



*God Wants to Ask You*

A BIBLE STUDY RESOURCE

8 QUESTIONS GOD WANTS TO ASK YOU:  
A BIBLE STUDY RESOURCE

"QUESTIONS GET THINGS MOVING—GOOD QUESTIONS WILL  
CARRY YOU THROUGH WHOLE JOURNEYS, EXCITING ADVENTURES,  
AND CHARMING ENCOUNTERS."

Carmen Kindl-Beilfuss, *Fragen können wie Küsse schmecken* (Questions Can Taste Like Kisses), p. 9



## INTRODUCTION



*Questions, questions, questions...*

I'm a father of two girls. They are now 18 and 20 years old, but if I travel back in time, I would say our best bonding experiences have been those in which they started asking questions. I have to admit that sometimes it was too much, because even though I gave an answer to their every question, they would ask, again and again, "Why?"

Why are questions so important? Well, for starters, questions are used by teachers all over the planet as the key means to find out what students have learned and understand. Questions give them information so they can better plan the next teaching steps.

Our Sabbath School lessons, the materials for small groups, and Bible Study lessons have one thing in common: questions! We use them all the time to strike up conversations.

And when it comes to Jesus, questions were a big part of His teaching program. We should consider at least two different reasons why He decided to focus on questions for His disciples' learning process.

The first reason why is that Jesus was looking for a teaching opportunity stemming from the individuals' answers to His questions. "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15). Peter's response is simply profound, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!" (Matthew 16:16).

The second reason why is that He knew that His questions would produce a transformation in the lives of those involved in the conversation. "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). Such a question could not leave you indifferent: you would be moved to stop criticizing others and start changing your own behavior.

I hope that this resource—based on 8 of God's questions for you—will provoke not only deep conversations, but also the vital transformation of your heart.

### JONATÁN TEJEL

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CONTENTS

P. 10

L 1

# WHERE ARE YOU?

GENESIS 3:1-10

P. 18

L 2

# WHERE ARE THOSE ACCUSERS OF YOURS?

JOHN 8:1-11

P. 26

L 3

# WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

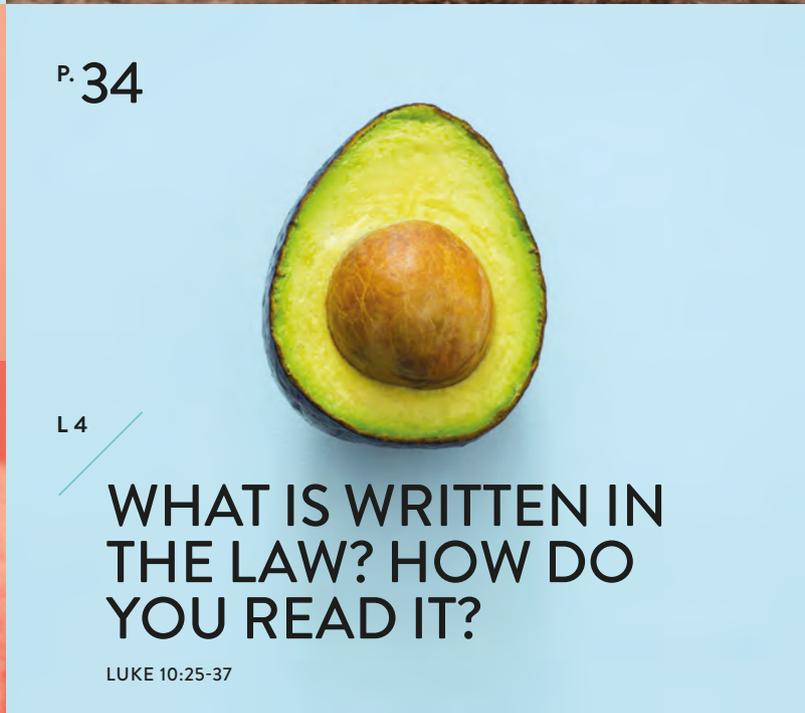
MATTHEW 16:13-20

P. 34

L 4

# WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW DO YOU READ IT?

LUKE 10:25-37



ABOUT THE AUTHOR / 07

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS RESOURCE / 08

CREDITS / 78

P. 42

L 5

WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING HERE?

1 KINGS 19:9-18

P. 50

L 6

DO YOU WANT  
TO BE HEALED?

JOHN 5:1-9

P. 58

L 7

DO YOU UNDER-  
STAND WHAT I HAVE  
DONE TO YOU?

JOHN 13:12-17

P. 66

L 8

WHAT IS THAT IN  
YOUR HAND?

EXODUS 4:1-4



"GUARD  
YOUR HEART  
**ABOVE ALL ELSE,**  
FOR IT DETERMINES  
*the course*  
OF YOUR LIFE."

Proverbs 4:23, NLT

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**TROY FITZGERALD** GREW UP IN THE SILICON VALLEY IN CALIFORNIA. HE STUDIED AT SOUTHERN COLLEGE WHERE HE MET HIS BRIDE, JULIA. HE THEN MOVED NORTH TO MICHIGAN TO WORK AS A PASTOR, EVANGELIST, AND BIBLE TEACHER. AFTER SERVING IN MICHIGAN, HE AND HIS FAMILY MOVED TO THE WALLA WALLA UNIVERSITY CHURCH WHERE HE SERVED AS YOUTH/ YOUNG ADULT PASTOR FOR 20 YEARS. TROY AND JULIA HAVE TWO SONS, CAMERON AND MORGAN.

Troy has a BA in Theology from Southern Adventist University, an MA in Education and a PhD in Leadership from Andrews University. He has authored various books for Christian living and spiritual growth: *Discovering God's Will*, *Twenty Questions God Wants to Ask You*, *Live Like You Mean It*, *Forty Days Wild*, and *Out of the Shipyard*.

He has also written resources for discipleship for all ages, such as: *Christwise Discipleship Guides (for juniors, teens, and youth)*, *Seeing Red Small Group Study Guide*, *Facing the Son* (a Bible study for primary grades), *Roundabout Faith* (28 beliefs for young adults).

Recently, Troy has conducted research on young adults entitled: *A Meaning Full Season of Life—The Faith Tasks of Young Adults*. As a result of this research, he wrote a series of devotionals focusing on 5 major endeavors: *Calling, Conviction, Compassion, Community, and Commitment*.



## HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS RESOURCE



TIP 1



PRAYER

An important aspect of approaching any text for reflection is to do it in prayer. This is a great chance to establish a prayer routine with God. Talk to Him like you would with a friend. Ask Him to make your journey through this material something significant in your life. Allow each topic to inspire you in your prayer life. You can also start a prayer journal, and as time passes, you can look back and see how God has answered your specific prayers. A quick search on Google will give you lots of ideas to make your own prayer journal.

TIP 2



JOURNAL

Use a journal or notebook to write down the thoughts and ideas that come to you as you read or listen to the topic. You can also use it to write your own prayer requests or to thank God for what He does in your life. It is important that you open your heart to the influence of the Holy Spirit and that you write (or draw!) what He inspires.

TIP 3



QUESTIONS

At the end of each main text you will find a few questions for reflection. They can be useful both for your personal reflection and for a group conversation. Make sure you ask God for wisdom and a clear mind as well as a sensitive heart so that you can truly make the most of them. When you answer the questions in a group, remember to be respectful towards others. Help to establish a dialogue by having a positive attitude and being willing to listen to other people's opinion without judging them.

TIP 4



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

We want the thoughts for each lesson to be more than just thoughts. That is why the personal challenge has the goal of helping you to implement and put into practice a key idea from the text. It won't always be easy, and you will have to be proactive, but only then will we be able to go from theory to practice.



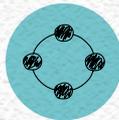
TIP 5



GO DEEPER

Perhaps you are left with a desire for more after you read the text. We have included a section with a few proposals for you to dig deeper in the topic. The suggestions include: reading some additional Bible verses or a chapter from a book as well as some thought-provoking quotes. The list is not meant to be exhaustive; we encourage you to make it the beginning of something more.

TIP 6



ACTIVITIES

Every lesson includes 2 or 3 optional activities. These can be used in a group setting as ice-breakers. Make the most of them not only this week but also in youth activities, on field trips, or wherever you can! And adapt them as needed!

TIP 7



NOTES FOR LEADERS

The purpose of this resource is to gather you around several questions of the Bible, so that each person in the group has a profound experience with God. So, make sure you plan the day as best as you can so that this goal is fulfilled.

Every lesson includes several sections to help you prepare. These are: Key Bible text, Ellen G. White quote, Main text, Prayer of the day, Questions, Personal Challenge, Go Deeper and Activities. Take some time to read the key Bible text together. In advance, choose the questions you want your group to reflect on, and in what order. You may also add your own questions. Also choose the activities that are useful to you (remember they are all optional).

If you are using this resource as a week of prayer reading, make sure you set aside enough time in advance to prepare each day or lesson. Read the text thoroughly and ask God to help you in your preparations. Always have your youth group in mind. He knows—better than anyone else—what we are going through as individuals, so lean on His presence and leading so that this week is of great impact for everyone involved.

We are always looking to provide better resources for you. Please let us know what you thought of this one by using this link: <http://bit.ly/8Qs2020>

# WHERE ARE YOU?

KEY TEXT: GENESIS 3:1-10



**YOU**  
ARE HERE

"... AND THE MAN AND HIS WIFE HID THEMSELVES FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD GOD AMONG THE TREES OF THE GARDEN. BUT THE LORD GOD CALLED TO THE MAN AND SAID TO HIM, 'WHERE ARE YOU?'"

Genesis 3:8-9

AT LARGE SHOPPING MALLS, IN PARKS AND EVEN ON HIKING TRAILS YOU WILL SEE A SIGN WITH A MAP OF THE AREA. SOMEWHERE ON THE MAP THERE IS A HIGHLIGHTED ARROW WITH A SIGN INDICATING "YOU ARE HERE."

If you wanted to travel to Geneva, you would put the address of your destination in the GPS and these two truths would emerge: *where you are now* and *where you want to go*. Likewise, the questions about your starting point and your destination are essential. The story of life begins with answering key questions in Genesis.

Consider the story in the garden where God creates a world, organizes a system and launches life on earth: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.... Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:1, 31). Sounds perfect!

The story of creation portrays a perfect world set up for enduring goodness and glory.

Are you the kind of person who reads the beginning, gets drawn into the story and rushes to the last pages to see how the situations are resolved? The Bible starts with two chapters of describing life in perfect harmony, and the last two chapters in Revelation pick up the glorious end when everything is restored. Today, we live in the middle of the book, somewhere between the garden and the hopeful place at the end.

“

The central issue of the fall is a slight adjustment that changes your position in relation to God.”

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" (Genesis 3:1-3)*

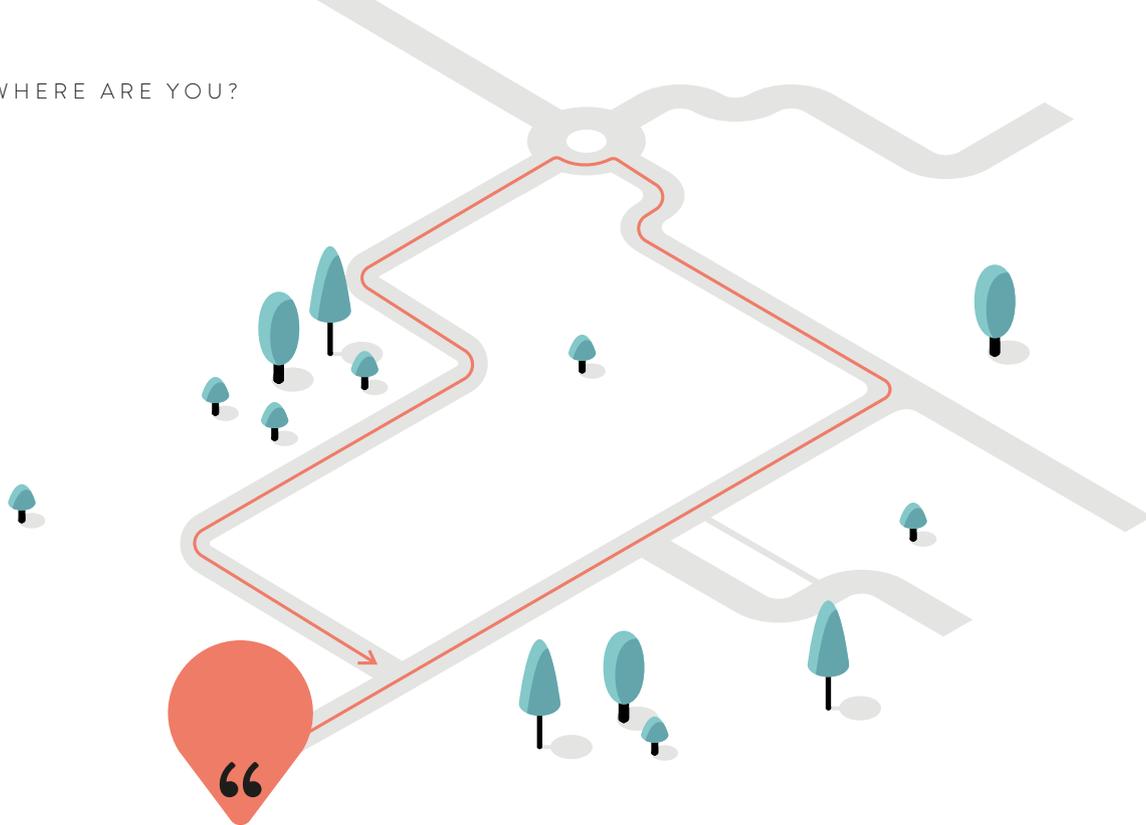
God creates earth, trees and plants, light, water, animals, and humans. Adam and Eve are told to work, produce, and multiply. God asks people to eat fruit from all the trees, except one. When you think about it, it seems irrational to say, "Eat fruit! It's good, but eating this particular fruit is not good—eating this fruit is wrong." If there is no moral act of violence you can understand that people might see God as harsh or demanding. On the surface, the penalty doesn't fit the crime. "Eat fruit, all fruit, except from this one tree, because if you do, you will die." Why is eating this fruit so wrong?

