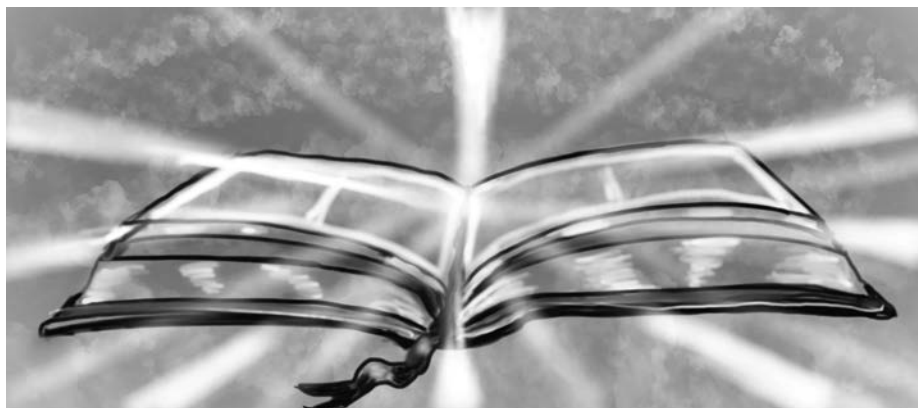


Blessings From the Bible



SABBATH—DECEMBER 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 2:2; Luke 24:27; 2 Timothy 4:1–5; Matthew 11:28, 29; John 17:20–23.

MEMORY VERSE: “Everything that is written in the Bible comes from God’s Spirit. It [the Bible] helps us in many ways. The Bible teaches us what is true. It [the Bible] warns us when we are doing wrong things. It shows us what is right. It teaches us how to live good lives. As a result [because of the Bible], people who want to serve God can know how to live properly [correctly]. They will be people who are ready to do all kinds [types] of good things” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, EASY).

GOD never asks us to believe in Him without giving us reasons for our faith. Nature gives us powerful proof to trust in God. Even after 6,000 years of sin, nature shows us a God who is both powerful and loving.

There’s more. Peter writes, “We heard this voice come from heaven when we were with Christ [Jesus] on the holy mountain. All this [the experience we had] helps us know that what the early preachers [Old Testament messengers] said was true. You will do well to listen to what they have said. Their words are as lights that shine in a dark place. Listen until you understand what they have said. Then it will be like the morning light which takes away the darkness. And the Morning Star (Christ) will rise to shine in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:18, 19, NLV).

God sent His messengers to talk to us. Their messages are proof. The question is: Will we accept their words?



Even after 6,000 years of sin, nature shows us a God who is both powerful and loving.

**SPECIAL MESSAGES PRAISE AND HONOR JESUS
(1 Corinthians 2:2)**

God uses special messages to communicate with His people. Special messages connect people to God. No wonder, then, that Satan (the dragon) is angry at the woman (God's church). Because Satan is angry, he goes to war against God's people (read Revelation 12:17).

Last week, we learned who God's end-time people are. They keep the commandments of God. They have the truth that Jesus taught. Revelation 19:10 tells us that this truth is the gift of special messages.

What does Paul say is the reason for his life and his work for God? What did he live for? Read 1 Corinthians 2:2 and Galatians 6:14 for the answers.

Jesus' followers accepted what God's messengers in the Old Testament said about Jesus. As Christians, we have promises about Jesus from both the Old and New Testaments. These promises show us a coming Savior. Jesus kept all the promises. All this proof helps make our faith grow strong. "God gave people a fair chance to grow their faith in God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit."—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 3, page 182, adapted.

In some ways, faith may be more of a 'heart thing,' than a 'head thing.' What does that mean? It means that when people shut their hearts, their minds shut, too.

Read John 1:1–5. What do these verses tell us about who Jesus is?

Jesus lived before there was anything that was made. Jesus came to this earth as a baby. He was born with a human body. He lived with us. Jesus is the living Word of God. As the Living Word, Jesus was an important part of the words and messages that God gave to His messengers.

Think about how big outer space is with all its planets and stars. Jesus made all of it. This same Jesus died for us. What wonderful hope does this thought give you?



