

Permission to Talk for God



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 2:11–15; Matthew 21:23–27; Jeremiah 38:1–4; Acts 6:1–7; 1 Chronicles 29:29.

MEMORY VERSE: “So be careful! God’s message to us is alive and powerful. It is like [the same as] a sword that has two sharp edges. Even more than a sword, God’s message goes very deep into us. It cuts between our soul and our spirit. It is like a sharp knife that can cut deep into our body between our bones. God’s message shows what we are really thinking. It shows what we really want” (Hebrews 4:12, **EASY**).



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ON NOVEMBER 9, 1989, Günter Schabowski said something on live TV in East Germany that started the fall of the Berlin Wall. Schabowski was the government spokesperson for East Germany’s press. Schabowski made a mistake during a press meeting on TV. He announced that East Germans would be allowed to visit Western Europe. When a reporter asked Schabowski when this change would happen, Schabowski said, “As far as I know, this change happens right away.” Minutes later, many East Germans came to the border and asked to cross into Europe, because of Schabowski’s announcement.

People often are chosen to speak for a company or a country. But what about those people who talk for God? This week, we will look at the power and permission that God’s messengers have. We will ask, “What power do messengers have who didn’t write a book of the Bible?” These messengers include Nathan, John the Baptist, and Ellen G. White.

PERMISSION TO TALK FOR GOD (Exodus 2:11–15)

Before you give a person permission to talk for you, you must choose someone you trust. This person must know what you believe and then communicate it.

How did Moses' time as a shepherd help him to be God's spokesperson? Read Exodus 2:11–15 and Exodus 3:1–3, 10–13 for the answer.

Moses spent the first 40 years of his life getting the best education that Egypt offered. But this learning didn't teach him to become God's messenger. Moses needed to spend the next 40 years of his life as a shepherd in the desert. In many ways, Moses had to undo much of the education he got as a prince in Egypt. Moses would be talking for God. So, before Moses could help God lead Israel out of Egypt, Moses needed to get to know God better.

Read the conversation between God and Moses in Exodus 4:10–16. What can this conversation teach us about how God chooses His messengers? How do His messengers work for Him?

Moses was God's spokesperson. Aaron spoke for Moses (Exodus 4:16; also read Exodus 7:1). God helped Moses and Aaron to decide the best way to share the message He gave them. God does the same thing with all His messengers.

Moses knew that he made mistakes in the past. Moses remembered his last meeting with his fellow Israelites. At that time, the Israelites did not believe Moses could help them. So, God understood Moses' worries and fears. God was patient with Moses. Moses made many excuses about why he wasn't the best person for the job. God removed all reasons for Moses' excuses. Finally, Moses' fears showed his doubt. He questioned God's choice in using him. So, God commanded Moses to stop making excuses and get to work (Exodus 3:14–17).

You may not be a special messenger. But what did God ask you to do for Him with your life? What is the best way to get ready for this work? Or, if you are already doing this work, what is the best way to continue doing it?



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**JESUS HAD PERMISSION TO TALK FOR GOD
(Matthew 21:23–27)**

Did God give Jesus the power and permission to talk for Him? If yes, what was the proof? Read Matthew 21:23–27 and John 17:2 for the answers.



**Jesus woke up people
from the dead.**

While Jesus was teaching, the Jewish leaders asked Him a question. They wanted to know who gave Jesus the permission to speak for God. Jesus didn't go to any of the local schools for religion. None of the teachers trained Jesus. Jesus answered with a question about John the Baptist: Who gave John permission to speak for God? The Jewish leaders refused to answer. In doing so, they rejected God's power in the lives of both John and Jesus.

Read Matthew 7:28, 29; Mark 1:21–27; Luke 8:22–25; Luke 9:1; John 5:25–27; and John 7:38. What do these verses tell us about Jesus' power?

All power belongs to Jesus. He made humans (John 1:3). He is our Savior (Romans 3:24). Jesus also is the Word of God in a human body. Jesus had power from God to do His work on earth. Jesus' teaching surprised His audiences because He taught with power from God (Matthew 7:29).

The first four books of the New Testament talk about Jesus' power as God's messenger. Jesus forgave sins (Mark 2:10, 11). Jesus commanded demons to come out of people (Mark 3:15). Jesus knew what people were thinking (John 2:24, 25). Jesus woke up people from the dead. He offered the gift of everlasting life (John 10:28). While Jesus lived on earth, He used the power that God gave Him (John 17:22). Jesus depended on the Father and always worked together with Him (John 5:19). Jesus often used quotes from the Old Testament. Jesus said the Old Testament explained who He was. Jesus had all power in heaven and on earth. He could give power to His followers (Mark 6:7). Jesus gave power to His messengers to communicate His messages and talk for Him (Revelation 19:10).

Jesus gave so much proof that He was sent from God. But some people rejected Him anyway. How can we be careful not to make this same terrible mistake?

