

Life Under the New Agreement



SABBATH—JUNE 19

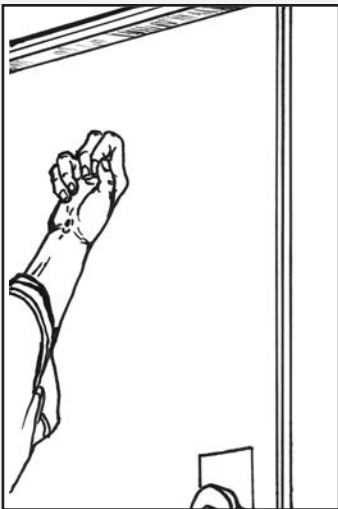
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 John 1:4; Romans 8:1; John 5:24; Romans 3:24, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 2:11.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so they may have life. I want them to have it in the fullest possible way’ ” (John 10:10, NlrV).

THIS QUARTER, we studied the agreement. The agreement shows us the plan of God to save us.

The biggest promise of the agreement is everlasting life on an earth made new. But we do not need to wait for the new earth to enjoy the blessings of the agreement today. The Lord cares about our lives now. He wants the best for us now. The agreement is not some deal where you do this and that and then, a long time later, you get your reward. First, we must enter into a friendship with God by faith. Then the rewards and gifts of the agreement are blessings that we may enjoy here and now.

Our lesson this week looks at some of these blessings and promises. These gifts come from the loving-favor of God. God knocked on the door of our hearts. We opened the door. Now He gives us His promises and blessings. Of course, God has more blessings to give us than we can study in our lesson this week. What we learn here is only the beginning of something that will continue forever.



God knocked on the door
of our hearts.

JOY (1 John 1:4)

“We write these things to you so that you can be full of joy with us” (1 John 1:4, ERV).

Look at this verse from John. In a few simple words, John tells us about one of the most important blessings we have as Christians: joy.

As Christians, we are told faith is not feeling. That is true. At the same time, we are human, and humans feel. So, we cannot behave as if we have no feelings. We need to understand our feelings and respect them. We need to control them as much as possible, too. But if we refuse our feelings, then we refuse to be human. As 1 John 1:4 says, we should have feelings. Our feelings should be strong, too.

Read the verses that come before 1 John 1:4. These verses help explain why John says what he says in 1 John 1:4. What is John writing about? Why does he hope this will make the Christians feel full of joy? Why should the words of John give the Christians joy?

John is one of the 12 followers of Jesus. John was with Jesus almost from the time Jesus first started to work. For 3 1/2 years, John saw some of the most surprising things Jesus did. John was at the cross. John was at Gethsemane, too. John saw many things happen in the life of Jesus. So, John has the experience to talk about Jesus.

Do you see that John does not talk about himself? John talks about the things Jesus did for His followers. Why did Jesus do these things? So that His followers now can have fellowship with each other and with God Himself. Jesus made it possible for us to enter into a close friendship with God. Part of this friendship is joy. John wants the Christians to know that everything they learned about Jesus is correct. John saw Jesus. John touched and heard Jesus, too. So, the Christians John writes to can enter into a joyful friendship with their Father in heaven. God the Father loves them. God gave Himself to them. God did this by giving them Jesus.

In a way, John is telling his own story about Jesus. What is your own story about your friendship with Jesus? How can you help someone feel more joy in the Lord, as John tried to do?



John saw many things happen in the life of Jesus.

FREE OF GUILT (Romans 8:1)

“So now anyone who is in Christ Jesus is not judged guilty” (Romans 8:1, ERV).

We all are guilty. We all have done things we feel bad about. We have done things we wish can change but cannot.

Thanks to Jesus and His blood, no one needs to feel guilty for the past anymore. Romans 8:1 shows us that God will not punish us for our sins that He has forgiven. Our Judge in heaven does not judge us as guilty. God looks at us as if we did not do those things we feel guilty about.

Read John 5:24; Romans 3:24, 25; and 2 Corinthians 5:21. How do these verses help us understand Romans 8:1?

One of the most powerful promises of the new agreement is that we no longer need to live in fear of punishment for our past sins. We no longer need to feel guilty. Why? Because we choose to enter into the new agreement with God. We choose to live by faith. We choose to feel sorry for our sins. We turn away from sin with the help of the Holy Spirit. We choose to obey God. Because of these choices, we can live free from guilt. The blood of the agreement shows us that we can have this freedom.

Sometimes Satan whispers to us that we are evil and bad. He tells us that God will never accept us because we are full of sin. What can we do to shut Satan up? We can do the same thing Jesus did when Satan tried to get Him to sin in the desert. We can say Bible verses. One of the best verses of all is Romans 8:1. Romans 8:1 does not mean that sin will no longer be a problem in our lives. Romans 8:1 simply shows us that we no longer need to live in fear of our past sin. Jesus has forgiven it. Jesus paid the price of our lawbreaking for us. Now Jesus stands in front of God. Jesus offers God the gift of His blood for us. Jesus also offers God His perfect obedience for us.