Jesus lived before there was anything that was made. Jesus came to this earth as a baby.

SPECIAL MESSAGES SUPPORT BIBLE TRUTH (Luke 24:27)

The Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit worked with special messengers to make the Bible. 2 Peter 1:21 helps us understand how God works with His messengers: “None of the prophets’ [messengers’] messages came because any person wanted to say something. Instead [but], God’s Holy Spirit caused people to speak words that came from God” (EASY).

Who made the Bible? How does the Bible help us? Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 for the answers.

Without the Bible, we wouldn’t know how to live. The Bible teaches us how to escape sin. Today, the Bible is everywhere. But that was not so in the past. In Jesus’ day, only the Jewish leaders were allowed to read the Bible. So, God’s messages were precious in those days.

After Jesus woke up from the dead, what did He use to help His two sad followers better understand His work? Read Luke 24:27 for the answer.



**Jesus is God’s Word.
Jesus honored the Bible
(John 7:38).**

Jesus is the most important Messenger who lived. He didn’t just teach God’s Word. Jesus **is** God’s Word. As God’s Word, Jesus honored the Bible (John 7:38). That’s one of the most important things that special messages do.

“Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God? Do you wish to follow its teachings? Then you must learn daily from the Bible. Every day you must ask God to fill your heart with the wish to serve Him. You must ask Him for strength. God will give us these gifts. He will send the Holy Spirit to give them to us.”—Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, March 8, 1910, adapted. The gift of prophecy, or special messages, always honors the Bible. The gift of prophecy always causes us to read the Bible. The Bible gives us the reasons for our faith.

When Jesus walked on the road to Emmaus with His two followers, He started the conversation with an explanation about Bible truth. After that, He told His followers who He was. Why did Jesus explain the Bible first? What should that tell us about how important the Bible is to our faith?

THE BIBLE IS GOD'S 'LIE DETECTOR' (2 Timothy 4:1–5)

Did you know that there are more than 45,000 different types of Christian faith groups today? How did a religion that started with Jesus separate into so many different groups? The answer is that people started to believe different things about the Bible. Today, what one church teaches goes against what other churches teach. For sure, not all their teachings or explanations can be correct.

From the start, Satan confused people and caused them to reject Bible truth (read Genesis 2:16, 17; Genesis 3:1–5). Satan mixed just enough Bible truth with lies when he tricked Adam and Eve. Satan does the same thing with us today to get people under his control. Satan lied to God's people from the beginning of time (2 Chronicles 36:14–16). Satan even tried to trick Jesus (Matthew 4:1–11). But Jesus met Satan's lies with Bible truth (Matthew 4:4).

Read 2 Timothy 4:1–5. What important advice does Paul give Timothy about the Bible? Why did Paul want Timothy to be ready? What danger was coming?

Paul saw a time when people would not love or obey Bible truth. They would choose spiritual teachers who preached lies. God will allow these people to believe the lies they are looking for because they rejected His truth. "For [because of] this reason, God will allow them to follow false teaching so they will believe a lie. They will all be guilty as they stand before God because they wanted to do what was wrong" (2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12, NLV).

But for people who love Bible truth, Jesus promised: " 'You will know the truth and the truth will make you free' " (John 8:32, NLV). God gave us the gift of special messages to help us to separate Bible truth from lies. That's why God's special messages are the same as a lie detector. They show us what is Bible truth and what's is false.

This idea helps us understand why there are so many Christian faith groups and teachings today. If we believe Bible truth, we will honor the Sabbath. If we believe Bible truth, we will reject the false teaching that the dead are in heaven or burning in hell. That limits about 99.5% of all the churches we can belong to, right? So, where else can we go except to the Seventh-day Adventist Church?



Satan even tried to trick Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). But Jesus met Satan's lies with Bible truth (Matthew 4:4).

GOD'S MESSAGES GIVE HOPE TO HIS PEOPLE**(Matthew 11:28, 29)**

Read Matthew 11:28, 29. What does Jesus tell us to do? What does He promise everyone who comes to Him?

