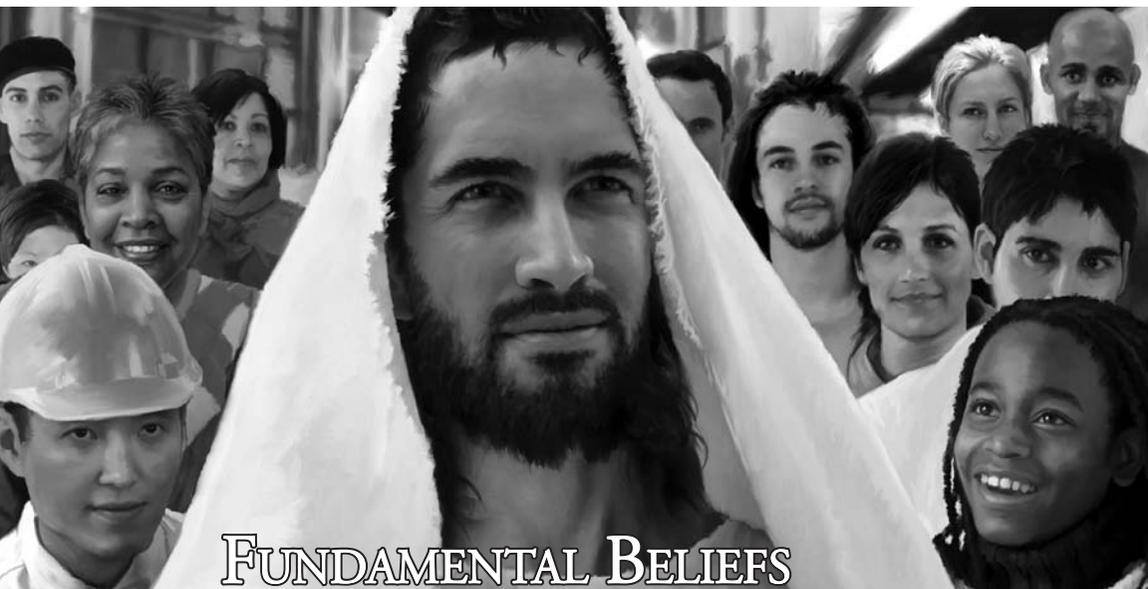
Concept Design
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The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, whose members serve as consulting editors. The published guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).



Everyone believes in something. Even those who claim to believe in nothing, or in nothing *absolute*, still believe in something (in this case, their relativism). Beliefs are important because they greatly impact the way in which we live. For some Christians, the feeling of belonging or a sense of community is more important than belief or behavior. Yet community must be based on shared beliefs, shared goals, and common concerns.

For Seventh-day Adventists—people from almost every conceivable manifestation of humanity—what holds us together as a community are our “fundamental beliefs,” all 28, which are foundational for growing in Christ and living as a community of faith in the light of eternity.

Some argue that what matters is our love of Christ, not doctrine. This sounds nice, but the Bible never separates a love for Christ from a love for the truth. We are told that by “speaking the truth in love,” we may grow into Christ (*Eph. 4:15, 16*). Knowing doctrine is not mere accumulation of correct data; rather, knowing doctrine results in love for God (*2 John 6–10*). Furthermore, the Bible is concerned about “sound doctrine” because, among other things, it affects the ethical life (*1 Tim. 1:9, 10; Titus 2:1–5*).

The 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are not a creed in the sense that one could not expect any further development of the truths expressed in

them (or that even more teachings could be added). And though we must always be open to more light, a firm consensus on these beliefs is crucial to the unity and mission of the church. What else has brought together millions of people from all over the world into a unified movement other than our shared doctrines?

This quarter, then, we are going to focus on some of those teachings. Though we believe that all 28 are foundational and fundamental to our identity as Seventh-day Adventists, we cannot study them all in one quarter. But we do hope to present a systematic and coherent guide to some of these beliefs. Special attention will be given to belief number 11, “Growing in Christ,” accepted by the General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, in 2005 (see lessons 5–7). This belief, in and of itself, didn’t add new or previously unknown teaching; rather, in response to needs in certain parts of the world, it helps to clarify the church’s understanding of God’s power to give believers in Christ victory over the forces of evil. In fact, all the lessons this quarter will be framed within the context of the struggle between Christ and those forces of evil—what we call “the great controversy.”

Within the great-controversy motif, and directly related to it, salvation in Christ is the thread that runs through all our doctrines.

Within the great-controversy motif, and directly related to it, salvation in Christ is the thread that runs through all our doctrines. The great controversy, and the issues it has generated, sets the stage for the plan of redemption, which is what underlies and permeates all 28 of our fundamental beliefs.

Doctrines, then, are not an end in and of themselves. They are a *means* to an end, and that end is Jesus, as well as the knowing of Jesus for ourselves and our growth in Him. Or, more subjectively, all 28 of our doctrines should lead us to a deeper understanding of what Jesus has done for us through the plan of salvation; this, in turn, should lead us to a deeper love of God, to a life more committed to the revealing of that love to the world, and to “principalities and powers in heavenly places” (*Eph. 3:10*).

Yes, everyone believes in something. The goal of this quarter is to help us to not just believe in Truth (*John 14:6*), but to love Him even more and to grow in His grace.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. 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? (Apply); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Create).

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—Apply: 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—Create: 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.