

God Talks to Us



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 3:1–8; Luke 15:11–32; Genesis 3:14–24; Hebrews 1:1, 2.

MEMORY VERSE: “Many years ago, God spoke to our ancestors by his prophets [messengers]. He spoke many times and in many different ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us in his Son. In the beginning, God worked through [with] his Son to make the whole universe [everything that God made on earth, in heaven, and in outer space]. He [God] decided that everything should belong to his Son” (Hebrews 1:1, 2, EASY).



Many of God's messengers wrote parts of the Bible.

WE USE COMPUTERS and other scientific inventions to communicate with friends in faraway places. Of course, that's wonderful. But don't you like meeting in person much better? For sure, something special happens when we get together, hug, and talk in person.

As humans, we were made for a face-to-face relationship with Jesus. Sin destroyed that face-to-face connection long ago. Because God loves us so much, He made a way to communicate with us again. He chose messengers to share His words with us. Another name for messenger is prophet. Many of these messengers wrote parts of the Bible.

God wants to make us new. God will finish this work when He makes “a new sky and a new earth. . . . That will be a home for everything that is good and right” (2 Peter 3:13, EASY).

Until that day, God continues to talk to us. He uses His messengers to do just that.

COMMUNICATION IN EDEN (Genesis 1:27, 28)

Genesis 1 and 2 tell us that God made the skies and the earth. God made the earth very beautiful for Adam and Eve. Humans were different from everything else God made. That's because God "made them to be like [much the same as] himself" (Genesis 1:27, EASY). The Bible doesn't say that about anything else God made. Because we are like God in many ways, He made us to be happy. He made us to love and be loved, too. He made us to communicate with Him.

Also, we read in Genesis 2:18–23 that God made Eve for Adam. Why? Because God said that man should not "live alone" (Genesis 2:18, EASY). From the start, God made us to live with other people. Today, scientists teach that people need relationships. Relationships help us grow. They keep us healthy. On the other hand, when we feel lonely, we may not think that our lives are really worthwhile.

Adam understood this feeling. That's why he made this announcement after God makes Eve for him: " 'Finally, this [person] is someone who is right for me. She has bones that are taken from my bones. Her body comes from my body. I will call [name] her "woman" because God used me, a man, to make her' " (Genesis 2:23, EASY). God made marriage and families in the Garden of Eden. The Bible teaches us that marriage is a relationship between a male and a female. God gave us marriage as a gift. In this relationship, we learn how to love and communicate. Satan wants to destroy God's plan for marriage and the family!

How did God communicate with humans in the Garden of Eden? Read Genesis 1:27, 28; Genesis 2:15–17; and Genesis 3:9 for the answer.

Adam and Eve communicated with God face-to-face. They listened to His teachings. God made Adam and Eve the managers of the Garden of Eden. As managers, Adam and Eve learned how to care for the plants and animals. Each day they had special time with God. The Sabbath day was a very special time between God and His children, too (Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:8–11). On that day, God showed our first parents His love and care for them in a special way.

Imagine in your mind a picture of Eden in its beauty before sin changed it. That's hard to do, right? How does nature continue to show us Eden's beauty?



God made marriage and families in the Garden of Eden.

HIDING FROM GOD (Genesis 3:1–8)

After Eve's talk with the snake, she ate the forbidden fruit.

God is love (1 John 4:8). Because God is love, He gives us free choice. He made us free to love Him and other people. Without free choice, we have no brains, the same as robots.

We see God's gift of free choice in His command not to eat the forbidden fruit (read Genesis 2:15–17). Why warn Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit if they can't choose?

"God made our first parents innocent and holy. God also made them free to choose between good and evil. Adam and Eve respected God's wisdom. They knew that God was love and that His law was fair. God made them free to obey Him. . . . But what if God didn't make Adam and Eve free? Then they are forced to obey Him."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 48, 49, adapted.

Why did Adam and Eve hide from God after they sinned? Read Genesis 3:1–8 for the answer. Compare with Jeremiah 23:24 and Hebrews 4:13.

Genesis 3 tells an awful story: the sin of Adam and Eve. After Eve's talk with the snake, she ate the forbidden fruit. Satan used powerful words and feelings in a sneaky way to trick Eve. Then Eve convinced Adam to join her in sinning against God. Eve saw "that the tree was beautiful and the fruit looked so good to eat. She also liked the idea that it [eating the fruit] would make her wise" (Genesis 3:6, ERV). Satan promised Eve, " 'When you eat the fruit from this tree, you will understand things. You will become like [the same as] God himself. You will know about good things and evil things' " (Genesis 3:5, EASY).

Satan's sermon was filled with lies. He lied to Adam and Eve about what would happen if they chose to sin. After they sinned, they understood right away that they broke God's law. They saw that they weren't wearing any clothes. Before they sinned, God covered them with clothing made from light (Psalm 104:1, 2). Adam and Eve lost this clothing when they sinned. No wonder they hid from God! (Of course, we can't really hide from God, right?!) Why did Adam and Eve try to hide? They hid because they felt guilty. When we feel guilty, we want to escape from God.