The Lord forgives you for your past sins because you are sorry for your sins and turned away from them. What does this Bible truth mean to you? How has this teaching changed your life? How does it help you forgive other people who sinned against you? How should this Bible truth help you get along better with other people?



Sometimes Satan whispers to us that we are evil and bad.

THE NEW AGREEMENT AND A NEW HEART
(Ephesians 3:17–19)

“And I ask [pray] that Christ [Jesus] may live in your hearts because you believe in him. I ask that you may live and grow in love. I ask that God will give you power [understanding] to know how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is. All Christians should know that. I ask God that you may know the love of Christ which is more than we can ever know. I ask that you may be filled with everything that God has” (Ephesians 3:17–19, WE).

Under the new agreement, the Lord puts His law in our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31–33). Jesus lives in our hearts, too, with His law. Ephesians 3:17–19 shows us that Jesus and His law are closely connected. The Greek word written as “live” in these verses also means “to come to rest” or “to make a home” somewhere. Jesus makes His home in our hearts. So, we see another important promise of the new agreement: a new heart.

Why do we need a new heart? What change will be shown in people who have a new heart?

Read Ephesians 3:17–19 again. Do you see that love is the most important idea Paul talks about? Paul says we must “live and grow in love.” What do these words show? They show us that love will help us to stay firm in our faith. Our faith means nothing if we do not have love for God and love for other people (Matthew 22:37–39). Our love for God starts with His love for us. We see His love in Jesus. This love changes our lives. Our hearts are changed, too. Then we become new people. We have new thoughts, feelings, and plans. We become more loving, and we love people more, too. Maybe this is what Paul talks about when he says the love of Jesus is “wide and long and high and deep” (Ephesians 3:18, WE).

Read 1 John 4:16. Compare this verse to Ephesians 3:17–19. How are these two verses the same?

Look at the verses we studied today. What can you do to make these promises real in your life? What things do you need to change? Make a list of these changes. If you feel comfortable, share your list in class. How can you help each other change the things that need to be changed?



Our faith means nothing if we do not have love for God and love for other people.

THE NEW AGREEMENT AND EVERLASTING LIFE
(John 11:25, 26)

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the One Who raises [wakes up] the dead and gives them life. Anyone who puts his trust in Me will live again, even if he dies. Anyone who lives and has put his trust in Me will never die. Do you believe this?’ ” (John 11:25, 26, NLV).

Everlasting life has two parts. There is the part we enjoy now. There is the part we enjoy in the future. Right now, we can live a full life in Jesus (John 10:10). Jesus gives us many promises for our lives today.

The future part of everlasting life is the promise that God will give us new bodies (John 5:28, 29; John 6:39). This promise makes everything we suffer now worth it. Everlasting life is the reward we hope for.



Jesus is “ ‘the One Who raises [wakes up] the dead and gives them life’ ” (John 11:25, NLV).

Study John 11:25, 26. What is Jesus saying in these verses? Where do we find everlasting life? How do we understand these words of Jesus: “ ‘The person who believes in me will live, even though he has died’ ” (For the answer, also read Revelation 2:11; Revelation 20:6, 14; Revelation 21:8.)

Of course, we all die. But Jesus says death is really the same as sleeping. We will lie in the grave for a little while, the same as going to sleep at night when we were alive. Then Jesus will wake us up from the dead when He comes back. Jesus will give us bodies that cannot die. Both the dead and the people alive on the earth when Jesus comes back will have the same bodies. At that time, everlasting life will start for the people of God.

Life does not end in the grave! This thought should fill us with joy. Because of Jesus, we who die believing in Him will live again. Then life will have no end. Our new life will continue forever.

“Jesus was born in a human body. He did this so that we can become one spirit with Him. The life of Jesus becomes our life by faith. That is why the dead can wake up from their graves. Their waking up will show the power of Jesus. Who will have everlasting life? The people who see Jesus as He is and accept Him into their hearts. Jesus lives in us by His Spirit. When does everlasting life start? When we accept Jesus into the heart by faith.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 388, adapted.

**THE NEW AGREEMENT AND OUR WORK FOR GOD
(Matthew 28:19, 20)**

“ ‘So go and make disciples [followers] in all countries. Bapti[z]e them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do all the things I have told you to do. I am with you always, even to the end of time’ ” (Matthew 28:19, 20, WE).

God gave all humans the gift of life. But many people do not know what to do with this gift. What if someone gives a friend a library filled with expensive books? But the friend does not read the books. He uses the books to build fires! Is that good? No. It is an awful waste of something so precious and expensive!