God always cares about us and how we live. Before God made Adam and Eve, He made a perfect home for them to make them happy (Genesis 1). God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed. After they sinned, God went looking for them (Genesis 3:9). God told them about the coming Savior (Genesis 3:15). God made them clothes (Genesis 3:21). For sure, God cares about His children.

God shows us He cares for us in other ways, too. He sent us His messengers in the past because He loves us. God also gives His church the gift of prophecy, or special messages, today. This gift gives us hope and helps make our lives new.

What message does God give to Isaiah to share with His hurting people? Read Isaiah 40:1–5 for the answer. How can we follow this important rule in our lives today?



Before God made Adam and Eve, He made a perfect home for them to make them happy (Genesis 1).

God punished His people in Judah. But God wanted the people from Judah to know that He continued to love them. So, He gave Isaiah a message of hope to share with the people. Isaiah must convince the people that God loves them very much. God cared so much about touching the hearts of His people with the message He gave Isaiah. So, God tells Isaiah exactly what to say and how to say it. God encourages His people with many caring messages in the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 12:1; Isaiah 49:13; and Isaiah 51:3).

Paul warned that people who live for Jesus will suffer for their faith (2 Timothy 3:12). In the difficult times ahead, we will need words of comfort and hope. God uses the gift of prophecy to help encourage His people. This gift gives us strength while we wait for Jesus to come back to take us home.

In what parts of your life do you need a word of hope? What does God help us to do after He gives us hope? Read 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4 for the answers.

**WORKING TOGETHER IN PEACE AND LOVE
(John 17:20–23)**

Read John 17:20–23 and 1 Corinthians 1:10–13. What important idea do we learn from those verses?

Before the time came for Jesus to die, His heart was filled with a deep wish for His people. Jesus and His Father were one in heart, mind, and spirit. Jesus wanted all His followers to be one in heart, spirit, and mind with each other, too. Jesus prayed a powerful prayer for His people to work together in love. This prayer also was a special message about His church in the future. This promise will happen before Jesus comes back. The Holy Spirit will help God's people everywhere on earth from every country to work together in peace and love. Paul also talks about this idea. He asks church members in Corinth to agree with each other about Bible truth. They must teach the same things. They must not allow anything to separate them.

Jesus prayed, “ ‘Father, I pray that all who believe in me can be one. You are in me and I am in you. I pray that they can also be one in us. Then the world [people everywhere] will believe that you sent me’ ” (John 17:21, ERV).

God wants everyone to be saved. But before people can be saved, they must believe in Jesus. They must believe that God sent Jesus to save us. When different groups of people accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they will show His love. Their lives will be powerful proof that Jesus is who He says He is. Jesus wanted this peace more than anything else for His church. Satan worked hard from the start to destroy this peace. (Read Acts 6:1 for an example.) Sad to say, there has been separation in the church since that time.

But God sends us the Holy Spirit to give us hope. The gifts of the Holy Spirit help the church to work together in peace and love. Ephesians 4:11–15 tells us that these gifts also help the church do God's work. Paul explains: “All of us will become united [joined together], like [the same as] one person. We will all believe in Jesus as the Son of God. We will all know him. We will become like [the same as] a man who has grown up well. We will be completely as God wants us to be, just like Christ himself” (Ephesians 4:13, EASY). The gift of prophecy, or special messages, is an important part of helping the church work together in peace and love.



Jesus prayed a powerful prayer for His people to work together in love.

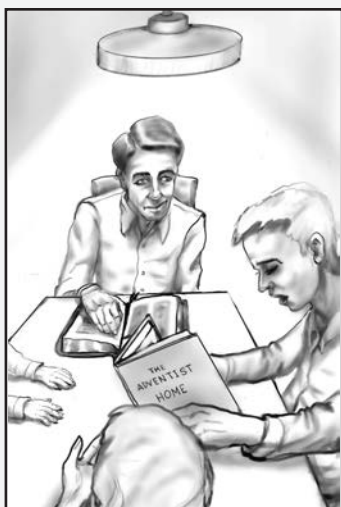
TRY IT AGAIN!