It's not about the nature of the fruit. The problem is trusting your sensibilities against the clear word of your Creator. When you cross over the tipping point of trusting your own will over God's will, you shift to be God. If you only commit to your own understanding you become the reference point. Note that the Deceiver didn't argue that the Creator was evil. He did not even suggest that God did not exist. The shift was not about God, it was about you. The central issue of the fall is a slight adjustment that changes your position in relation to God.

The children of God came close to the tree and were drawn by the sound of the snake. Being so close to the fruit—combined with the words of the snake—compelled Adam and Eve to look to their own desires, instead of God's will. They doubted the heart of God.

The deception worked a fearful result in their position. When God came into the garden to find His children, they felt foreign in His presence. The first question God asked was, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). Clearly, God knew where His children were hiding. The real issue is why they were hiding.





“Turn to God. It’s a hard move, but it’s the right choice.”

When you feel like running away, you can trust that God still knows where you are hiding. Answering the question “Where are you?” is a part of the restoration process. Being out of alignment with God produces at least two options: 1) staying in hiding, and 2) answering the question.

“Where are you?” If you were to respond to that question today, what would your answer be? Adam’s confession reveals the work of sin in our hearts, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10).

I heard you...  
I was afraid...  
I was naked...  
I hid...

Are you tempted to do the same? To focus on your situation and hide away? To try to fix it all by yourself? Or do you turn toward God and face Him?

When you turn to God, you see differently. Seeing God (instead of yourself) is the first and most important adjustment you can make in your life. A. W. Tozer once said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”<sup>1</sup> See God rightly, and everything changes.

The opposite posture is also true. Lucifer found that your view will change your perception, and your perception changes everything, as is written in Isaiah:

“How you are fallen from heaven,  
O Lucifer, son of the morning! [...] For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”

(Isaiah 14:12-14 NKJV)

You can highlight the “I will” instead of “Your will be done...” The same temptation returns again and again in the story of Jesus: your will or God’s will. The Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness by saying, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread” (Matthew 4:3).

The Devil came later in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus faced the same temptation again: “Choose what I want,” or “choose to do God’s will.” Jesus answered, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). It might be the hardest prayer to pray, if you mean it!

Even after the victorious decision in Gethsemane, the leaders of Israel challenged Jesus on the cross with the same temptation:

“If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save.”

(Matthew 27:40-42 NKJV)

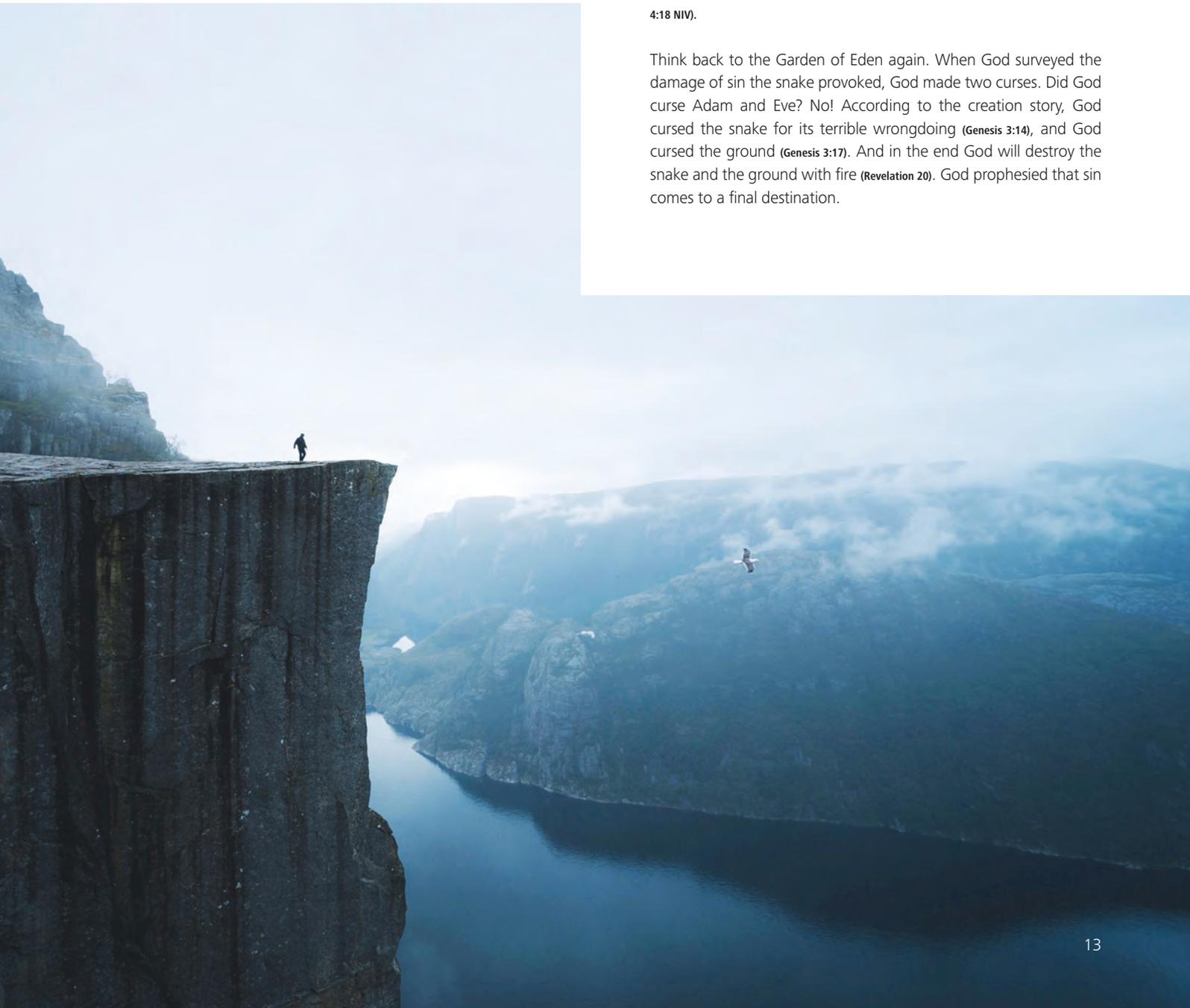
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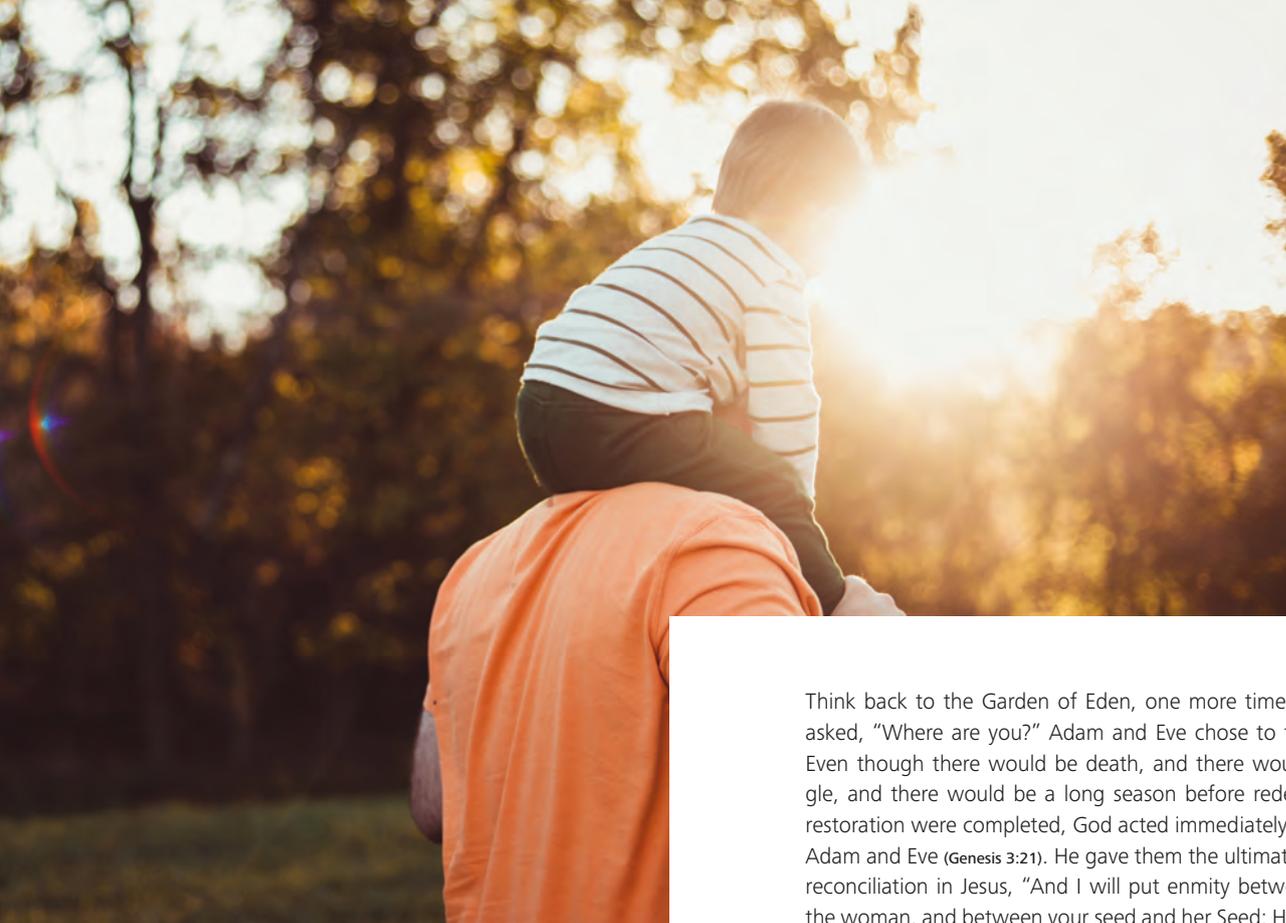
The truth is the only distance between you and God is your position. The moment you turn to Him, God fills in the gap.”

Turn to God. It's a hard move, but it's the right choice. The other option is to stay away from God hoping that in hiding you will discover another way. When you change your position, it changes your relationship. The word "repent" in the Bible simply means to "turn" or "change your mind". You may believe that you have taken too many steps away from God to really turn back. Perhaps you think that you need to change your life first, prove your convictions, and start leading the right way before God can heal the distance between you. The truth is the only distance between you and God is your position. The moment you turn to Him, God fills in the gap. The distance is erased by God's grace.

Think back to the Garden of Eden. Why did Adam and Eve hide? "I was afraid." You might remember John writing, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18 NIV).

Think back to the Garden of Eden again. When God surveyed the damage of sin the snake provoked, God made two curses. Did God curse Adam and Eve? No! According to the creation story, God cursed the snake for its terrible wrongdoing (Genesis 3:14), and God cursed the ground (Genesis 3:17). And in the end God will destroy the snake and the ground with fire (Revelation 20). God prophesied that sin comes to a final destination.





“

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken.”

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25

Think back to the Garden of Eden, one more time. When God asked, “Where are you?” Adam and Eve chose to turn to God. Even though there would be death, and there would be struggle, and there would be a long season before redemption and restoration were completed, God acted immediately and clothed Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21). He gave them the ultimate promise of reconciliation in Jesus, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His Heel.” (Genesis 3:15 NKJV, see also 2 Corinthians 5:19-20)

In 1997, the *Chicago Tribune* reported a story about a skydiving accident. Typically, you would expect that any accident that had to do with jumping out of a plane would not end well. Michael Costello, a parachute instructor, jumped out of a plane with Gareth Griffeth, a novice skydiver. Gareth soon discovered how fortunate he was to have such a skilled instructor. When he pulled the rip cord, the parachute failed to open and the two of them fell through the air, straight toward the ground. But just before they hit the ground, Michael Costello rolled, hitting the ground first and breaking Gareth’s fall. The instructor died instantly, but Gareth survived, fracturing his spine, but not to the extent of paralysis. It would be easy to imagine Gareth returning regularly to the place where someone else broke his fall and saved his life, making such a place sacred ground.

From the beginning, the plan was to cover the brokenness of sin with the sacrifice of the Son. As a result of Christ’s sacrifice, you can turn and face God with confidence. When you are asked, “Where are you?” you can answer confidently, “I am with Him.” //

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, HELP ME BE HONEST WITH MYSELF AND WITH YOU ABOUT WHERE I AM IN MY LIFE RIGHT NOW. I TURN TO YOU AND I WELCOME YOUR PRESENCE IN MY LIFE.

1 A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 1961, p. 1.

 QUESTIONS

1. Do you find it easy to explain the concept of sin and the fall? A friend once said, "I mean, if you look at it, we are mostly good: we don't steal or hurt or kill anybody." How would you explain what sin is to a friend who knows nothing about God?

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2. Think of the conversation between the woman and the serpent (Gen. 3:1-6). From this experience, is there anything we can do to avoid sin and overcome temptation? Explain.

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3. "I heard you... I was afraid... I was naked... I hid..." When we do something wrong, or we feel shame or guilt, why is hiding our first instinct? Is hiding even useful at all? Why?

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4. Why do you think God asked Adam and Eve the question, "Where are you?" What does His question show you about His character?

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5. How does knowing that God already knows every detail of your life, that He already knows "where you are" make you feel?

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## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Look at yourself in the mirror today. Who is that person looking back at you, really? If God were to ask you, "Where are you?" what would you reply? Is there anything you are hiding from God that brings you guilt and shame?

Instead of hiding, deal with the issue head-on. Delaying the matter won't solve anything and it won't make it go away. Confess to God in prayer (silent prayer, written prayer, a song or a poem that you write...) the aspects of your life and of your character that you would like Him to transform. Remember, the victory is already yours in Jesus: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"

(Romans 8:1).