Think of a time when you sinned against God. Did you try to hide, too? What made you want to hide? Did you feel shame or guilt? What did your experience teach you?

GOD COMES LOOKING FOR US (Luke 15:11–32)

Genesis 3:9, 10 teaches us that God goes looking for His lost children. God makes the first move. He doesn't wait for us to come back to Him first. Look at God's question to Adam, " 'Where are you?' " (Genesis 3:9, ERV). Did God need to ask this question? Of course not! God knew where Adam and Eve hid. He also knew what they did. So, why then does God ask this question? Because sin cut off communication between God and Adam and Eve. God asks the question because He wants to communicate with His children again. God wants to meet with them and give them hope. That's why "the Lord God called to the man. The Lord said, 'Where are you?' " (Genesis 3:9). Do you see the word "called"? In the Hebrew language, this word often shows us God's wish to start communicating with His people.

Read the story in Luke 15:11–32. How does it help us better understand what happened in Genesis 3:9, 10?

The Lord goes looking for Adam and Eve because He loves them. God never gives up on us (read Luke 15), even when we hide from Him. Jesus will do everything He can to bring us back to His Father. Before Jesus died, three times Peter acted as if he didn't know Jesus. Then Jesus "turned and looked" (Luke 22:61, NKJV) at Peter. Jesus' look cut Peter's heart. With that look, Jesus tried to bring Peter back to God.

Notice in Genesis 3:11–13 that sin changed Adam and Eve's relationship with God. At first, Adam and Eve didn't confess their sin or guilt. They blamed each other. First, Adam blamed Eve. Next, Adam blamed God for giving him Eve (Genesis 3:12)! Then Eve blamed the snake (Genesis 3:13). Not much has changed with us in 6,000 years, right?

For sure, sin has hurt all of us. Paul explains the sin problem in Romans 7:15–24. He talks about the pain he feels when he wants to do what is right but then does bad things: "I do not do the good things that I want to do. Instead [but], I do the things that I hate to do" (Romans 7:15, EASY).

Everyone feels this way. Who hasn't?

Paul's words are powerful. We are all broken people. We keep doing things we know we shouldn't do. Our only hope is Jesus (Romans 7:25). God continues to look for us so He can lead us to Jesus. Only Jesus can save us from sin.



The Lord goes looking for Adam and Eve because He loves them.

FORCED TO LEAVE THE GARDEN (Genesis 3:14–24)

Adam and Eve needed to leave Eden.

Adam and Eve's sin separated them from God. God forced them to leave the Garden of Eden. They no longer could talk to God face-to-face. Isaiah talks about how sin separates us from God: "But your sins have separated you from your God. They have caused him to turn his face away from you. So he won't listen to you" (Isaiah 59:2, NIV).

Of course, Adam and Eve were God's children, even after they sinned. But sin caused their separation from God. So, Adam and Eve needed to leave Eden. Nothing was the same after they ate the fruit.

Sin changed the human family in many ways (read Genesis 3:14–24). How did sin change our communication with God? (Also read Exodus 19:16–22 for the answer.)

Sin completely changed human life in ways we can't even start to imagine in our minds. Because of sin, the land was under a curse. The land was filled with thorns and weeds. Because of sin, humans felt pain. Now they must sweat and work hard to grow their food or earn a living. In the end, we all die and become dirt. Death is the most powerful example of sin. Because of sin, we lost our face-to-face communication with God, too.

But God promised to solve the sin problem. Yes, our first parents, Adam and Eve, no longer could see God or talk to Him face-to-face. But they left Eden with hope for the future. God explained to them His plan to save the human family from sin.

Genesis 3:15 is the first Bible promise that Jesus saves us from sin. This first promise filled Adam and Eve (and us) with hope. God made clothes for Adam and Eve before they left Eden. The clothes were a symbol of what Jesus would do for sinners. Jesus would cover them with His holy life, the same as clothes. Because of Jesus, we can hope to communicate with God face-to-face again.

So, right there in Eden after Adam and Eve sinned, God gave them hope. God promised that He would solve the sin problem. As soon as humans sinned, God promised a Savior.

How do you feel after doing something bad? Do you feel guilty? Do you feel shame? Do you hate yourself? How does sin cause you to suffer? How does your faith in God and the Good News help you not to give up?

GOD'S SPECIAL MESSENGERS (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

How did God talk with people after sin separated them from Him? Read Hebrews 1:1, 2; Romans 1:19, 20; Numbers 12:6; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; John 14:7–9; and John 10:27–30 for the answer.

As we already saw, people no longer communicated with God face-to-face after sin. But God continued to communicate with sinners in other ways. One of those ways is with nature. Nature helps us to understand God's wonderful acts. Nature shows us the things we lost because of sin. As we saw yesterday, the death of every living thing is the most powerful example of what sin cost us.

Another way that God talks to us is with His messengers. God chooses men and women to be His messengers and to talk for Him to His people. Another name for messenger is prophet. Messengers share God's words with His people. Some examples of messengers are Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Daniel. God's messengers help us understand that He remembers us. God continues to be with us, too. Some messengers wrote down the messages God gave them. Many of these messages are now part of the Bible. Other messengers didn't write any books of the Bible. But many things that these messengers said were included in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The Bible also shows us God. We see God's love in the Bible. The Bible gives us advice about how to live. The Bible helps us understand who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. In the Bible, we learn about God's plan for our lives.

