

# Education *and* Redemption



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## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Gen. 1:26, 27; Isa. 11:1–9; 2 Tim. 3:14–17; 1 Kings 4:29–34; John 14:17; 1 Cor. 2:1–16.*

**Memory Text:** “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16, NKJV).

**T**he Bible tells a long story about God and His people. Sometimes it is viewed as a love story gone awry, at least temporarily. Or it can be seen as a story of a Father and His rebellious children who, eventually, come around.

But for the purposes of this week's teaching, we will discover in the Bible story another theme, namely, that of a Teacher and His students. They keep failing their tests, but He patiently explains their lessons again and again, until, at last, some learn it.

The Bible story is not unlike our own human stories that we know so well—with one exception. The story of God and His people is assured of a good ending, of reaching its goal. Divine grace toward His people assures that outcome. The human responsibility in this relationship has often been misunderstood and even dreaded by many who have thought of it as onerous. But in fact, the Bible story is essentially an invitation to know God and understand His will. Indeed, learning to know God is our foremost response to His grace. We cannot earn such grace, but we can learn about it, and what is Christian education if not, at its core, education teaching us about this grace?

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 21.

## In the Image of God

**Read** Genesis 1:26, 27 and Genesis 5:1, 3. What do these texts teach about how God originally created humanity, and then what happened to humanity after sin?

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The phrase “the image of God” has captivated interpreters of the Bible for centuries. What is this image in which the first humans were created? For example, does it mean that God looked in a mirror and formed His new creation to look like Himself? Or does it mean that humans are more like God than all other forms of life are? Or does it refer to a spiritual and intellectual similarity and compatibility between the Creator and His human creation? The Scriptures do not give any precise explanation of this expression even though scholars have derived from Scripture many interpretations of what it could mean. However, we can see that, after sin, this image had been changed, which is why Ellen G. White wrote that the goal of education is to restore in man the image of his Maker (*Education*, pp. 14–16).

How can education achieve such a remarkable goal?

First, we need to remember that God made us to have a relationship with Him, somewhat as parents do with their children. He made us in His image, the same way human parents have children in their image (*Gen. 5:1*), so that He can bring us up to be His children, who belong to His family; He can communicate with us and form a lasting relationship with us. The image of God therefore is more of a “mental image” that enables two beings, one divine and the other human, to have a meeting of minds. This is precisely what happens in education, first at home between parents and children and later at school when teachers take over the work of education. Evidently God intended this process of education we know so well when, distinguishing us from many other life forms, He made us in His own image—He did it so that He can teach us and we can learn from Him, until His image (His mind) is reflected in ours.

**The story of Redemption is a story of education from Creation to Incarnation, and from Incarnation to re-creation. God is a teacher, and heaven is a school for all time (see Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 301). What are the implications of this thought for our commitment to Christian education at home, in church, in school, in the university, and throughout life?**

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## Jesus as Teacher

The Bible uses many terms to describe Jesus. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of man, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Lord, the Lamb of God, just to mention a few. But to those people who knew Him best during His three-plus years of public ministry in Judea and Galilee, He was a teacher. They called Him “Master,” or “Rabbi.” Both mean the same thing, namely, “Teacher.”

Therefore, the teaching profession and the work of teaching must have been a particularly suitable way for Jesus to carry out His public ministry. Somehow His work of Redemption is akin to the work of teaching. What is more, it was foretold by the gospel prophet.

**Read** Isaiah 11:1–9. What does it reveal about the teaching role of Jesus?

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One of the most startling Messianic prophecies in the Scriptures is found in Isaiah 11. Verses 1–3 portray the coming Messiah in educational terms, someone who brings knowledge, counsel, wisdom, and understanding. The whole passage concludes with this remarkable promise: “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (*Isa. 11:9*). Perhaps it was such teachings of Scripture that inspired Ellen G. White in her book on education to note that the work of education and the work of Redemption are one (see *Education*, p. 30).

Read John 3:1–3. Nicodemus addressed Jesus as a rabbi, and he further identified Jesus’ teaching gifts as coming from God because of the signs Jesus performed, namely, His miracles and insights into the meaning of life. Jesus accepted, if not the title given Him, then surely the origin of His teaching gifts when He responded to Nicodemus that he must be born again to see (understand, as well as enter) the kingdom of God. This means that the authority to teach others, even in the case of Jesus, comes from God.