## GO DEEPER

- › 2 Chronicles 30:9; Joel 2:13; Acts 3:19; James 4:8; 1 John 4:18; Revelation 12; Romans 5 and 6; Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:5-11.
- › Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, ch. 1, "Why was Sin Permitted?" ch. 3, "The Temptation and the Fall" and ch. 4, "The Plan of Redemption."
- › "And before God, any attempt to cover my own sin is futile and arrogant. He has already cleansed me of my sin—how pointless is it for me to try to cover it on my own." (Catherine Parks. *Real: The Surprising Secret to Deeper Relationships*. UK: The Good Book Company, 2018, p. 32).
- › "When you, a being created to live for God, live instead for yourself, you violate your design." (Tim and Kathy Keller. *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms*. NY: Penguin, 2015, p. 189).
- › "The fall of humanity was essentially constituted in the breaking of the covenant of love." (Ty Gibson. *The Sonship of Christ: Exploring the Covenant Identity of God and Man*. USA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018, p. 229).
- › "A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship*. NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1954, p. 116).



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: SOAR AND FALL

**Materials:** Make sure you have a large enough space to allow your group to move freely.

**Activity Description:**

- › All the members of the group must walk within a designated area or circle, until one person shouts, “I soar.” At that moment, everyone must run and lift that person up, as the person does the gesture of flying with their hands. After a few seconds you put the person down, and continue walking within the group until someone shouts, “I fall.” Everyone must run to that person to “rescue” them, since they will fall backwards, trusting everyone else will hold them.
- › This is repeated several times: people choose to shout “I soar” or “I fall” and the group runs to their rescue, either to lift them up or hold them when they fall.
- › Stop the activity when you see fit. Everyone should have had a chance to “soar” and “fall” (they can repeat several times).

**Application:**

In life, you will have low moments in which you feel like you are falling down and other moments in which you will undertake demanding projects and go after lofty goals. Only if you recognize that in both situations you need God to protect you from the fall or to help you reach higher, will you allow Him to hold you and to bless your projects. Admitting where you are and turning to God both in the good and in the bad is always the right path. Spend some time in silent prayer, thinking about where you find yourself in life. Ask God to be present in whatever you are going through. One person from the group can end with a prayer to ask God to lead the group so that you will soar high with His Spirit (*Isaiah 40:31*).

## ACTIVITY 2: THE CURTAIN RISES...

**Materials:** 1 box or 1 basket. Envelopes and cards with the scenes you must represent.

**Activity Description:**

- › Make 2 or more groups depending on the number of people. Each group chooses one envelope, which contains a scene or an idea to act out.\*
- › Give the group a few minutes to prepare the drama using mime.
- › When each group is ready, they will perform their drama and the rest must try to explain what idea is being represented. Capturing the main idea is enough.

**\*Scenes:**

1. Pride separates us from God and Jesus is the bridge that connects us back to Him.
2. Your attitude determines the distance between you and God. Jesus brings you back to the starting point.
3. Dealing with the problem brings us closer to God. Hiding away separates us from Him.
4. Confession as the turning point to get closer to God. God receives us with joy.

**Application:**

Dealing with the proposed topics—both when we represent them and when we try to explain them—helps us to understand them more deeply. End with a group prayer in which you thank Jesus for being the bridge that connects us with God again and surrender your pride to Him.

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# WHERE ARE THOSE ACCUSERS OF YOURS?

KEY TEXT: JOHN 8:1-11

"... HE SAID TO HER, 'WOMAN, WHERE ARE THOSE ACCUSERS OF YOURS? HAS NO ONE CONDEMNED YOU?' SHE SAID, 'NO ONE, LORD!' AND JESUS SAID TO HER, 'NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU; GO AND SIN NO MORE.'"

John 8:10-11 (NKJV)

“

God’s salvation  
is free for you.”

SOMEONE SAID, “WHEN YOU ARE WRONGED, YOU WANT JUSTICE. WHEN YOU ARE WRONG, YOU DESIRE MERCY.” BOTH EXPERIENCES CAN BE SO INTENSE.

The story in John 8 is often referred to as one of the best examples of God’s infinite grace. It amazes you every time you read it. Perhaps the story sticks so deep into our minds because you can relate to both—the accusers and the accused.

Still, there are two features of this story that make it unforgettable: 1) the questions that Jesus asked at the end, and 2) how Jesus compels the woman to answer His question out loud. Normally, questions move you to think, respond, share information, or correct a misunderstanding—but Jesus’ question seems too easy to answer.

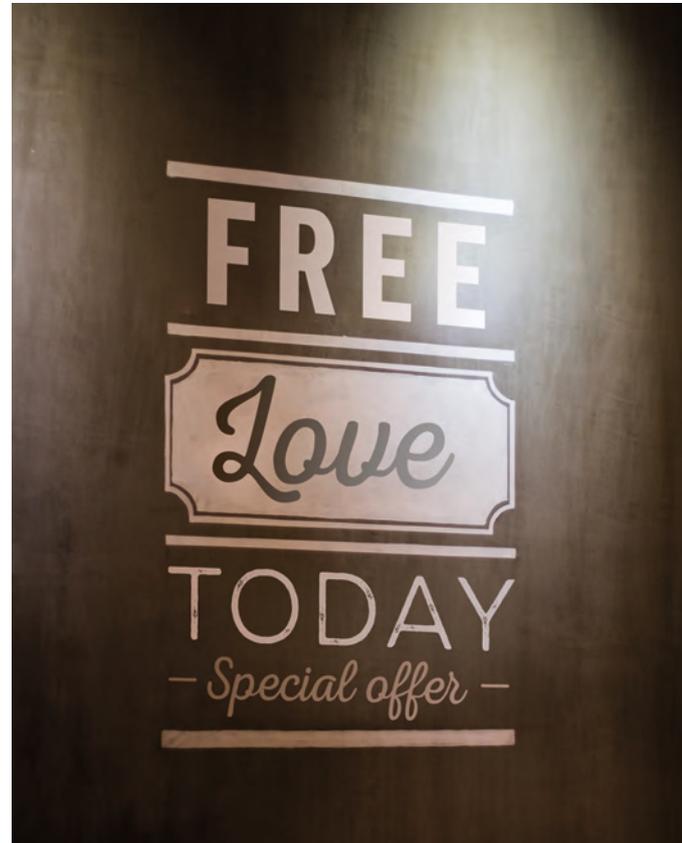
There are endless forums on the Internet about “trick questions,” you know, those questions that make you feel uneasy and doubtful because the answer seems too obvious at first glance. Students suspect the worst when questions seem “too easy” and struggle to find the “real” answer. When it comes to believing, it is true that God’s salvation is free for you. As simple as that. Yet the hardest thing is to really believe that God saves you. Your very nature would rather secure your success by your own means. Being self-reliant is not always a virtue, though.

Knowing that people are capable of decent acts of kindness as well as terrifying cruelty sets the scene for the timeless story in the temple courts fiasco.

It’s ironic that this story occurs in the temple court area.

Let’s go back in time for a moment. The sanctuary was constructed on earth in the wilderness. After 400 years of slavery, the Israelites embarked on a journey from slavery to the Promised Land. In the meantime, God instructed them to create a special space, “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst” (Exodus 25:8a)

When sin entered into this world the relationship between the Creator and creation changed. The reality of the rift between people and God was unmistakable. The idea of being “separated” from your Creator is the direct opposite of the presence of the sanctuary—God being with us, or dwelling in our midst.



If there was any place where a holy God and a lost sinner could meet it was in the temple, a space where you could come close to God, daily. The outer courts of the temple were prepared to convey the invitation that everyone is accepted and forgiven. The intended sacred space was described in the Psalms:

*“One thing have I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
and to inquire in his temple.”*

(Psalms 27:4)



“

Grace and mercy are not complicated concepts to understand or explain, but they are so hard to accept and embrace.”

And yet, the beauty, grace and truth of “that space” had become the setting of a horrible scene. According to John, “The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him...” (John 8:3-4).

Rarely will you find people who cheer, “Good! We finally caught the cheater!” Likely, you respond with shock and outrage towards the religious leaders who are setting up the fiasco. Yet, the whole courtroom and judgment space is perfect—it occurs in the temple, before Jesus. And that is how the “set up” of this woman that was intended to trap Jesus turned into a perfect plan gone wrong for the religious leaders. After all, they were in front of Jesus, also called Immanuel, which means “God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

The religious leaders made their strategic move, but there were two fatal flaws in their argument. First of all, although this woman was caught in the act of adultery, the law demanded that both guilty parties die (Deuteronomy 22:22 and Leviticus 20:10). Only the woman is there and there are no witnesses. According to the law, any manipulation of the truth in court is payable by death. The second issue was that any death sentence required a Roman court to preside.

The imagery is compelling: Jesus writing with His finger on the ground in the midst of the temple courtyard is quite a sight. After engraving truths with His finger, Jesus offers an idea that rings like a bell in the area, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7).

No one said a word. There was no answer. You could only hear the sound of sandals shuffling on the dirt as people walked away. A few minutes later, the courtyard was empty except for the woman and Jesus, who remained in the midst of the temple.

The voice who utters planets into existence and quiets the hurricanes with a whisper offers two questions, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?”

Remember, the questions God asks are often a doorway to a new life. The story is almost too good to be true for the woman caught in adultery. Was Jesus’ question another trick question or was it really the opportunity to start again?

If you have a difficult time choking out the truth of grace, you are not alone. It’s just a little too easy. It’s a little too good to be true. Saying the words out loud “I’m saved” or “I’m free” is an even deeper problem for humanity. Grace and mercy are not complicated concepts to understand or explain, but they are so hard to accept and embrace.

Consider the questions again, “Where are your accusers?” and “Has no one condemned you?” There is one scene in Revelation that captures the answer beautifully:

*And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."*

(Revelation 12:10-11)

This truth is for the woman caught in adultery, and it is also true for you. Will you declare this truth today? Say it out loud! When you do, you will mean it more than if you keep your thoughts to yourself. As you speak, the truth inside your heart and mind grows stronger.

Do you think the woman heard Jesus when He said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8:11)? Perhaps this makes you think about your own story of:

- › broken promises,
- › weak devotion,
- › being consistently inconsistent,
- › failing people,
- › and hiding the truth.

However, Jesus does not set up people to fail. Jesus reminds her to "go, and sin no more." But if you think "going" and "being flawless" is the point, the story is a contradiction. Another way to say "Go, and sin no more" is to say, "Since you are free, go and walk in freedom and not shackled by slavery."

Some struggle to imagine that a life of sin could ever allow the deep abiding confidence in salvation, but there is another truth to embrace: you are much closer now than you realize.

Consider this story that happened years ago.

“  
Broken. Repaired.  
Better. After a life  
of selfishness  
and sin, will you  
ever be close to  
God again?”

Because Antonio Stradivarius handcrafted his violins with such care and precision, their sound has no rival in the world. When Peter Cropper, an accomplished British violinist, was offered a 258-year-old Stradivarius to play in upcoming concerts, his dream came true.

The long-awaited evening arrived. He stepped forward on the stage and, unfortunately, tripped, turning his dream into a nightmare when he fell on his Stradivarius. The neck of the violin snapped off. To his horror, his priceless treasure broke.<sup>1</sup>

As you can imagine, Peter Cropper was devastated. He took the violin to a craftsman to try to repair the instrument. While many could fix the violin with glue, tools and time, no one could guess if the violin would sound the same way ever again. In time, Peter learned that the sound was no longer the same. In reality, it sounded even better. He explained, "As a matter of fact, the violin is now in better shape than ever, producing a much more resonant tone."<sup>2</sup>

Broken. Repaired. Better. After a life of selfishness and sin, will you ever be close to God again? Is it even possible to be closer to God after being broken? Ellen White writes one of those "too good to be true" statements:



“

In His act of pardoning this woman and encouraging her to live a better life, the character of Jesus shines forth in the beauty of perfect righteousness. While He does not palliate sin, nor lessen the sense of guilt, He seeks not to condemn, but to save.”

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 462

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken.

*(The Desire of Ages, p. 25)*

Today, because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, you are closer to Him than you could ever imagine. You may have heard the saying "my sin was great, but God's love is greater." It's absolutely true. But, you need to do more than agree, you need to say it out loud and live accordingly. Take a walk to the courtyard and find grace in the midst of Jesus. //

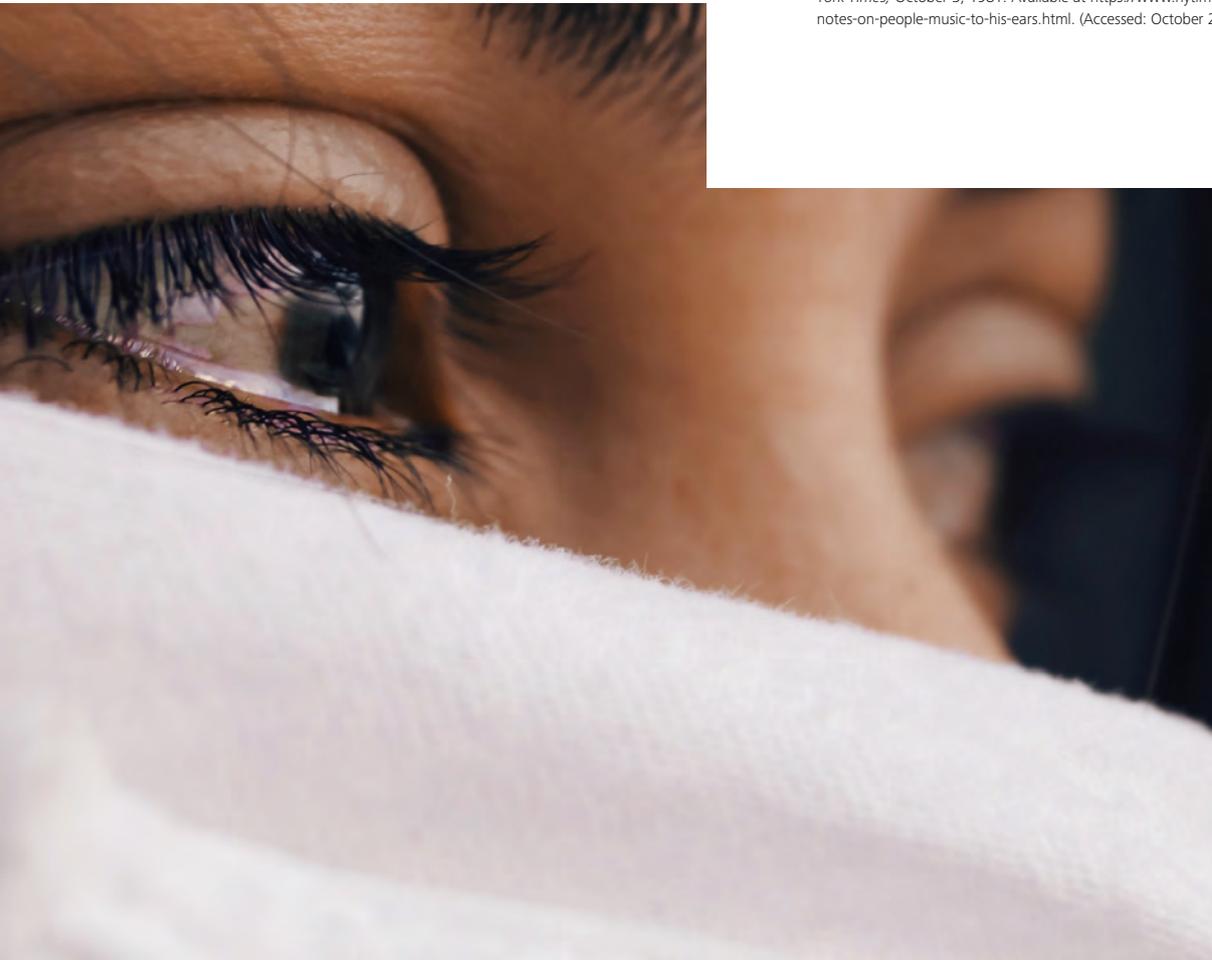
#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, THE WOMAN IN THIS STORY REMINDS ME OF YOUR RELENTLESS, UNENDING AND FOREVER FAITHFUL LOVE FOR ME. YOUR GRACE IS ENOUGH. HELP ME TO NOT ONLY UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT ACCEPT IT DEEP IN MY HEART.