We do not have this problem. As Christians, we live under the new agreement. So, we know Jesus personally. He is our Savior. He died for our sins and the sins of every human everywhere. Jesus did this so that we all may have everlasting life and know real joy. Matthew 28:19, 20 shows us the plan of God for our lives. We must share with other people the wonderful Bible truth we learned about Jesus. Most everything else we do on this earth will end when this earth ends. But our sharing the Good News about Jesus with other people can change their lives forever. Wow! We have a powerful work for God to do.

Break the verses for today into all their separate parts and ideas. What is Jesus telling us to do? How do we do these things? What promise does God give us that fills us with the faith and courage to do what Jesus asks?

As Christians, we live under the new agreement. God gives us a command in Matthew 28:19, 20. This command shows us exactly what He wants us to do. Maybe you feel you are not very important, powerful, or rich. But God has given each one of us a part in His important work. What have you been doing to help the Lord? Can you do more? What can your class do together to have a bigger part in this work?



Using books to make fires is an awful waste of something so precious.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “God’s People Delivered,” pages 635–645, in *The Great Controversy*; “Rejoicing in the Lord,” pages 115–126, in *Steps to Christ*.

“Jesus was the Holy Son of God. Jesus did not carry His own sins or sadness. No, Jesus felt the sadness of other people. God put on Jesus the sins of every human. Jesus connects Himself to humans by His love and pity for the human family. Jesus is the One who stands in front of God for us. That is why He accepts the punishment for our sins. Jesus looks at the awful separation that sin causes between us and God. Then Jesus promises to be the same as a bridge. He will connect humans to God again.”—Ellen G. White, *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, August 1, 1892, adapted.

“Come, my brother. Come as you are. You are full of sin. You are not clean. Come anyway. Put your heavy load of guilt on Jesus. By faith, you can accept His perfect life of obedience. Come now, while God continues to give you His mercy. Come and confess your sins. Come with a heart that is sorry for your mistakes. God will forgive you fully. Do not wait. Obey the voice of mercy that asks you to wake up from the dead. Then Jesus will give you light. . . . Do not let your pride or doubt cause you to keep refusing the gift of mercy from God. If you do, you will cry out in sadness at the end: ‘Gathering time is past, summer is ended, and we are not saved.’ [Jeremiah 8:20, NLV].”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 353, adapted.



“Put your heavy load of guilt on Jesus.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① God promises us joy because we believe in Jesus. Is joy the same as happiness? Should we always be happy? If we are not, is something wrong with our Christian experience? What does the life of Jesus show us that helps us answer these questions?

② Talk some more about being “filled with everything that God has” (Ephesians 3:19, WE). What does this mean? How can we experience this in our lives?

Summary: The new agreement is more than simply teachings about God. The new agreement is a saving friendship with God, too. As our Friend, Jesus gives us many wonderful promises and rewards, now and at the Second Coming.

“GOD IS REAL”

When Christian Suárez is 18 years old, he becomes a heavy drug user. He also wins a big music contest. The winner gets to join a famous rock band. Soon he becomes a famous rock star. The band plays in football stadiums for wild crowds of people. Their concerts are sold out. So, Christian thinks he is a big success.

When he turns 21, Christian decides to leave the group and start his own music career. That is when all his dreams fall apart. After an awful year alone, Christian has no money or home. He moves back in with his mother and is using drugs.

Christian never believed in God. But now he is sad and alone at home. He raises his eyes and says, “Lord, I do not know who You are. I do not believe in You. But if You are real, and if You really live, I need You to tell me. If You tell me, ‘I am real,’ then I will follow You.”

At that instant, the phone rings. Christian answers it.

An older woman says, “May I talk to Christian?”

“I am Christian,” Christian says. “How may I help you?”

“Christian, I am calling to tell you that God is real.”

Christian is surprised. The woman says the exact words Christian asked God to tell him so Christian will believe in Him.

Christian asks, “Why did you say those exact words to me?”

The woman says that Christian came to her home for the first time two weeks ago to pick up her brother, Leonardo, to practice their music. That night, the woman prayed, “Lord, that young man needs You.” She got the phone number for Christian from her brother. Two weeks later, she felt the Lord asking her to give Christian a phone call. Before she called Christian, the woman prayed, “Lord, use me to help him.”

Christian is excited by her story. Right away, he calls another musician friend, Alfonso. Christian tells Alfonso about the phone call with the woman. Alfonso asks Christian to come over to his house right away. When Christian gets there, Alfonso holds a Bible in his hand. Christian is surprised. Alfonso never talked about God in all the years they had been friends. That night, Alfonso gives Christian a deep Bible study about Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Christian learns that Alfonso wants to become a Seventh-day Adventist.

Christian starts studying the Bible and stops using drugs. Three months after that, Christian is baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Today, ten years later, Christian is a student at Colombia Adventist University in Colombia. He studies to become a pastor. Alfonso also has joined the Adventist Church.

This 13th Sabbath Offering will help open a training center for Bible workers at Colombia Adventist University.

INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



“Christian, I am calling to tell you that God is real,” the woman says.