Surely teaching is a gift of God. It is commissioned by God, it was adopted by Jesus, and it is recognized by those who are taught as having divine authority.

**What role do we have in seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy about the knowledge of the Lord going all over the world?**

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## Moses and the Prophets

**Read** 2 Timothy 3:14–17. What do these texts teach us about the role of Scripture in Christian education?

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The word for the first part of the Bible, the Torah, is sometimes translated as “the law,” partly because there are many laws in these books. But Torah really means “teaching” or “instruction.” This understanding is very different from what many think the “law” in the Bible is about, namely, rules and regulations that we have to follow to remain in God’s good graces. Not so; the law is intended as teaching material dealing with how to live successfully and safely in the covenant relationship God intended when He created us in the first place.

The next two sections of the Hebrew Bible, the prophets, report on how well God’s people mastered this educational material and lived by it (the former prophets, or historical books), and what they ought to have learned from this educational material (the latter prophets). The remaining part of the Old Testament (called the “writings” in Hebrew) is full of examples of successful and less-successful teachers and students along with their educational experiences. Examples of educational success in these books would be Esther, Ruth, Daniel, and Job. Among the failures would be Job’s four friends. Of course, the book of Psalms is a hymnbook, but even it has at least three educational psalms: Psalm 1, Psalm 37, and Psalm 73.

The Gospels abound with materials intended for educational purposes, especially in the parables of Jesus. Many of Paul’s letters begin with a strong gospel proclamation but end with educational material, practical lessons about daily life for Christians. The book of Revelation is full of educational material. For example, the whole disclosure, or unrolling of the future of Christ’s church, is revealed in a book that only the Lamb of God—Jesus, the Master Teacher—can open (*Rev. 5:1–5*).

**Some may say that not all the teaching material in the books of Moses applies in our time, and that is correct. Deuteronomy 17:14–20, the instruction regarding kings, has some very explicit instructions about the selection of someone to hold the royal office. Today, of course, we do not appoint any kings in our church. How do we determine the proper application of all this teaching material in Scripture for our time?**

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## Wise Men and Women

The words for school, study, and education are clearly understood in our time, but they are not common in the Bible. There is one word, *wisdom* or *wise*, which is much more common. For example, the Old Testament makes mention of wise men and women (*2 Sam. 14:2, Prov. 16:23*).

**Read 1 Kings 4:29–34. What does this teach us about the importance of wisdom?**

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King Solomon is singled out as a very wise man who spoke about animal and plant life and uttered proverbs with great wisdom, meaning as a man of education (*1 Kings 4:29–34*). The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes contain many wise teachings on numerous subjects, attributed to Solomon, as well as to other wise teachers in ancient times (*Prov. 1:1, Prov. 25:1, Prov. 30:1, Prov. 31:1*).

According to the Bible, wisdom is very much like our education today. It is something one learns from parents and teachers, especially while young (*Eccles. 12:1*), but actually a person accumulates wisdom all through life. Second, wisdom generally has a practical side to it; for example, learn from the ants that save in the summer in order to have enough for the winter (*Prov. 6:6–8*).

Yet, wisdom is not only practical, but it also has a theoretical side to it, for it begins with faith in God and follows certain foundational principles (*Prov. 1:7*). Wisdom helps us live responsibly and for the benefit of others, and it also helps protect us from misfortune. Finally, just like education today, wisdom does not answer all the questions we may pose, but it enables us to be content with what we know while continuing to search for what is still unknown, and that is a good position from which we can learn to know God and to trust in His grace. According to Jeremiah 18:18, the role of the wise teacher is considered on par with the roles of priest and prophet. All three convey messages from God to His people, in the form of instruction in the law, educational counsel, and special messages from God.

**How can we learn wisdom and then pass it on to those who come after us? Why is this so important for us, as a people, to do?**

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## Education in the Early Church

One of the remarkable principles of education in Scripture emerges as Jesus, the Master Teacher, prepares to leave His students or disciples. They had been with Him for three and a half years, approximately the amount of time we allocate to a high school or college education. At the completion of either period, depending upon the person, students are often considered ready to manage on their own.