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1 See <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/03/nyregion/notes-on-people-music-to-his-ears.html>

2 Albin Krebs and Robert Mcg. Thomas. "Notes on People; Music to His Ears" in *The New York Times*, October 3, 1981. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/03/nyregion/notes-on-people-music-to-his-ears.html>. (Accessed: October 21, 2019)





# QUESTIONS

1. "If there was any place where a holy God and a lost sinner could meet, it was in the temple, a space where you could come close to God, daily." Is this true about your church? How so? If not, how can your church be more caring? What can you do to make your church a safe place for imperfect sinners?

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2. Think about the woman in front of Jesus. She knew she was guilty. She had been humiliated in front of everyone. And then she hears Jesus setting her free, bestowing His grace upon her. How do you think she felt? How would you describe grace from her experience?

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3. "Grace and mercy are not complicated concepts to understand or explain, but they are so hard to accept and embrace." Do you agree? Why? Can you think of real-life examples you can share with the group?

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4. Jesus tells the woman, "Go, and sin no more." Troy says this as "go, and walk in freedom and not shackled by slavery." How would you say it in your own words:

"Go, and \_\_\_\_\_"  
\_\_\_\_\_."

5. What is easier for you, to accept grace or to impart grace? Why?

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## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

“Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?”

It might seem like a trick question, but it's not. Jesus also tells you that His grace is sufficient for you. Try this. For one week, start each day by reminding yourself of the gift of grace by reading this text, “God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God” (Ephesians 2:8, NLT). Print it, do some nice lettering with it, paint it, whatever you prefer, and put it on your bathroom mirror or someplace where you will see it each morning.

As you interact with others throughout the day, remind yourself of God's grace, and choose to act with grace with each person that crosses your way. Plan in advance practical ways of doing this. For example, “If someone speaks to me unkindly today, instead of replying in the same tone, I will respond nicely.” At the end of the week, ask yourself how this challenge made you feel.



## GO DEEPER

- › Romans 6, 7 and 8. See also: Fabian Looser Grönroos, “Powerful grace: Operating Manual on How to Defeat Sin” (ch. 6, based on Romans 6); Pierrick Avelin, “The Christian's Paradox: The Christian Walk, An Unexpected Journey” (ch. 7, based on Romans 7); and Raphaël Grin, “The Radical and Unconditional Love of God: How God Is Dealing with Evil” (ch. 8, based on Romans 8) in *Romans Study Guide*. Edited by Youth Department of the Inter-European Division of SDA, 2017. Available for download at: <https://icor.church/resources/>
- › Ephesians 2:4-9; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Isaiah 30:19; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:7.
- › Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, ch. 50, “Among Snares.”
- › On Jesus' parable of the workers (Matthew 20:1-16): “Grace is not about finishing last or first; it is about not counting. We receive grace as a gift from God, not as something we toil to earn... We risk missing the story's point: that God dispenses gifts, not wages. None of us gets paid according to merit, for none of us comes close to satisfying God's requirements for a perfect life.” (Philip Yancey. *What's so Amazing about Grace?* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1997, pp. 61-62).
- › “Christianity is not the sacrifice we make, but the sacrifice we trust.” (P. T. Forsyth).
- › “Jesus is the gift. He himself is the treasure. Grace is precious because he is. Grace changes lives because he does. Grace secures us because he will. The gift is the Giver. To discover grace is to discover God's utter devotion to you, his stubborn resolve to give you a cleansing, healing, purging love that lifts the wounded back to their feet.... This is the gift that God gives. A grace that grants us first the power to receive love and then the power to give it.” (Max Lucado. *Grace: More than We Deserve, Greater than We Imagine*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2012, p. 150).



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: STONES OF PEACE

**Materials:** Glass container with a lid, flat stones, permanent marker, ribbon for decorating, water, color glitter

**Activity Description:**

Decorate your glass container using the ribbon. Fill it with water until it is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Put the color glitter in the water. On each stone, write a difficult or negative situation you have lived through, a problem, an error, a mistake, or a part of your life that you would like to change: ultimately, whatever feels like a burden to you, whatever you need to be released of. Now, drop each of your stones in the jar, as a symbol of dropping them into the bottom of the sea. As you do so, pray to God and ask Him to help you, forgive you and set you free. Once you have filled in your jar (you may take it home and continue filling it day by day), close the lid and shake the container. You will see that the glitter moves in such a beautiful and marvelous way (the grace of Jesus) that you can no longer read what you have written on the stones: God covers your failures and cleanses your sin. As you look at the colors, focus on the peace God gives you, and thank Him for his forgiveness and for renewing your heart.

**Application:**

Even though there are no menacing stones above us like with the woman of John 8, sometimes we ourselves carry heavy stones of guilt and shame that become a heavy burden in the luggage of our life. With this activity, we have focused on letting go of that dead weight by handing it over to Jesus. In Micah 7:19, God promises us that “He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. [He] will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

## ACTIVITY 2: WITNESS ARENA

**Materials:** Small decorative tray (1 per person), small box (1 per person), thick paper cards, pen or marker, scissors, stickers for decorating, clean sand.

**Activity Description:**

Cut out small paper cards so that they fit inside the small box you have chosen. On each card, working alone or in groups, write a Bible text, a quote, or a prayer that reminds you of how God promises to be with you, to take care of you, to live with you, to rescue you, to renew you, etc. Once you have written your cards, place them in the small box. You can also decorate your box as desired. Now take home your box with the paper cards, the small decorative tray and the sand. At home, cover the decorative tray with the sand, and place your special box in the middle. Place the box close to the door, so that on your way out, you can take a card and take the promise of God with you as you go about your daily affairs. Look at it throughout the day. Once you return home, place that card vertically on the sand, as a symbol of how God has been with you throughout the day. Next day, you can take the same card with you or choose a new one. You can also draw—on the sand—a symbol or an icon of what that promise has meant to you, using your finger or a small stick.

**Application:**

In the desert, God lived in the midst of His people. He also lives in your home and in your heart. On the sand, there was a tabernacle that reminded the people of God’s permanent presence. After that, they had the temple in Jerusalem. With this simple activity, God’s promises can be present in your life as you go in and out. His promises do not disappear in the sand; they are always with you, wherever you go.

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# WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

KEY TEXT: MATTHEW 16:13-20

"HE SAID TO THEM, 'BUT WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?' SIMON PETER REPLIED, 'YOU ARE THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.'"

Matthew 16:15-16

EUGENE PETERSON ONCE SAID, "WE LIVE TODAY IN A WORLD IMPOVERISHED OF STORY."<sup>1</sup> EVEN THOUGH YOU CAN DO EVERYTHING FASTER AND BETTER, INSTEAD OF LIFE GETTING RICHER OR DEEPER, THERE IS JUST MORE TO DO AND LESS TIME TO DO IT. OVER TIME YOU SENSE SOMETHING IS MISSING. WHEN YOU LOOK AT LIFE'S GREATEST QUESTIONS YOU DISCOVER YOU NEED A STORY AND STORYTELLERS.

Many years ago, a research project was conducted to observe the behavior of monkeys and learn how they develop their "customs" or "practices." For the experiment, four monkeys were put in a room. In the center, a long pole was erected and some bananas were placed at the top. When a monkey climbed up to get the bananas, a stream of cold water would come down from the ceiling and drench the monkey. One by one, the monkeys attempted to get the bananas, but finally gave up after realizing they would inevitably get drenched.

The researchers then decided to replace one of the monkeys in the group. When the ambitious newcomer tried to get a banana, the other monkeys pulled him down and kept at it until he no longer attempted to climb.

One by one, the scientists replaced a monkey with a new one, and the others always stopped the climbing attempts. In time, the room was filled with monkeys who had never experienced the cold shower when they reached for a banana. None of the monkeys would climb the pole, but none of them knew why.

Nowadays, we hear opinions about politics. We find clever memes to capture ideas; ticker tape data for stock prices; tables for standings for sports; weather updates; calendar reminders; and abbreviations such as "lol" that capture words in a more expedient way. With digital warehouses resourcing everything you need or whatever you want by simply calling Siri, where is the story? Why live? How did life start? How will it end? Do you matter? Is what you feel real, or is it an illusion? What is the meaning of death? What ethics, morals, and values fit into everyday life? Is there more to living than getting through the day? If God is powerful, good, and aware of life on earth, why does it seem like evil, destruction, and pain are more prominent?

“

When you look at life's greatest questions you discover you need a story and storytellers.”



The greatest thoughts and questions of life will not be answered by the information on a database. These questions require you to answer the why. For that you need a story and a storyteller.

When the last living apostle of Jesus penned his gospel, he wrote about both:

This is the disciple [the storyteller] who is bearing witness [telling the story] about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:24-25)

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)

Telling stories is critical, but what you choose not to tell is equally important. Have you ever considered that your silence might give your approval one way or the other? When you withhold your story from your conversations it changes you. You need to speak up.

Perhaps Jesus thought it was time to speak up. One day, He gathered the disciples together for feedback, and He asked:

“Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” (Matthew 16:13-14)

The disciples answered by quoting the “word on the street” about Jesus, but all the names they listed fell flat. Almost half of the disciples were previously following John the Baptist—so that’s obviously a rumor. The name “Elijah” typically sparks a fire because the end of the last chapter of Malachi mentions the sensational prophet—but the disciples didn’t buy that story either. Maybe there was a cult following group waiting for the Messiah to revive Israel like Jeremiah did—but they were not biting on that hook either.

Rumors and popular polls are interesting, but Jesus pressed them to speak the truth, to share their story. So He asked, “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:5).

You might imagine the disciples shuffling in their sandals, looking around in apprehension. In this world saying what you really think is risky. The awkward pause probably felt longer than it was in

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From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory.”

Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 10



“

Faith is not the graduation of your journey but the enrollment to a new way of thinking, seeing, and living.”

reality. Finally, Peter broke in and answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16, NIV).

Sometimes, someone will speak up and utter a simple sentence that moves you over the threshold, from one life to another. Peter’s confession simply proclaimed what he “knew” and “believed” about Jesus Christ. Have you struggled with statements that are so firm that they seem to be “blind faith?” What kinds of faith are there, anyway?

- › Presumptuous faith.
- › Weak faith.
- › Emotionally charged faith.
- › Slow faith.
- › Immature faith...