Many years ago, the Kellogg company wanted to win back customers who switched to other brands. They made an advertisement to encourage people to “taste our cereals again for the very first time.” This saying may be helpful for Seventh-day Adventists, too. Many of us have spent time learning **about** Ellen G. White without really ‘tasting’ or reading her writings. Learning about her life and work is helpful and important. We must read her work for ourselves. If we don’t ‘taste’ her writings for ourselves, we won’t be able to understand how much God blessed our church with her messages. When we read her writings, we will understand the gift that God gave to us. As we already saw, Ellen White connects us to Bible truth and to God. God blesses us deeply when we read her writings.

Roger Dudley and Des Cummings Jr., did a study about Ellen White’s writings. They discovered that people who often read Ellen White’s writings have a more powerful relationship with Jesus than people who don’t read her writings. Their faith is strong compared to people who don’t read her work. Dudley and Cummings also discovered that people who read Ellen White’s writings will worship together more often with their families. These same readers want to talk more about Jesus to other people, too. Dudley and Cummings wrote, “Our study shows that the church members who often study Ellen G. White’s writings have better spiritual growth than members who don’t read her writings often or at all.”—Dudley and Cummings, “Who Reads Ellen White?,” *Ministry*, October 1982, page 12, adapted.

During this quarter, we learned that God communicates with His messengers. Their messages connect us to God. God’s special messages help us to be holy in every part of our lives. God’s messengers invite us to trust that God will save us in Jesus. God’s special messages will change our lives. That’s why the Bible invites us to “taste [give God a chance to show you; learn and study] and see that the Lord is good!” (Psalm 34:8, EASY). God’s messages help us to preach Bible truth, share Jesus, and serve people. We must do these things if we want Jesus to come back. We must do our part in announcing the Second Coming as we wait for Jesus to come back. God’s special messages will give us the courage and strength to do exactly that.

To learn more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/13>.



Dudley and Cummings discovered that people who read Ellen White’s writings will worship together more often with their families.

WHERE ARE YOU, GOD?

I opened my cousin's letter and started to read. She wrote, "I gave my life to Jesus." I wondered, "What does that mean?" I wanted a close relationship with God. But I wasn't sure how to do that. Sure, I went to different churches. But I didn't find that special connection with God that my cousin talked about.

After I finished university, I moved back to Helsinki, Finland, where I met my future husband. I invited him to go to church with me. I hoped he would come to know the Lord and show me how to have a relationship with Him, too. But it didn't work.

Then our children were born. My life became busy. I had everything I wanted except for God. I continued visiting churches and prayed, "Lord, I can't find You. Please find me."

Our teenage daughter decided to study in Australia for a year. I was worried and prayed for her to find a good family to live with. She did! My daughter and I used text messaging to stay in touch. The family she was staying with started to text me, too. I got to know them on the group chat we set up. The father of the family was named Greg. I told Greg and his family that I was searching for God. I learned that Greg no longer went to church. But he told me to read his favorite book, *The Desire of Ages*. I found a copy of the book online and started to read it. The book changed my life for the better! I found answers to my questions and had a closer 'walk' with God.

Then Greg told me to visit a Seventh-day Adventist church near me in Helsinki. When I arrived at the church, I felt so much love from the church members. Those people really knew so much about the Bible! I loved the sermon, too. I went to church the following week.

I fell in love with Jesus, just as my cousin did do many years earlier. That summer, I visited the church's Bible camp. There, I studied the Bible deeply.

I came home so happy from Bible camp. I shared my love for God with my husband. I asked him to give his life to Jesus. I didn't know then, but that was our last conversation about God. Two days later, he died in a car accident.

I couldn't understand why God took my husband so soon after I gave my life to Him. Now I understand that God gave me a church family to support me and pray for me during those hard times. The Bible verses I read gave me peace. The Holy Spirit filled my heart with hope.

Soon I started to work for the church at its Bible school. I now help other people who are suffering the same things I did. I met a good man at church. We got married. God gave us work to do for Him together. As for Greg in Australia, he came back to the Lord. For sure, God works in amazing ways!

INSIDE
Story
by HANNELE AMBERLA



I found answers to my questions and had a closer 'walk' with God.