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD, THE BIBLE (Jeremiah 38:1–4)

God helped His messengers write the Bible. The Bible answers life's big questions. God shows us who He is in the Bible. The Bible teaches us the meaning of life. We learn from the Bible why we are here. The Bible also teaches us God's plan for our lives. The Bible shows us truth. Bible truth helps us to make the best choices in life. The Bible is the rule for our faith and behavior.

We can accept the Bible, or we can reject it. We don't need to burn our Bibles to reject Bible truth, as King Jehoiakim did (read Jeremiah 36:22–27). We may say we believe the Bible. But what if we don't follow it? Then we reject it. When we discover Bible truth and accept it, we can be changed, the same as King Josiah (read 2 Kings 22:10–13). Then we can help other people accept Jesus, too.

Today, people often make fun of the Bible. Or they look for mistakes when they read it. Some people don't think the Bible is important for their lives today. They think that Bible truth is old-fashioned and not up-to-date with accepted ideas and behavior. (For sure, the Bible often goes against these things. And it should!) Many people also laugh at Bible truth because it goes against science or popular teachings.

Sad to say, some Christians use the Bible to support personal beliefs that go against the Bible. Other people explain the Bible in a way that gives it no control or power over our lives. That is the same as rejecting it.

One of the easiest ways to reject the Bible is not to read the Bible or live its truth.

How did God's spoken message change people's lives? Read Jeremiah 38:1–4; John 3:1–10; and Acts 16:25–34 for the answer.

In Bible times, writing material was expensive. Many people couldn't read. So, the spoken message from God's messengers was very important.

Bible truth can touch the heart. With the Holy Spirit's help, God's truth can show us our sin. Bible truth can change our lives for the better and make us new. The Bible tells us to stop sinning and obey God (Acts 5:29; also read Hebrews 4:12). That's why many people reject the Bible. They don't want to give it any control over their lives.



**The Bible is the rule
for our faith and behavior.**

GOD'S MESSENGERS AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP (Acts 6:1–7)



**In times of war or trouble,
the messengers shared
God's advice
with His people.**

Hosea 12:13 says, “The LORD used a prophet [messenger] to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. He used a prophet to keep them safe in the wilderness [desert]” (EASY). As we see in this verse, part of the job of God’s messengers was to protect and lead God’s people.

If we read Judges 4:4–8; 2 Chronicles 20:14–17; Exodus 12:1–3; and Deuteronomy 1:9–16, we can see that God’s messengers showed His people His plan for leadership in their lives. In times of war or trouble, the messengers shared God’s advice with His people. Messengers also gave hope and encouragement to the people and their leaders. (Read the stories of Jehaziel and Deborah.) Messengers also gave advice to the leaders about worship and religious celebrations. At other times, the messenger helped the leaders make good decisions. God sent His messengers to help His people with advice for every part of their lives.

How did God’s messengers help the church in New Testament times? Read Acts 6:1–7; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16; and Titus 1:5 for the answer.

When Jesus went back to heaven, He left His followers without a visible leader on earth. But Jesus told His followers what He wanted them to do: “ ‘Go everywhere in the world [earth]. Tell the Good News to everyone’ ” (Mark 16:15, ERV). Yes, Jesus chose the Twelve Apostles to lead His church before He went to heaven. Apostles were the leaders and teachers in the church. But there was nothing already in place to help the apostles get started. They needed help. So, God sent His messengers to them.

The New Testament church had many difficult experiences at first. How would they lead and guide the church? How would they share God’s message? How would they punish false teachings and sins in the church? God’s messengers helped answer these questions. The messengers helped keep the church safe (Acts 13:1, 2). The church couldn’t get started without God’s messengers. They helped the church move forward with its work for God.

Some people are against churches and church leadership. Why is good leadership important? Why is it important to be part of a church?

BIBLE MESSENGERS WHO DIDN'T WRITE ANY BOOKS OF THE BIBLE (1 Chronicles 29:29)

Read 1 Chronicles 29:29 and 2 Chronicles 9:29. What do you learn about some of the messengers in these verses?

There were many Bible messengers whose books didn't become part of the Bible. These messengers included Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, and Iddo.

Read 1 Kings 11:29–39 and Luke 7:28. What do these verses teach us about the power of messengers whose writings are not included in the Bible?

Why did God allow the writings of some messengers to be included in the Bible and not the writings of others? We don't know. What we do know is that the messengers whose writings were not included in the Bible were filled with the Holy Spirit. Their messages fully came from God. The Bible teaches us that the spiritual gifts will continue in the church until the end times. That includes the gift of special messages. The Bible says that there will be special messengers from God in the end times. Paul says, the Lord “gave all these gifts to help God's people to serve him in different ways” (Ephesians 4:12, EASY). Paul adds, “This work must continue until we are all joined together in what we believe and in what we know about the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13, ERV). For sure, the spiritual gifts will continue in the church until “the great [amazing] and terrible day of the LORD comes” (Joel 2:31, Nlrv).