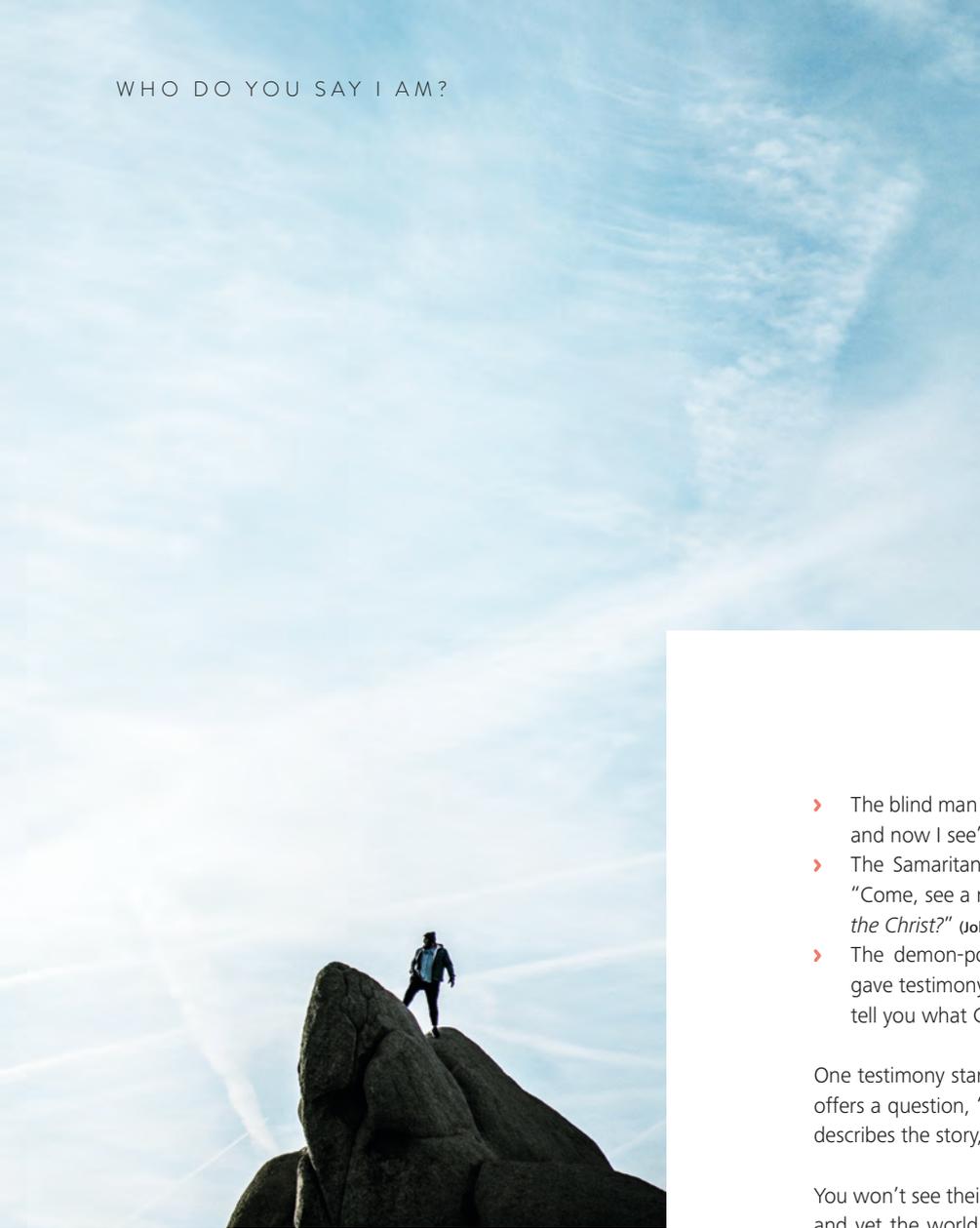
Whatever faith you possess, it’s still faith. Faith is not the graduation of your journey but the enrollment to a new way of thinking, seeing, and living. Many wait for more information and knowledge hoping to find unwavering certainty, and yet they rarely find it. If you struggle with the nature of faith, consider the proverb: “Don’t let what you don’t know confuse you about what you do know.” There will always be moments of uncertainty but the things you already know should not be cancelled by a list of things that are not explained. There is always more to learn and know.

Jesus knew that Peter’s faith was shaky, unreliable, and overestimated. Later, on the night Jesus was arrested, His words to Peter captured both the reality of weakness and the confidence of overcoming, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32).



Knowing that Peter’s heart is capable of betrayal and also of being filled with the Holy Spirit so that He could speak life to thousands is encouraging. The defining moment occurs when you finally speak out your belief. Even if you don’t speak a word, you will be sending a message. If you don’t stand up when the moment calls for it, staying on your seat speaks against your own belief. On the other hand, when you tell your story there is no power that can argue against your words on behalf of Christ.

Maybe you struggle because you don’t think your story is interesting. Perhaps you think your failures are numerous and your triumphs are sporadic and rare. The best testimonies are the honest declarations of people who are seeking, struggling, and reaching for more:



“

The best testimonies are the honest declarations of people who are seeking, struggling, and reaching for more.”

- › The blind man said, “*I don’t know*, all I know is that I was blind and now I see” (John 9:25).
- › The Samaritan woman raced home to her town to declare, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. *Can this be the Christ?*” (John 4:29).
- › The demon-possessed man returned to his hometown and gave testimony by saying, “*God has had mercy on me*, let me tell you what God has done for me!” (Mark 5:19-20).

One testimony starts with the statement, “I don’t know.” Another offers a question, “Can this be the Christ?” Yet still another simply describes the story, “God has had mercy on me.”

You won’t see their stories on TED Talks or going viral on YouTube, and yet the world changed because of people like them. That is what happens when you stand up and speak out. The Christian movement moves forward only because people respond to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am?”

The power of story is unmistakable. When you declare what you believe about Jesus and what you experience in Him, those words become the beginning of hope and a new life. In the end, what you say, and even what you don’t say, matters. //

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, I WANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE YOU AS MY PERSONAL SAVIOR. I WANT TO HAVE MY OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH YOU AND I WISH TO FOLLOW YOU EVERY DAY OF MY LIFE. I ALSO WANT TO BE BRAVE AND SHARE MY STORY WITH OTHERS.

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Peterson. *Eat this book: a conversation in the art of spiritual reading*. Colorado Springs, CO, USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1932, p. 48.



# QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to personally respond to Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" What does that imply about the nature of our faith (as individuals)?

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2. Think about your own, personal story with Jesus. What were the key moments that led to your own conversion? Share with the group.

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3. How do you feel about talking to others about Jesus, especially people who are not Christian? Share your experiences with the group.

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4. Is every Christian expected to be a witness for Jesus? How so?

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5. What do you need to be able to talk to others about Jesus? How can you support one another in this mission?

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## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

“What about you? Who do you say I am?” You have your own personal experience with Jesus, your own story that needs to be told. This time the challenge is to write your own gospel, like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did. To help you, do the following:

- › Describe your life before becoming a follower of Jesus;
- › Reflect and speak about the crucial moments in your conversion experience;
- › Explain how different your life is today because of Jesus.

Practice telling your gospel story to a friend. Now any time anyone asks you about your faith, you can share your own gospel story with them!



## GO DEEPER

- › Ephesians 2, Isaiah 56, Matthew 1, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:1-42, Hebrews 1:1-4, John 17.
- › Romans 5:15-19. See also: Slavi Mitrev, “Friends Again, Friends Forever” (ch 5, based on Romans 5) in *Romans Study Guide*. Edited by Youth Department of the Inter-European Division of SDA, 2017. Available for download at: <https://icor.church/resources/>
- › Ty Gibson. *The Sonship of Christ: Exploring the Covenant Identity of God and Man*. USA: Pacific Press, 2018.
- › Ellen G White. *The Desire of Ages*, ch. 45, “The Foreshadowing of the Cross.”
- › “Every other person who is at the heart of any religion has had his or her beginning either in fancy or in fact... Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem was a moment preceded by eternity. His being neither originated in time nor came about by the will of humanity. The Author of time, who lived in the eternal, was made incarnate in time that we might live with the eternal in view. In that sense, the message of Christ was not the introduction of a religion, but an introduction to truth about reality as God alone knows it.” (Ravi Zacharias. *Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000, pp. 34-35).
- › “We have to ask, Why is there no other first-century Jew who has millions of followers today? Why isn’t there a John the Baptist movement? Why, of all first-century figures, including the Roman emperors, is Jesus still worshiped today, while the others have crumbled into the dust of history? It’s because this Jesus—the historical Jesus—is also the living Lord. That’s why. It’s because he’s still around, while the others are long gone.” (Lee Strobel. *The Case for Christ*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998, p. 141).
- › “Who you decide Jesus Christ is must not be an idle intellectual exercise. You cannot put Him on the shelf as a great moral teacher. That is not a valid option. He is either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. You must make a choice.” (Josh McDowell. *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. USA: Thomas Nelson, 1999, p. 162).



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

**Materials:** 1 sheet of paper and 1 pen or marker per person.

### Activity Description:

Each person draws the timeline of the “story of their life” on the paper, highlighting their important milestones as well as the moments in which God has been present in a significant way for them. Share your story with someone you trust.

### Application:

We all have a story to tell, a story with ups and downs, with happy moments and tough moments. Yet, we can be sure that God has been present throughout our story, and He will continue to be there, especially when we need Him the most. Spend some time in prayer, thanking God for His presence in your life, especially in the key moments.

## ACTIVITY 2: AND THE REST, WHO DO THEY SAY YOU ARE?

**Materials:** 1 sheet of paper, 1 pen or marker and 1 piece of tape per person.

### Activity Description:

Stick one sheet of paper on every person’s back. Everyone should stand up and write an adjective on each person’s sheet of paper that describes something about them. It should take about 5 minutes for the whole group to write on everyone’s back. When the time is up, each person can get the paper from their back and read the adjectives out loud.

### Application:

Sometimes we define ourselves by the adjectives that others apply to us, sometimes in a negative way. However, God sees us just the way we are, and He also sees our full potential and who we can become with Him. After reading what everyone thinks of you, and being aware of what God thinks about you, who do you say you are?

## ACTIVITY 3: DIFFERENT TYPES OF FAITH

### Activity Description:

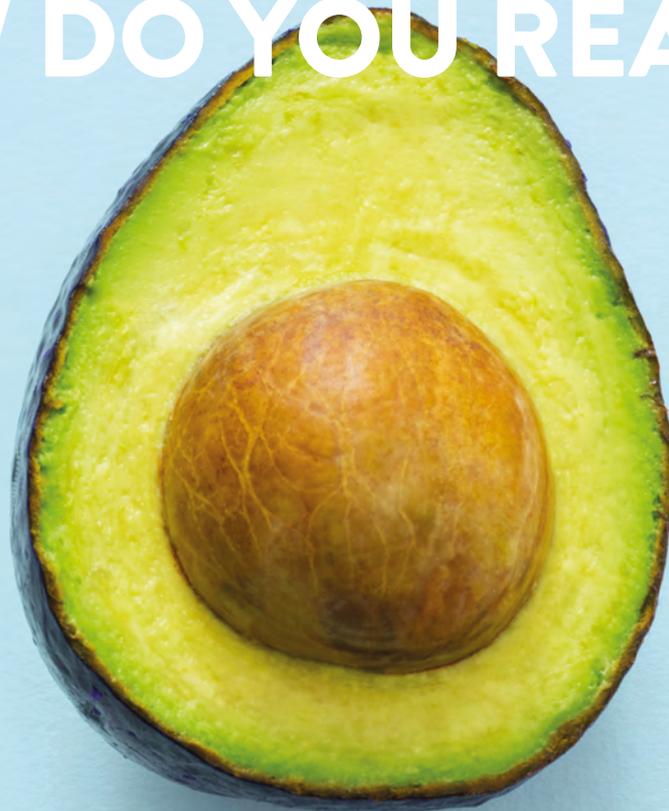
- › Make groups of 5 or 6 people. Each group must look for different “types” of faith in the Bible:
  - **Natural or human faith.** Read Acts 3:2-6. Characteristics: It is the product of human knowledge, it is part of the human character and it requires no spiritual effort.
  - **Blind faith.** Read Acts 8:9-11. Characteristics: It’s based on superstition, false belief and lies.
  - **Emotional faith.** Read Matthew 13:20-21. Characteristics: It is based on feelings, it has a fleeting joy that is short-lived, and in the face of difficult circumstances, it crumbles.
  - **Insufficient faith.** Read Matthew 14:28-31. Characteristics: In moments of doubt, it is filled with fear and despair; it does not grow and it does not please God.
  - **Dead faith.** Read James 1:22; 2:14 and John 12:42-43. Characteristics: It is only theoretical, it boasts of knowing God, but its actions deny it.
  - **True faith.** Read Matthew 13:23; Acts 8:35-36; 2 Corinthians 5:6-7; 12:15; and 2 Timothy 4:7. Characteristics: it is born, it is committed, it grows in trust, it perseveres until the end.

### Application:

- › What faith do you think you have? What faith would you like to have? What do you need to have that kind of faith?

# WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW DO YOU READ IT?

KEY TEXT: LUKE 10:25-37



"HE SAID TO HIM, 'WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW DO YOU READ IT?' AND HE ANSWERED, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'"

Luke 10:26-27

**IF YOU ONLY GLANCED AT THE OUTSIDE OF AN AVOCADO,  
WOULD YOU BE OVERWHELMED BY HUNGER AT THE SIGHT?**

Imagine you are hiking and you notice a pineapple bush on the side of the hill. Would you immediately think, "Smoothie!" or would you avoid the plant because it looks dangerous?

After seeing the leathery skin, the speckled scales on the head-shaped body and the sharp leaves towering ahead with a bad hair day on display, you would run, or at least report it!

Ugly fruit? No, thank you. Jackfruit? You might feel an instant allergic reaction just imagining eating it.

Coconuts? Whether you are hit on the head by this rock-hard wooden cannonball from the sky, or you mindlessly climb a tree without limbs to reach the fruit underneath the top leaves, the initial experience is not quite impressive. Who looks at an actual coconut and thinks, "dessert!" or "an excellent alternative oil," or "a perfect choice for garnishing baked bread!" or "this will be great with chocolate!"? Really? What kind of person would grab a sphere-shaped rock and mutter, "I wonder if there is milk inside?"

On the surface, some fruit appears to be ordinary in its shape. The inside, however, might surprise you. Have you ever been in a conversation about a topic that caused you to automatically disengage, roll your eyes, or move on to do something else?

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Unless there is practical self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighborhood, in the church, and wherever we may be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians.”

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 504

The questions Jesus asked are not initially interesting.

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" (Luke 10:25-26).

The lawyer asked a question. His words were possibly loaded. You might notice, first of all, that the lawyer did not ask how to "earn" eternal life, but how to "inherit" eternal life. So the conversation isn't about the obvious legalism. A deeper problem is stirring. The only way to "inherit" something is for someone to die so that the legal heir or specified individual receives the "inheritance."

The real question is not "how do you become an heir?" The easy answer to that is by "being born a Hebrew, a child of Abraham." Whether the Jews at that time believed they were the only ones who would inherit eternal life is difficult to imagine. The very nature of Abraham's story is about a mission to the world, "and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Isaiah 56 captures a song about *outsiders* becoming *insiders*:

Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say,  
"The Lord will surely exclude me from his people." [...] I will give within my temple and its walls  
a memorial and a name  
better than sons and daughters;  
I will give them an everlasting name  
that will endure forever.