But Jesus knew better, and so He provided His followers with ongoing or continuing education under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. Elsewhere that teacher or guide is identified as Comforter or Advocate (in Greek, *paracletos*) who will be given to the followers of Jesus permanently (*John 14:16, 17*). He is identified as the Spirit of Truth. While the Holy Spirit is not identified as an educator, the work of the Spirit certainly is educational, particularly as it pertains to seeking and finding the truth.

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–16. What is Paul saying that is so important in the context of education?**

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Paul begins by reminding the church in Corinth that when he first came to them he spoke of nothing but Jesus Christ and His crucifixion (*1 Cor. 2:2*)—no clever wisdom, only the gospel proclamation. But that was not the end of it (*1 Cor. 2:6*), because once these new Christians matured, the apostle would be back to teach them wisdom, the things God hid before the world began (*1 Cor. 2:7*), even the deep things of God (*1 Cor. 2:10*). All will be studied under the guidance of the Spirit of God as He joins with the spirit of the learner.

How deep will that study be, and how much learning will be open to those who are led by the Spirit? The chapter concludes with a quotation from the prophet Isaiah: “Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him?” (*Isa. 40:13, NKJV*). The prophet speaking to ordinary people of his day would say that no one can do that. But Paul corrected that perception by concluding, “We have the mind of Christ,” meaning that Spirit-filled Christians have access even to the mind of God, and thus to any amount of learning and understanding (*1 Cor. 2:10–13*) that would be needed to know the path of righteousness.

**Further Thought:** The great gospel commission (*Matt. 28:18–20*) set in motion a remarkable religious movement throughout the whole world. Here a few apostles or missionaries (the two words mean the same—“those who are sent”) went throughout the whole world and gathered up students, made them into disciples, called them to believe in Jesus, baptized them, and proceeded to teach them all the things Jesus has commanded them. The picture is that of Christian converts from around the world, representing different cultures and speaking different languages, coming out of the waters of baptism only to enter a school and begin their education. This is not surprising, for they still had much to learn.

The reason Christians are always learning is not just intellectual curiosity or an eagerness to master knowledge, but rather that the Christian life and faith permeates every corner of daily life. There is so much to learn. Because of that, the letters of the New Testament contain both the proclamation about Jesus (sometimes called by the New Testament word *kerygma* [*keh-RIG-ma*]) and education in all the things Christians have to learn (sometimes called by the New Testament word *didache* [*did-ah-KAY*]). A good example of proclamation is seen in 1 Corinthians 2:2, whereas education begins in 1 Corinthians 4 and continues on and off in the rest of the letter. What is it Christians have to learn?

Work, rest, social issues, community relations, church and worship, economics, philanthropy, relations with the authorities, counseling, family systems, marriage relations and child rearing, food and its preparation, clothing, and even getting old and preparing for the end of life—both one’s personal life and life in this world; to be a Christian means to learn something about all these things and more. Understanding them does not come naturally. It has to be learned.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 How important is the educational work for the mission of the church?
- 2 What did Ellen G. White mean when she wrote “Heaven is a school” (*Education*, p. 301)?
- 3 Read 1 Corinthians 2:1–16 again. Look at what Paul is telling us about what God is revealing to us through inspiration. Think about his assertion that the rulers and wisdom of the age will come to nothing. If he could say that back then, what about some of the “wisdom” of our age, as well?

## Resurrected in Indonesia

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Two student missionaries greeted their supervisor, Sungbae Gee, with excitement when he arrived at their jungle village on the Indonesian island of Papua.

“Pastor, we have a very nice story!” said Santos, a 22-year-old student missionary from Universitas Klabat, a Seventh-day Adventist university on faraway Sulawesi island. “We prayed for a dead eight-year-old girl, and she was resurrected!”

Sungbae, a South Korean missionary serving as director of the 1000 Missionary Movement in Indonesia, had flown in a small airplane and walked two days and a night to reach the village in Papua’s Samir district. He had come to coach the student missionaries at the halfway point of their one year of mission service, but first he wanted to hear about the girl.