After David slept with Bathsheba and then killed her husband, God sent Nathan to talk to him (2 Samuel 12:7–14). Nathan didn't write a book of the Bible. But David didn't question Nathan's word. Why? Because Nathan's message came from the Holy Spirit. Nathan respected Bible truth. Modern messengers will also respect it, too. Their messages must be tested with the Bible. Modern messages don't replace the Bible as the reason for our faith and teachings.

Ellen G. White wrote, “The Lord wants you to study your Bibles. He didn't give us any new light to replace His Written Word. The Bible will help people who are confused to understand His truth. The Bible gives us life, the same as food.”—Selected Messages, book 3, page 29, adapted. How well does the church follow this advice?



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THE POWER OF GOD'S MESSENGERS



In God's messages to Ellen White, we see the fight between good and evil. This fight started with Lucifer in heaven.

God's messengers speak for Him. Their messages have the power to change lives for the better. Some of these messengers wrote part of the Bible. Other messengers didn't write any part at all. Some messengers lived after the Bible was written. God gave all these men and women their messages. Their messages showed that God chose them.

Ellen G. White belongs to this last group of messengers who lived after Bible times. As Seventh-day Adventists, we do not include Ellen White's writings as part of the Bible. We do not say that her writings are the same as the Bible. At the same time, her writings help people. They tell us what God wants us to know. Ellen White wrote, "In the messages I give, I share with you what the Lord showed me. I don't write one article about my own ideas. I write only what God showed me in a vision. His messages are the same as precious light that shines from His throne."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, page 29, adapted.

Ellen White's writings always agree with Bible truth. She warns against sin. She tells us about our need for Jesus. Jesus is the only hope of everlasting life.

In God's messages to Ellen White, we see the fight between good and evil. This fight started with Lucifer in heaven. It will continue to the end-times. Then sin and evil, along with Satan and his angels, will be destroyed forever. Ellen White's writings help us understand what the Bible teaches about the end-times. She talks about the danger of joining the church with the government. She teaches us that religious freedom is important. She warns against sin and evil. She honors God's law. She helps us understand Bible truth about the mark of the beast.

Ellen White also talks about Christian living. Her messages have helped to change many lives for the better. These messages include topics about health, education, family relationships, being parents, and being holy.

Ellen White's writings are not in the Bible. But God uses her to help people who are living in the final days of earth's history. Her writings speak with power and meaning to our lives.

To discover more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/10>.

TO FINLAND WITH LOVE: THE WORK OF ELSA LUUKKANEN

Elsa Luukkanen was born on May 20, 1916, in Sortavala, Finland. Elsa grew up very poor. At 16, Elsa went to Seventh-day Adventist Bible study meetings. Then she was baptized. Because Elsa kept the Sabbath, she lost her home and her job for a time. But she kept her faith.

When Elsa was 17, she led her first person to Jesus. When she was 19, she started preaching.

A church member helped pay for Elsa to study at the Toivonlinna Adventist school. She worked as a Bible bookseller before she became a Bible worker. When World War 2 started, Elsa and another Bible worker named Aino held Bible meetings across Finland.

Many people came to Elsa's meetings. Her preaching touched hearts. Often, she sang and played the guitar. In Joensuu, the Seventh-day Adventist membership grew from five to 150 people in just two years. A new church started. Elsa helped to start more churches in other cities. One Bible worker said that Elsa was "filled with the Holy Spirit. Her sermons were powerful. Her sermons touched hearts and minds and brought people to God."

After the war, Elsa's work for God continued. In Helsinki in 1957, Elsa preached up to three times a day to big crowds. 80 people were baptized. Elsa worked so hard. So, church leaders asked her to take a break and rest. Elsa, along with Aino, went to North America for a vacation. They went to Finnish communities. There they preached and sang. They supported their Bible work with money they made from dressmaking. Elsa named her work "vacation preaching"!

Elsa went back to Finland. In the late 1960s, she started the Adventist Welfare Society (AWS). This center gave tens of thousands of blankets and clothes to poor people all across Eastern Europe. Elsa and Aino even collected offerings to sew clothes and build a new church and a new building for AWS in Kajaani. Elsa said, "I couldn't just preach. I had to help the children. I loved all the poor children in Finland as if I were their mother. They were the same as my children. I had to find homes for them." Elsa Luukkanen found and built homes for these children across Finland.

Elsa died in 1996. Over her lifetime, she led 700 people to Jesus. She helped start many churches. In 1975, Elsa was honored during the worldwide Women's Year celebration. She spent her whole life serving Jesus. She did not let war, hard times, or being poor stop her from her work.

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

INSIDE Story



"I loved all the poor children in Finland as if I were their mother."