(Isaiah 56:3,5 NIV)



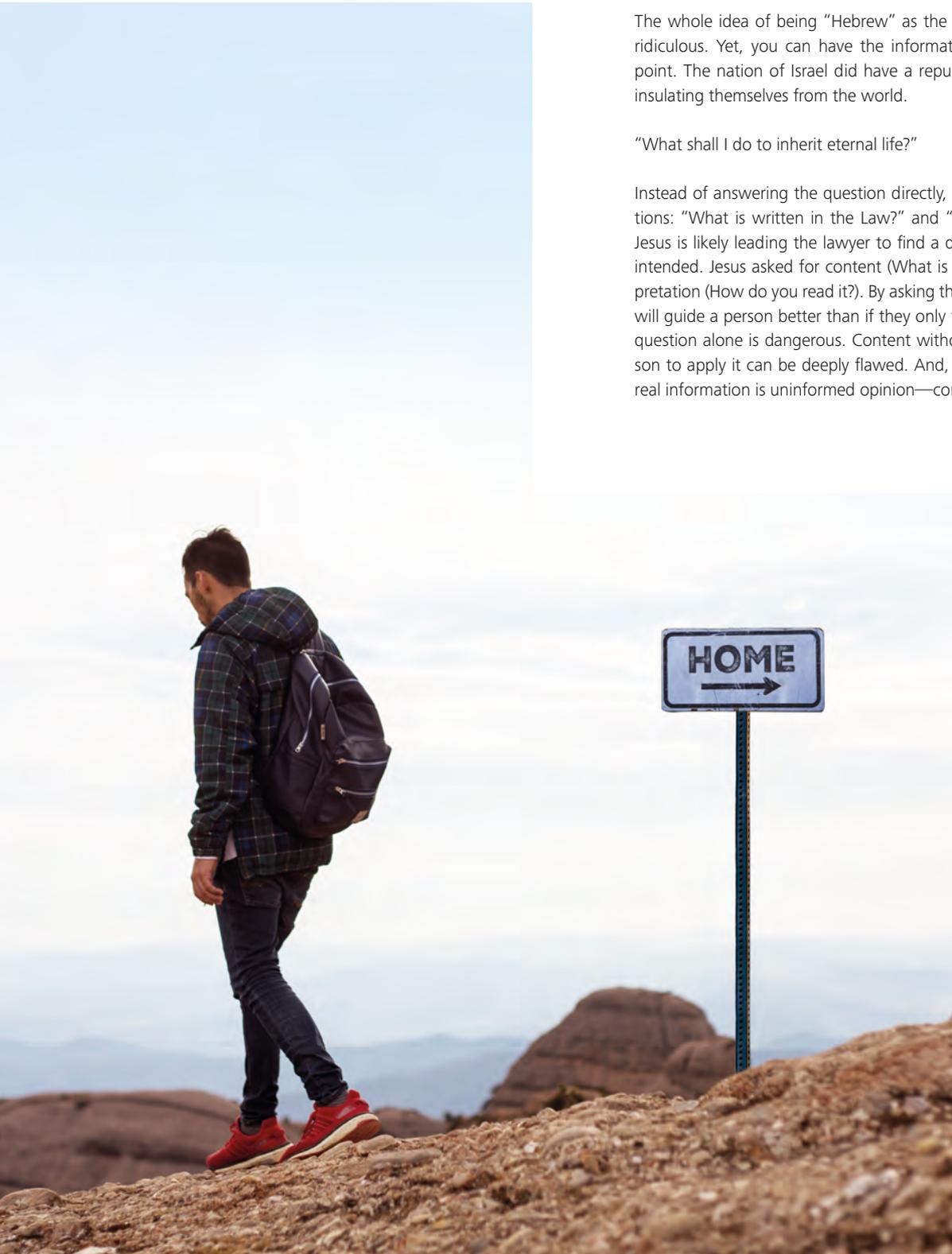
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You can have the information,  
and still miss the point.”

The whole idea of being “Hebrew” as the only way to heaven is ridiculous. Yet, you can have the information, and still miss the point. The nation of Israel did have a reputation of isolating and insulating themselves from the world.

“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Instead of answering the question directly, Jesus asked two questions: “What is written in the Law?” and “How do you read it?” Jesus is likely leading the lawyer to find a deeper answer than he intended. Jesus asked for content (What is in the law?) and interpretation (How do you read it?). By asking those two questions you will guide a person better than if they only focused on one. Either question alone is dangerous. Content without context and a person to apply it can be deeply flawed. And, interpretation without real information is uninformed opinion—common but broken.



“

The lawyer brilliantly combined love for God and love for people in one response.”

The lawyer answered both questions by saying, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he [Jesus] said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live’” (Luke 10:27-28).

Amazing! To synthesize all five books of Moses into these two excellent statements as a summary of the Law! The first part is taken from Deuteronomy 6:5 and the second from Leviticus 19:18. The lawyer brilliantly combined love for God and love for people in one response. Well done! Class dismissed.

Because when you look carefully at the question and the lawyer’s answer, the latter is just perfect:

“How do you inherit eternal life?”

“The only thing you can “do” is to be an heir—that is, to love God with everything you have. Love God. This relationship is always the center of the greatest issues in life.”

“If you know and love God, you will love others as well.”

Consider the prayer that Jesus offered to God, “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

The lawyer still presses Jesus for more, giving Him room to fully answer the question, as the Master Teacher He is. It’s such a small shift, that you might miss it unless you were careful. The lawyer goes on to ask, “And who is my neighbor?”



Up to this point, the lawyer has asked about the what’s. What do I need to do? What list? What action? What type of response? All of his inquiries are requests for information, until the question moves from information to person—the who.

The conversation about the law is like a coconut or an avocado waiting for someone to look inside, instead of focusing on the unimpressive external appearance. Consider thinking about the law in three spheres or levels. The most prominent part of any truth is called a *rule*, or a standard that we can measure, describe and define about how to behave. If you look around, you will see millions of rules that organize the parameters of behavior. However, there is a deeper motive behind most of the laws that you experience. When children don’t like or understand a *rule* they might ask, “Why?” That brings us to the second level or sphere of a truth, which is the *reason*. Rules will change over time but the reason for a truth will endure. For example, the speed limit changed when the characteristics of the cars and roads and the skills of drivers increased and yet the principle was not compromised—safety. Jesus explained the relationship between rules and their *reason* (or why) in the Sermon on the Mount:

“

When you follow the thread of God’s laws in history to their end, it is not about a book, but a Person.”



“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.” (Matthew 5:21-22 NIV)

The rule is “don’t murder.” But, you can get around the letter of the law and still break the spirit of the truth by damaging the sanctity of life by selfishness. When you look deeper into the rules you usually find a motive, a reason for applying the principle.

Still, if you want to know the “Truth” behind any “truth,” you need to look at the origin of any rule. The principles that explain why laws are helpful come from a source—a *relationship*. The truth is not a statement of belief but a Someone. A Person. The “Who” behind the “what” and the “why” of truth.

“Don’t murder!” Why, because “life is sacred.” Why, “because God is life.” The very nature of God is life in abundance (John 10:10).

“Don’t lie.” Why, because “truth is sacred.” Why, “because God is true.” God can’t lie.

Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). When you follow the thread of God’s laws in history to their end, it is not about a book, but a Person.

Back to the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

“Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.” (Luke 10:36-37)

Again, the answer is not “what” or “how” but who and to whom? Go, and do likewise in the context of a loving relationship with God, and not as part of a list full of loveless what’s. //

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, I WANT LOVE TO BE THE RULING PRINCIPLE IN MY LIFE. I WANT TO LOVE YOU ABOVE ALL, AND OTHERS LIKE MYSELF. HELP ME SHOW THAT IN MY ATTITUDE AND MY ACTIONS.



# QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been misled by appearances? Perhaps you judged a book by its cover, or a person by their looks, only to discover they were not what you initially thought, but so much better. Share your experience with the group.

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2. What is the difference between believing we inherit eternal life and believing we earn eternal life? How does knowing the difference affect you, as an individual and as a church? What is the most accurate way to express this in terms of God's grace?

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3. Why do you think Jesus responded to the lawyer's question about inheriting eternal life with two questions about the Law?

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4. What has impacted you the most about this conversation between Jesus and the lawyer? Share your thoughts with the group.

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5. Jesus ended this conversation about how to inherit eternal life by inviting the lawyer to do as the Samaritan did (see Luke 10:30-37). First of all, who is your neighbor? In what ways can you and your church "go, and do the same"? Think of 1 or 2 ideas that you can implement over the next month.

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## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Jesus' proposal is to act, inspired by our love for God and consequently for others.

Take some time to define who is your neighbor. Who do you interact with as you go through life? What strangers do you encounter?

Choose one person you can take extra care of today and go the extra mile for them. This may mean you need to rearrange your schedule or sacrifice an activity you like, so you can be there for your "neighbor." Remember, "Go, and do the same" (Luke 10:37).



## GO DEEPER

- › Matthew 5:17-48; Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-30; Ephesians 2:8-9, James 2:14-26; Hosea 6:6; 1 Samuel 15:22; Galatians 6:2.
- › Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, ch. 54, "The Good Samaritan," ch. 57, "One Thing Thou Lackest" and ch. 60, "The Law of the New Kingdom."
- › When you read the command, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" do you feel like giving up? Does Jesus expect the impossible? Read it again, but instead of understanding "perfect" as flawless, interpret it as "mature, complete, or used as intended." For example, if a screwdriver turns the screw, the screwdriver is perfect. If the screwdriver is rusty, but it turns the screw, it's perfect. If it is short or skinny or the handle has paint drops or scratches on it, but it turns the screw, it's still perfect. You will never be more like God than when you are forgiving and loving your enemies. That is perfect. (Troy Fitzgerald)
- › "Jesus surpasses other teachers. He preaches a simple way of life, arouses elevated ideals and teaches a profound philosophy of our existence.... He asks them to 'be perfect' (Matthew 5:48), that is to say, to reach their full potential with the power of divine grace!" (Youth Department of the Inter-European Division of SDA (Ed.). *Decisive Encounters. Youth Week of Prayer 2019*, p. 13. Available for download at: <https://icor.church/resources/>)
- › "According to the Bible, we are all like that man, dying in the road... when Jesus came into our dangerous world, he came down our road... He came to us and saved us, not merely at the risk of his life, as in the case of the Samaritan, but at the cost of his life.... Before you can give this neighbor-love, you need to receive it. Only if you see that you have been saved graciously by someone who owes you the opposite will you go out into the world looking to help absolutely anyone in need. Once we receive this ultimate, radical neighbor-love through Jesus, we can start to be the neighbors that the Bible calls us to be." (Timothy Keller. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2010, p. 77).



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: THE WORK INTERVIEW

**Materials:** 1 A5 sheet of paper and 1 pen or pencil per person.

### Activity Description:

- › One person in the group will be the interviewer and the rest will be the interviewees. The goal of those being interviewed is to get a job.
- › Before beginning the activity, each person must write down a “crazy” rule on their sheet of paper, which must be obeyed during the entire interview. For example:
  - No blinking.
  - No using the conjunction “and” when you talk.
  - Jumping (physically) throughout the interview
  - (...)
- › Fold all the pieces of paper and put them all together on the table.
- › Take turns to do the interview.
- › Each interviewee will randomly choose a piece of paper and read it. The “crazy” rule must be obeyed during the interview.

### Application:

In society, we sometimes find norms and regulations that do not really make sense and may even make us feel uncomfortable. It is important for us to learn to detect when norms are “crazy rules” and when they really correspond to principles that are worth following.

Pray to God to help you perceive His principles and to show you how to apply them in your daily life. Think about your upcoming week and projects, and pray to God specifically about them.

## ACTIVITY 2: LABELS

### Activity Description:

- › Read the following questions, and respond honestly:
  - Are you an only child?
  - Do you like to sing?
  - Are you in love right now?
  - Do you live in a different place from where you were born?
  - Do you have/use more than three social media apps?
- › For each question, ask people to form a group according to their response (yes on one side, no on the other).

### Application:

It is easy for society to label us and classify us in a particular role depending on our sex, race, religion, studies or even our family background. Even we are guilty of classifying people based on certain external characteristics that do not completely define who we are. It is marvelous to understand that beyond our human-made stereotypes, as people, we share elements in our life that bring us closer together and remind us that we are all the children of the same Creator.

Spend some time in prayer and thank God for how deeply He knows you. Smile, because even if people around you don’t know you deeply, the Creator of the Universe even knows the number of hairs on your head.

# WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

KEY TEXT: 1 KINGS 19:9-18

"THERE HE CAME TO A CAVE AND LODGED IN IT. AND BEHOLD, THE WORD OF THE LORD CAME TO HIM, AND HE SAID TO HIM, 'WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, ELIJAH?'"

1 Kings 19:9

WHETHER YOU ENJOY POPCORN OR NOT, MAKING THE SNACK IS INTRIGUING. THE KERNELS HEAT UP ON THE BOTTOM OF A KETTLE POT ANTICIPATING THE FIRST ERUPTION. SUDDENLY, A RANDOM KERNEL OF CORN EXPLODES INTO A WHITE FLUFFY BALL OF STARCH 20 TIMES ITS ORIGINAL SIZE.

Even though you expect the “pop,” it still catches you by surprise, and there are more, and more, and even still more that pop all at once. After a few seconds the growing masses of popcorn rise toward the top of the kettle. As you hear the muffled popping sounds underneath, the foamy matter on the surface moves as though the popcorn had a life of its own.

The popping of the corn is interesting, but the tidal wave that rises over the rim of the kettle can be likened to one particular season of Elijah’s life. Overwhelmed. Pressed on every side. Uncontained stress. The story of Elijah seems to feature one eruption of drama after another, until the prophet of God freezes completely.

The Elijah experience can be summed up in a few short snapshots from the showdown at the mountain to the cave.

“

There are hundreds of different trails that lead into this place, this cave, but there is only one way out.”

Elijah:

- › confronts the king with an unpopular message from the Lord (1 Kings 17:1);
- › flees and hides, and ravens feed him (1 Kings 17:3-7);
- › witnesses the miracle of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-16);
- › raises the widow’s son back to life (1 Kings 17:17-24);
- › returns to confront king Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-16);
- › presents a challenge with fire on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:17-40);
- › successfully prays for rain (1 Kings 18:41-46);
- › flees Jezebel in fear of her threat (1 Kings 19:1-8);
- › and crashes in a cave (1 Kings 19:9-18).