The student missionaries said something terrible had happened a few days earlier. Upon returning from a house visit, they had found the villagers weeping and chanting at the one-room hut of the village chief. The villagers were mourning for the chief’s daughter, Naomi, who had died two hours earlier and was lying on the hut floor. A witch doctor was leading the villagers in the chant.

The student missionaries began to weep. They longed for the villagers to turn away from their dead gods of trees and animals to trust in the living God of heaven. Santos and his friend sat beside Naomi’s still form. Santos gently picked her up and wrapped his arms around her. “Dear God, please show a miracle to the villagers,” he prayed. “We have given Bible studies, and they have listened. Show them that You are more powerful than trees and animals.”

The missionaries prayed for two hours, holding Naomi’s body and crying. They sang a gospel song, “Because He Lives.” The villagers were touched by the tears, the prayers, and the song. Suddenly, Naomi woke up. She turned to her astonished mother. “Mommy, I am hungry,” she said.

Her father, the chief, was shocked. With his own eyes, he had seen something more powerful than the trees and animals.

The village chief gathered the villagers for Bible studies when Sungbae arrived. All 57 adult villagers gave their hearts to Jesus.



“It was a miracle,” said Sungbae, now president of Pakistan Adventist Seminary and College. “Some people might think that resurrections only occurred two thousand years ago, but such miracles still occur today when we put full faith in God.”

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*Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that help spread the gospel around the world.*

## *Part I: Overview*

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Education is a precious gift that should not be taken for granted. Like every other good gift we receive, this one also is “from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (*James 1:17*). It is safe to assume God has the heart of a teacher. Teachers like to share all they know with their students, and Jesus shares a way that He and His Father are like that: “for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (*John 15:15*). What would happen if we read the Bible through the lens of the student-teacher relationship? What if we listened to our divine Teacher and asked ourselves, What is God trying to teach me today from this lesson? Taking a walk outside may be no less an opportunity to learn from the Master Teacher, remembering how often He used nature as His chalkboard. All in all, we must settle into, and embrace, the role of student if we are to appreciate fully God’s gift of education.

Perhaps part of God’s motivation for making us “in His image” is so that our similarity to Him would facilitate the communication of His love and knowledge to us. The lesson speaks of a “meeting of the minds,” one divine and one human, that allows this communion to happen. Being rational is one of those qualities that separates us from the rest of creation. To what degree should we rely upon reasoning in order to understand the plan of Redemption?

## *Part II: Commentary*

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### **Illustration**

This lesson has highlighted the importance of seeing God in the position of the divine Teacher and ourselves as His students. The crown jewel of His teaching is the plan of Redemption and restoration of this lost world. We are not only to learn of this plan but also then to share it with others. The problem is that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to communicate the truths of the gospel to a culture that does not share some of the presuppositions that undergird a Christian worldview.

For example, a Christian may want to witness by sharing a favorite Bible verse with a college friend but soon realizes that the friend sees the Bible as a compilation of myths with zero credibility. Now what? When the Christian skips the Bible and goes straight to explaining how God sent Jesus to die for our sins, he or she is met with a disdainful look over the word *sin*. “Sin?” the friend smirks. “Sin is an outdated concept from

the days when religion controlled society. We've moved beyond objective morality." In other words, what may be a "sin" for you may be a virtue in another culture. The Christian struggles to look unperturbed and as a last-ditch effort says that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" and that salvation can be found in Him if you believe. The friend patronizingly pats the Christian on the shoulder and remarks that postmodern studies have shown that the term "truth" is problematic and is a throwback to the era of modernity. The friend expresses contentment that the Christian has found a path that brings him peace but that he or she is on a different one. They part ways, and the Christian is left wondering why that whole witnessing opportunity didn't go the way it was supposed to.

As defeating as that last scenario sounded, it at least highlights another problem. The problem is that there are two distinct *responses* the Christian is encouraged to adopt. One is to pray that his or her college friend will see the light and exercise faith in spite of the boatload of intellectual arguments compelling him or her not to. The second response also would be to pray—but then to immerse oneself in the relevant academic literature of philosophy, biblical and systematic theology, history, faith/science studies, and other disciplines that would equip him or her to effectively handle the friend's skeptical concerns. So, which is it? Pray and leave it alone, or take advantage of the democratization of information and seek to educate oneself to the highest levels that are realistic in one's given situation and to continue to pray, as well?