For sure, nature and the Bible are powerful ways that God communicates with us. But the most powerful way that God communicates with us is in Jesus. Just as God searched for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, so Jesus came looking for sinners (Luke 19:10). Jesus announced: " 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father too' " (John 14:9, ERV). When Jesus died on the cross, He kept the promise God made to Adam and Eve in Eden. Jesus died as our Substitute so that He could give us everlasting life.

After Jesus went to heaven, God poured His Holy Spirit on the church. The Spirit continues to lead us into all truth. The Spirit helps us understand what will happen in the future (John 16:13).

How does Jesus' love show you the Father?



Nature shows us the things we lost because of sin.

ELLEN G. WHITE

God doesn't limit His communication with people to Bible times. As we will see in coming weeks, God talks to people in every age. God will communicate His words to us in modern ways until Jesus comes back.

Ellen Gould Harmon White and her twin sister Elizabeth were born on November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine. They were the youngest of eight children born to Robert and Eunice Harmon. In a few years, the family moved to the city of Portland, Maine, where Robert Harmon hoped to build his hat-making business. At about the age of 9, Ellen suffered a terrible injury. While she was in a park near her home, an angry classmate threw a stone at her. The stone hit Ellen in the face. For many weeks after, Ellen was very sick in bed. Because of this accident, Ellen stopped going to school. She had health problems for the rest of her life. She also felt bad about the way she looked at the time. So, she didn't visit many people.

Sick and injured, young Ellen started to think about her spiritual future. She was afraid of God. She didn't feel worthy of going to heaven. Her feelings grew worse after the Harmon family accepted William Miller's teaching that Jesus was coming back soon. Ellen was baptized into the Methodist Church, in 1842. But she didn't feel worthy of God's love. She believed she was "forever lost."—*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, page 29; also read pages 20–31.

During this time, young Ellen had two dreams. The dreams changed her ideas about God. Later, she met a Methodist preacher named Levi Stockman. Stockman helped Ellen understand God's love. She wrote later, "Faith now filled my heart. I felt a love for God that I couldn't put into words. I felt my sins were forgiven. My ideas about the Father changed. I now saw Him as a loving parent, and not a strict master who forced people to obey Him without question. My heart filled with deep love for Him."—*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, page 39, adapted.

During this time, Ellen learned the Bible teaching about what happens when we die. She also learned that there was no forever-burning hell. Her new understanding about God changed her whole life. We will learn each Friday about how, Ellen G. White fell deeply in love with Jesus. She served Him for the rest of her life.

To learn more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/1>.



For many weeks after getting hit in the face with a stone, Ellen was very sick in bed.

THE START OF THE SDA CHURCH IN POLAND

In 1888, Poland was controlled by other countries. At this time, a new spiritual light appeared in Poland. Herman Szkubowiec became the first Seventh-day Adventist in Poland. Later, Herman started the first Seventh-day Adventist church in Poland.

In 1893, two Polish men became Seventh-day Adventists. These men were Karol Fendel and Jozef Szlodzinski. Karol and Jozef traveled to the city of Łódź. There, Karol and Jozef shared their faith with a Baptist family named Lach. The Lachs accepted the Seventh-day Adventist message. They held Sabbath worship in their home. Sharing new religious ideas in Poland wasn't easy at that time. Most Polish people didn't trust people who weren't from Poland. But the Seventh-day Adventist message started to grow in the Lach's house church. In 1895, a new church group started in Łódź. A Russian pastor named Henrich Loeb sack held public meetings. Pastor Loeb sack baptized the first Seventh-day Adventist members in the city.

Another pastor named Herbert Schmitz felt that God wanted him to preach in Warsaw. Pastor Schmitz was a German who did not speak the Polish language. He looked for houses in Warsaw with German names on the doors. When the owners welcomed him in, he explained the Seventh-day Adventist faith. His small audience was mostly German. But the Seventh-day Adventist faith started to grow in that community. In a few months, Pastor Schmitz started a church in Warsaw. Soon, sermons were preached in both German and Polish.

In 1912, Schmitz became the first leader for the growing work in Poland. Even after World War I started, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Poland continued to grow. In 1921, the Seventh-day Adventist Union in Poland was started. The Seventh-day Adventists in Poland started to build their churches again after the war. At that time, they had 1,080 members. The churches continued to grow. Soon Bible meetings were held. Bible workers sold books about Jesus across Poland. Seventh-day Adventist schools were started.

The most amazing part of this story is those early Bible workers. These workers knocked on doors. They preached in private homes. They baptized new members in secret. In 1988, the Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated its work in Poland. The small group that met in the Lach family home was now a strong church across the whole country. The courage of the first members helps us remember that the light of Bible truth shines bright in dark places.

This story is adapted from the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, available at encyclopedia.adventist.org.

INSIDE Story



When the owners welcomed Pastor Schmitz in, he explained the Seventh-day Adventist faith.