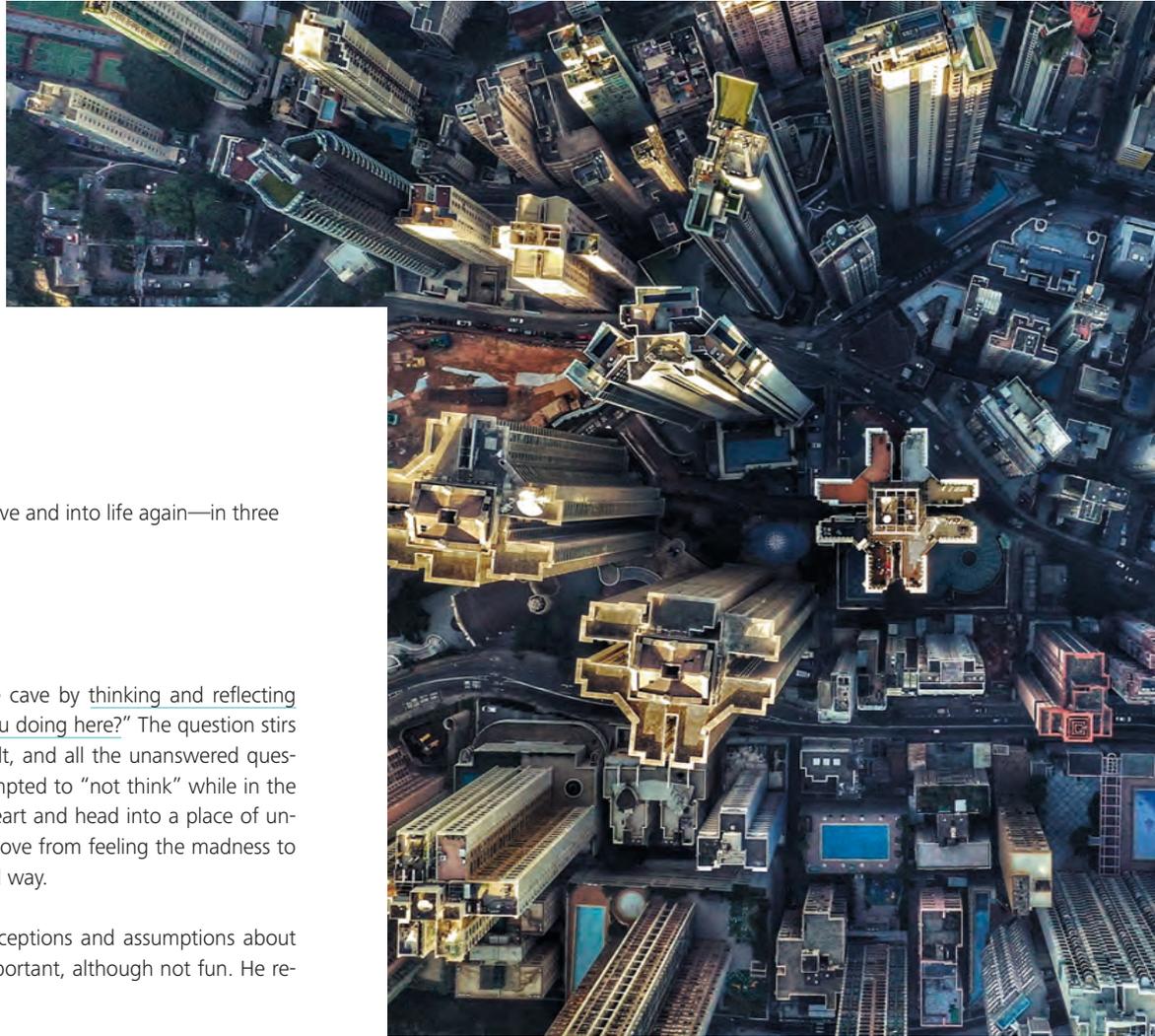
We can pick up the story at the edge of the cave where Elijah hears a Voice calling, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:9). It is true that when God asks a question He is not seeking new information. God’s questions usually prompt people to shift directions.

Have you ever asked yourself the question, “How did I get to this place?” Maybe you are pressed with too many things to do and too little time to do them. Or, you might push God away because of constant distractions. Perhaps you delay or defer the most important things in life to entertain the urgent things that ring ever so loud. Sometimes, you can get so caught up in the good things you do that you end up feeling exhausted, unable to find true rest. There are hundreds of different trails that lead into this place, this cave, but there is only one way out.

Elijah had obeyed and experienced God’s leading in the past, so his despair and fear comes as a surprise to us. He had managed to tell a king some pretty bad news; he found the courage to speak truthfully to powerful people; he successfully organized a do or die competition. And yet, how is it that after you experience miracle after miracle you end up allowing an evil queen to chase you out of town, into a cave?

In the cave, you can feel mystified. Confused. Discouraged. Depleted. Disillusioned. Depressed. Exhausted by anxiety. Overwhelmed by too much. Feeling the pressure of having no idea how to respond. You can use your own words to describe how the fire dies, the power evaporates, and the passion gets lost in the fog.





Elijah learned a way out of the cave and into life again—in three movements.

### FIRST MOVEMENT

Elijah began to move out of the cave by thinking and reflecting on God's question, "What are you doing here?" The question stirs your own fears, perceptions, guilt, and all the unanswered questions in your mind. Some are tempted to "not think" while in the cave, but reflecting leads your heart and head into a place of understanding and listening. You move from feeling the madness to thinking in a mindful and focused way.

For Elijah, recounting truths, perceptions and assumptions about what had just happened was important, although not fun. He reflects:

- › "I have been very jealous for the LORD..."
- › "For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant..."
- › "...thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword..."
- › "...and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

Processing the events out loud is essential. On the Road to Emmaus, the disciples talked through their thoughts. They honestly and openly expressed their disappointment. After being with Jesus their processing settled in and their sad memories turned into a glorious and joyful awakening.

### SECOND MOVEMENT

God then invites Elijah to "go out and stand on the mount before the Lord" (1 Kings 19:11). God did not just ask Elijah where he was, He invited him to get closer to Him. The lesson for us is: When you can't find clarity, move closer to God instead of moving away.

Being closer to God's presence is the only place to see a better view, to shift perspectives. When Elijah moved toward God, he experienced something new.

“  
Being closer to God's presence  
is the only place to see a better  
view, to shift perspectives.”



### THIRD MOVEMENT

God then asked Elijah to do three specific things: to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, to anoint Jehu to be king over Israel, and to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his place (1 Kings 19:15-16). Honestly, taking a road trip to “anoint leaders” did not have the same ring of excitement as his past missions, but the next steps were important in his growth. These were things that he could most definitely do.

The lesson for us is to do what we can with what we have. There is no need to ask more of ourselves than we can offer. We simply need to take it one step at a time.

The final lesson for Elijah was to realize that throughout his situation he was never alone. Perceptions can be deceiving. Although he felt all alone, God was next to him. Not only that, there were still 7,000 people who were faithful like Elijah was (1 Kings 19:18). When you think you are alone, God is closer than you think.

Elijah’s experience in the cave is much like the way the oyster produces a pearl. First of all, a pearl is a product of suffering. The oyster’s shell seals the edges to protect the animal inside from sand or foreign debris. Often the seal is compromised so a grain of sand can slip in and cause such an irritation in the oyster’s mantle that it needs to react. The only way to counter the problem is to secrete its own shell—the nacre—to cover the alien object. By coating the irritation with its own fluid, the oyster gives itself to the problem. The pearl is a product of time. It takes 3 to 5 years of constant work to produce a beautiful gem from a problem.

The most important lesson in this process is that a pearl is the product of a hidden work. From the outside, an oyster looks like a dirty

And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. (1 Kings 19:11-13)

Did you think of the miraculous stories? Food showed up every day in a widow’s pantry. When you were exhausted, birds brought snacks to you. Mount Carmel is not an everyday moment—God brought fire from heaven and everyone saw it! Surely, sometimes God speaks unmistakably. However, God is not going to use thunder and lightning, earthquakes and bright lights every time. Sometimes He will speak quietly, in whispers, even in silence, which is what you may need the most when you are in a cave. Elijah only recognized the presence of God in the low whisper, when he went out of the cave to get closer. When you hear the soft whisper of God, move closer to Him.



“

It is not always the most learned presentation of God’s truth that convicts and converts the soul. Not by eloquence or logic are men’s hearts reached, but by the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, which operate quietly yet surely in transforming and developing character. It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart.”

*Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 169*

rock on the floor of the sea, but inside, something beautiful is being secretly formed. When you focus on your situation, you might find it impossible to see the treasure. Elijah did not see the hidden work of over seven thousand who believed just like he did.

A story is told about a king who offered a prize for the artist who painted the best picture of peace. In the end, only two paintings caught the attention of the king.

One artist painted a scene of a calm lake with majestic mountains topped with fluffy clouds in the sky. Many commented that it was a perfect work of peace.

The second piece showcased mountains as well, but these were rugged and bare. An angry sky surrounded the rough mountains and blistering rain showered on the landscape below. Under the lightning in the grey sky, a waterfall tumbled down the side of the mountain. This painting did not look peaceful at all.

The king looked closely and chose the second painting. He explained, “Look, behind the waterfall, you can see a small bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush, a mother bird built her nest. In the middle of the angry storm, the bird is perched on her nest in perfect peace.”

The king chose the second picture because peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no struggle, noise, trouble, or strife. Peace means to be in the middle of the storm while your heart rests in the safe place.

Can you hear God’s voice in the middle of the night, “What are you doing here?” You can answer the question. Think about it. Move closer. Then go out with a sense of perfect peace, knowing that you are never alone. //

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, I ADMIT THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I FEEL HOPELESS AND DEPRESSED. I FEEL LIKE ELIJAH DID. REMIND ME OF YOUR PRESENCE, AND BRING PEACE TO MY HEART.



# QUESTIONS

1. What moments or circumstances in life can push you to hide in a cave, like Elijah did?

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2. As Christians, we can feel overwhelmed and discouraged. We can even suffer from stress, anxiety and depression. Yet, these can often be taboo topics in the church. Is that your experience? How can we (as individuals and as a church) improve the way we approach and deal with these subjects? What more can you learn from Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19:4-8?

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3. What do you think of the "three movements" Troy proposes to get out of the cave? What do you learn from them?

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4. When you are in the cave, perceptions can be deceiving. Elijah responded to God's question the same way twice, focusing on how he was all alone, even though there were 7000 faithful people like him (see 1 Kings 19:10, 14). Not long before, he had even prayed to God to take his life (v. 4). He was in a dark place. What practical steps can you take when you find yourself in a cave? For example, I can reach out to a loving friend, a family member or my pastor. I will not make any rash decisions. I will trust the positive things my friends, family and God say about me. I will seek professional help. I will take it one day at a time. I will listen to my favorite songs.

Make your own list as a group, and keep a copy for yourself, for when times get rough.

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5. From Elijah's experience, we learn that we are never alone. God is always there beside us, and we can sense it if we are sensitive to His presence. How can you remind yourself of God's presence and love when you are feeling low? How can you remind others who are feeling low?

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## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

“Overwhelmed. Pressed on every side. Uncontained stress. Confused. Discouraged. Depleted. Disillusioned. Depressed. Exhausted by anxiety.” Do you ever feel like this? Do you know someone who feels this way? Do something nice today for someone you know is feeling low or going through a tough time. Send them an encouraging message, give them a hug and let them know they can count on you.



## GO DEEPER

- › Jeremiah 29:11-12; Proverbs 3:5-6; James 4:5-8; 1 Peter 1:13; John 13:17; Isaiah 40:31; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:6-8, 4:11-13.
- › Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, ch. 12, “From Jezreel to Horeb” and ch. 13, “What Doest Thou Here?”
- › “Because the Holy Spirit is the active agent of the new covenant, and because the new covenant is the reestablishment of God’s love in the human person, the work of the Holy Spirit is to be perpetually engaged in a process of testifying without forcing, witnessing without violating, communicating without coercing, carrying out the delicate task of persuasion within our thinking and feeling process. It is the gingerly operation of saving us from sin while leaving the dignity of our free will intact and preserving the glory of our individuality. So, then, the work of the Holy Spirit is consistently depicted as one of influence as opposed to force.” (Ty Gibson. *The Sonship of Christ: Exploring the Covenant Identity of God and Man*. USA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2018, pp. 241-242).
- › I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I’m not enough / Every single lie that tells me I will never measure up / Am I more than just the sum of every high and every low? / Remind me once again just who I am, because I need to know (ooh oh) // You say I am loved when I can’t feel a thing / You say I am strong when I think I am weak / You say I am held when I am falling short / When I don’t belong, oh You say that I am Yours / And I believe (I), oh I believe (I) / What You say of me (I) / I believe // The only thing that matters now is everything You think of me / In You I find my worth, in You I find my identity, (ooh oh) // Taking all I have and now I’m laying it at Your feet / You have every failure God, and You’ll have every victory, (ooh oh) (*You Say*, song by Lauren Daigle).
- › To improve your mental health, make sure you get enough sleep, do physical activity regularly, are mindful of what you eat and drink, and are connected to others and to God. (Torben Bergland, *Mental Health and Lifestyle*, July 2019, <https://adventistreview.podbean.com/e/torben-bergland-mental-health-and-lifestyle-july-2019/>).
- › Visit [Secrets of Wellness](https://www.secretsofwellness.org). Search for these articles in particular: “What You Think Matters!”, “Hope for Depression!”, and “Bouncing Back!” Available in 9 languages at <https://www.secretsofwellness.org>.
- › [Youth Alive](https://youthaliveportal.org/en) is a program designed to build resilience among teens and young adults by equipping them to make healthy choices. More information at <https://youthaliveportal.org/en>



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: UNDER PRESSURE

**Materials:** 1 or several bags (depending on how many groups you make) with everyday objects like kitchen utensils, tools, etc.

**Activity Description:**

- Have the group/s sit in chairs in a circle.
- Pass the bag of objects from one person to another. Each person will take their turn to take out one of the objects from the bag and explain a pressure point related with that object. For example, a box of nails can represent negative comments or criticism from your classmates or work colleagues, whilst some kitchen scissors could evoke something that is “cutting” your dreams or your goals short. It is important that a moderator keep this activity agile. They should give hints to those who have a hard time coming up with ideas.