### Discuss:

Ask the pointed question above to your Sabbath School class, and you are bound to receive passionate answers on both sides of the issue. One passage that inevitably comes up is 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2, which reads, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The next section takes a closer look at this text.

### Scripture

On first reading 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2, one could conclude that the only strategy in evangelizing should be the mention of Jesus and His crucifixion. Avoiding arguments associated with wisdom and "excellent" speech appears to be a good thing. But there are some red flags with this interpretation. First, it goes against many sermons in Acts in which careful arguments, historical evidence, and logic are all utilized effectively to convince others of the identity of Jesus Christ and of His resurrection (*e.g., Acts 2, Acts 7*). In fact, in the same epistle Paul will use these tools to persuasively support the truth of the Resurrection (*1 Corinthians 15*). The following alternative and contextualized interpretations are offered in

part by J. P. Moreland, a well-known Christian apologist (J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God With All Your Mind* [Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1997], p. 58).

1. There is a false and prideful use of reason that is not conducive to spreading the gospel. Reason itself and “wisdom from above” cannot be under condemnation—but only its abuse. “It is *hubris* (pride) that is in view, not *nous* (mind). God chose foolish (*moria*) things that were offensive to human pride, not to reason properly used. For example, the idea of God being crucified was so offensive that the Greek spirit would have judged it to be morally disgusting.”
2. Paul also could have the use of Greek rhetoric in mind. Greek orators prided themselves on being able to argue persuasively any side of an issue for the right price. The truth of a matter becomes secondary in this context, and the prize goes to whoever gives the slickest, most polished speech. Paul may well want to distance himself from these methods.
3. Paul also may be arguing for the insufficiency of pure reason alone to communicate the gospel. It is not possible first to begin with principles of logic and deduction and somehow arrive at a crucified and risen divine Savior. Revelation, apostolic/prophetic testimony, the draw of the Holy Spirit, and faith are necessary components in conjunction with reason to make the move from unbelief to a commitment to Christ.

There are some things Paul says that are hard to understand (*2 Pet. 3:16*). Context helps. Also, because it is safe to assume he is not a hypocrite who is violating his own counsel, it is always wise to look at how he himself applies his counsel when he writes and preaches. So, when he says, “I’m only preaching Christ and Him crucified,” even a quick reading of Romans 1–12 helps us to realize that his preaching Christ and Him crucified may amount to crafting a dense, difficult, novel, profound, and brilliant theological treatise that has kept scholars occupied for centuries.

The relationship between faith, reason, academic theology, private Bible study, the Holy Spirit’s role, evangelism, and Adventist education is all rather opaque to many Christians. Many are bewildered as to why they should send their children through to higher Adventist education when they already have the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the Holy Spirit at their disposal. Why not save the thousands of dollars and perhaps do an evangelistic Bible study course through the mail?

This question brings us back to our illustration of the young Christian trying to witness to a college friend, and what his or her educational responsibilities are, in order to address the friend’s questions. If all that

Heaven expects the Christian to do is pray and quote verses, then it seems reasonable that he or she need pursue neither further college education nor self-education (not everyone can afford a firsthand college experience, but we can learn from the writings and resources of those who can). Perhaps two quotes can move us in the right direction, one from Peter and one from C. S. Lewis:

“Be ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (*1 Pet. 3:15, emphasis added*).

“If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were educated. But a cultural life will exist outside the Church whether it exists inside or not. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”—C. S. Lewis.

### ***Part III: Life Application***

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1. How did people see Jesus when He walked the earth? Search the four Gospels for all the times He was called “Redeemer,” and you’ll come up with nothing. Try looking for “Savior” in those same Gospels (three occurrences—two were spoken either by an angel or by someone before He was born). Search for “Rabbi,” “Master,” or “Teacher,” and one can quickly see how people saw Jesus. Of course, He was more than a teacher, but the point is He was never not a teacher. His saving work is tied together with His teaching work. How does this point affect how we share the gospel and what type of education we should acquire?

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2. Read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount or Paul’s letter to the Romans, and notice that they have both a theoretical side and a practical side. Looking at your life right now, which of those two sides of development need attention? Do you need to do more or learn more? If the latter, what more do you feel you need to learn?

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