\*Alternative: You can complement this activity by naming blessings of God when you take out an object, or share how God has answered your prayers about your problems. Focus on the importance of being positive when we face a challenge or a difficulty instead of complaining nonstop.

**Application:**

Once everyone has participated, reflect on the different ways we feel pressure daily and constantly, and how that sometimes makes us forget our blessings. Elijah felt really overwhelmed and he focused on his misery instead of praising God for how He had acted in the past. Put the bag of objects in the middle and pray for everything that burdens you in your daily life. Hand it over to God and ask Him to open your eyes so you can see the times He has helped you in the past, and to help you trust that He will do it again.

## ACTIVITY 2: ANTONYMOUS ACRONYMS

**Materials:** pens and paper with the word SOLITUDE written vertically.

**Activity Description:**

- Each team will work on the acronym SOLITUDE, but some groups (or couples) will do so in a positive way and the others in a negative way. The goal is to write a word (or phrase) with each of the initials. If this is too difficult, you can simply use the letter in any other position within the word.
- After about 5 minutes (or the time you consider appropriate), share the responses of each team with the group.

**Application:**

Elijah felt alone and abandoned, yet, in the quiet of his solitude, he heard the voice of God and recovered his confidence in His presence. Solitude can be something negative, it can mean abandonment, isolation, etc. (and the words that you came up with in the groups) or it can also be a special moment in which we encounter God, and we find ourselves pushed to trust in the only One who can truly give meaning to our lives.

Pray about finding time each day to spend it alone with God, and to turn to Him whenever you feel alone, so that He can renew your strength.

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# DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?

KEY TEXT: JOHN 5:1-9



"ONE MAN WAS THERE WHO HAD BEEN AN INVALID FOR THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS. WHEN JESUS SAW HIM LYING THERE AND KNEW THAT HE HAD ALREADY BEEN THERE A LONG TIME, HE SAID TO HIM, 'DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?'"

John 5:5-6

**ARE YOU SUPERSTITIOUS? AROUND THE WORLD, EVERY CULTURE CARRIES SOME IRRATIONAL AND UNFOUNDED SUPERSTITIONS.**

- › “Don’t go home right after a funeral.” Go shopping or stop by somewhere so a bad spirit won’t follow you home in a time of grief.
- › “Don’t leave your chopsticks in your food.” Why? Numbers are lucky or unlucky. The sticks look like a “four,” which is bad.
- › If you want to invite evil, “whistle a tune inside.” Otherwise, the expectation is to avoid whistling in order to avoid summoning demons.
- › Apparently, in Germany, if you toast with water—cheers!—you are wishing death to your comrades.
- › In Africa, you want to avoid sleeping with your head toward the west. That’s a “no-no.”
- › “Don’t play with scissors.” Well, casually playing with scissors with no real purpose brings bad luck according to Egyptian lore.
- › It might be difficult to imagine winter getting even longer in Iceland, but if you do needlework on your front porch, it’s going to be a long winter (or longer).
- › “Don’t get a haircut on Tuesday.”
- › “Don’t walk backwards.”
- › “Don’t sing at the table.”
- › “Black cats. Bad.”
- › “Broken mirrors are not cool.”

Know this: There is a God, the devil exists and there are angels and demons out there. The supernatural is real, however, it’s likely that spiritual forces are not concerned about the number 4 semblance in your bowl of rice. In Jesus’ day, there was a thin sheer between the natural and the supernatural. People (both believers and pagans) lived with the keen awareness that the other world was close. Over time, modern advances, science and technology have built a brick wall in place of the thin sheer that separated angels and humans.

One of the most penetrating questions God has ever asked a person happened in the middle of superstition in Jerusalem, at the pool of Bethesda. Around the five columns at the pool, “lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed” (John 5:3).

There was one man who had been living at this place for thirty-eight years. He caught the attention of the Savior. Among the crowd of broken people, Jesus “saw him” and asked him a simple, maybe obvious, question, “Do you want to be healed?” (John 5:6).

Around the world, the Adventist church holds a beacon of grace that calls for wholeness. The question Jesus asked long ago still rings true, “Do you want to be healed?” How can you say “no”? How can you argue? Whether it is the desire for physical strength and stamina, or for more holistic growth, the answer is a definite “yes!”

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The question Jesus asked long ago still rings true, ‘Do you want to be healed?’ How can you say ‘no?’”



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When your only source for healing is your own effort, your problem is not broken legs but paralyzed vision.”



However, instead of an answer, the man comes up with a list of excuses to explain why the impossible dream will never be realized: “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me” (John 5:7). When you can count two “I’s” and two “others” but no “Jesus” in the sentence, it’s a problem.

When your only source for healing is your own effort, your problem is not broken legs but paralyzed vision. It’s worse than blindness, because a blind person would reach out for help. A blind person would use a cane, Braille, or count on a friend. What is worse than being blind is being blind thinking you see 20/20.

Jesus could easily eat and drink with scoundrels, tax collectors, and prostitutes, but He struggled with those who were self-sufficient. “Do

you want to be healed?” Even if the notion of healing seemed impossible, the least you could do was ask. Asking assumes that you don’t have the answer, but someone else might. The paralyzed mind sees only what you can do by your own efforts. Others have found the impossible more attainable simply by asking, “How is this possible?”

God answered an aged couple’s dreams of having a child by saying, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14).

Job testifies about God’s power, saying, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’” (Job 42:1-3).

When you look at your own abilities instead of looking to God’s power, your own mind “hides counsel without knowledge.”

When you have riches, you are tempted to trust your resources. It's natural. If you are strong, you trust your muscles. If you are clever, you trust your wit. If you are wise, you are tempted to only trust your logical processes. To the conundrum of wealth, the disciples cried, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:25-26).

Even in the face of his most difficult choice, Jesus looked at His own desire, then turned to God and declared, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you" (Mark 14:36).

If there is a desire, there is an expectation, and expectation is, in truth, hope. Expectations have a lot to do with results.

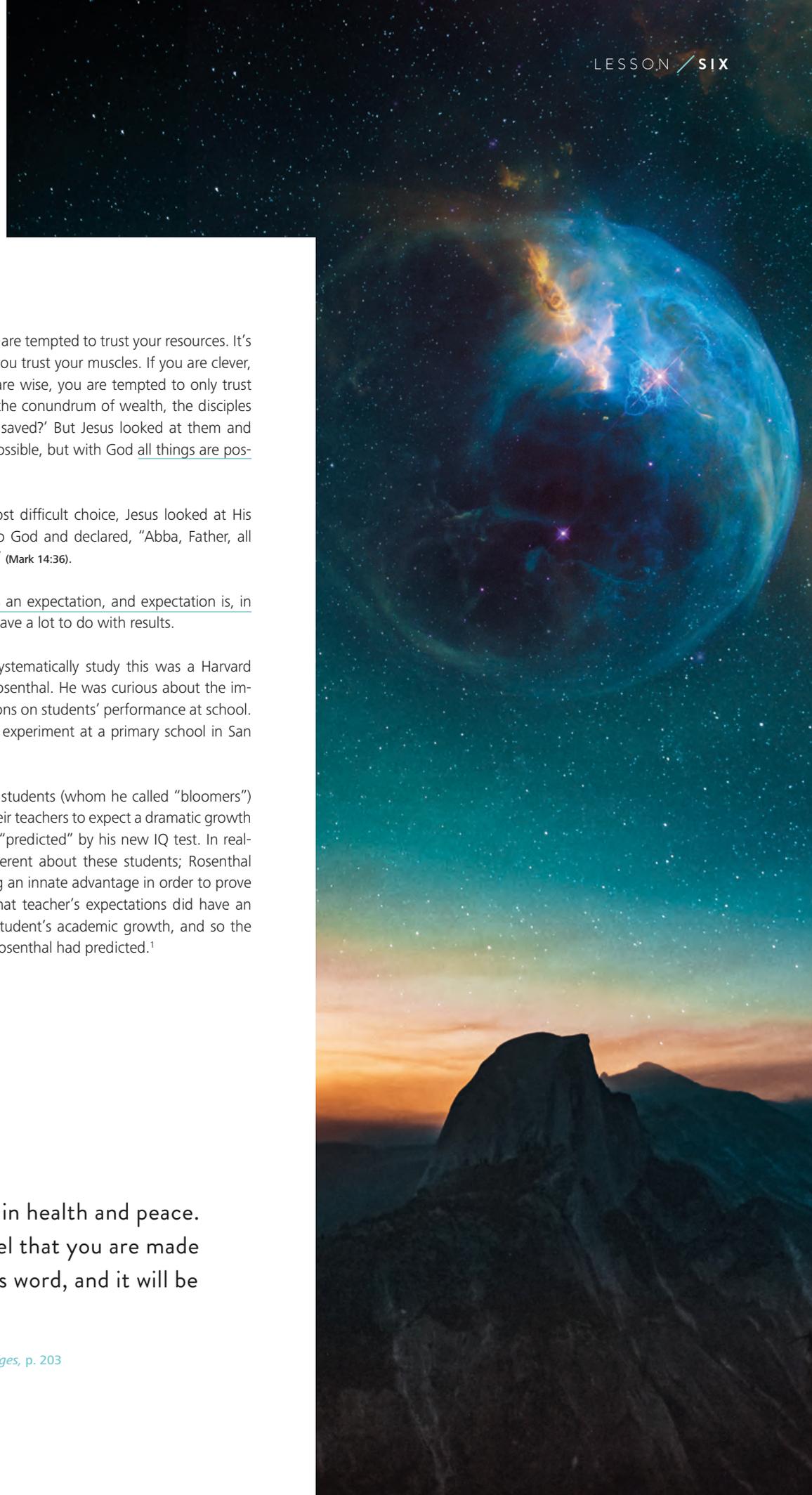
The first psychologist to systematically study this was a Harvard professor named Robert Rosenthal. He was curious about the impact of teachers' expectations on students' performance at school. In 1964, he conducted an experiment at a primary school in San Francisco, California.

Rosenthal randomly chose students (whom he called "bloomers") from each class and told their teachers to expect a dramatic growth in their IQ competence as "predicted" by his new IQ test. In reality, there was nothing different about these students; Rosenthal had lied about them having an innate advantage in order to prove his theory. It turned out that teacher's expectations did have an important impact on the student's academic growth, and so the bloomers excelled just as Rosenthal had predicted.<sup>1</sup>

“

He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled.”

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 203



## DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?

Telling factory employees to reach a minimum production does not get you beyond that expectation. When you remove the minimum and reward proficiency and production, workers respond with a higher output than before.

You will discover that the “law of expectation” is not a new insight, but an old virtue of God’s character:

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12)

Do you believe this to be true? The Master Teacher expects great things, not by manipulation or trickery, but because “all things are possible for God.”

When you are so stuck in your own self-sufficiency the only way out is with help. The lame man at the pool could not see the nature of his own problem—him. Your love for Christ deepens when you witness Jesus attempting to reach him:

Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. (John 5:8-9)

When you can’t, Jesus will. The learning moment will always return you to a place where you can repent and change your mind. Jesus finds the man later in the temple and offers him the “real healing” he needed, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you” (John 5:14).

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The learning moment will always return you to a place where you can repent and change your mind.”

Did Jesus really just say that? Most never read the end of the story when He tells the hard truth. Even though it hurts, it can heal. The man’s “real sin” was seeing himself as the only source instead of seeing Jesus as the only possible option. The truth would heal him, if he responded to it and looked up to Jesus.

The same Spirit calls us and invites us to answer the question, “Do you want to be healed?”

The *Desire of Ages* confirms the Spirit’s plea:

Let these desponding, struggling ones look up. The Saviour is bending over the purchase of His blood, saying with inexpressible tenderness and pity, “Wilt thou be made whole?” He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203)

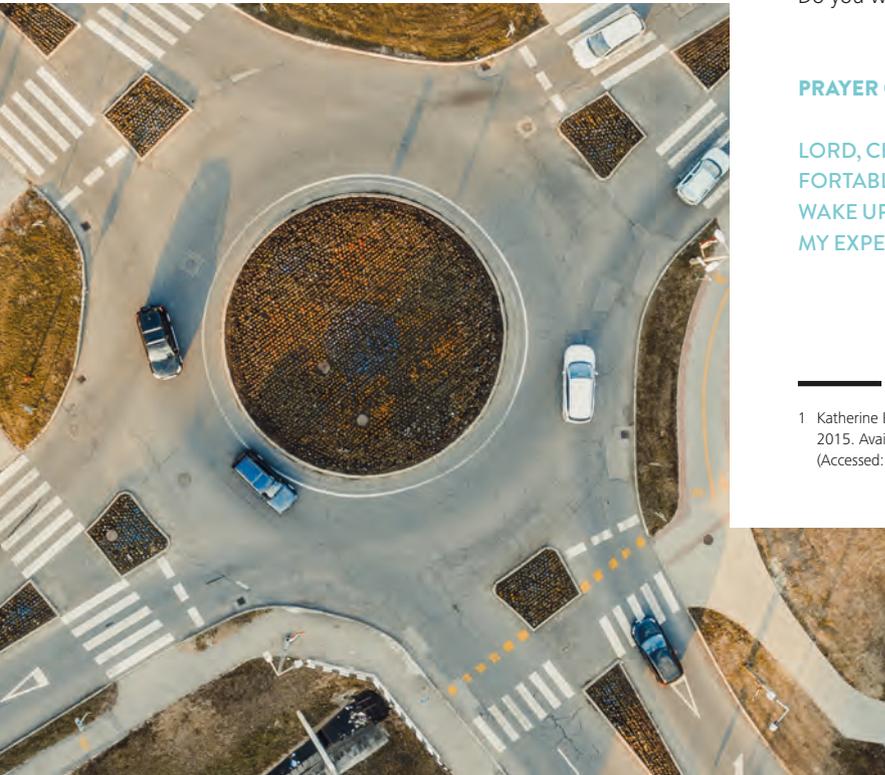
Do you want to be healed? Truly? //

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, CHANGE COMES HARD TO ME. IT IS JUST MORE COMFORTABLE TO LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE. BUT, I WANT TO WAKE UP AND ACCEPT YOUR CALLING TO HEAL ME BEYOND MY EXPECTATIONS.

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1 Katherine Ellison. “Being Honest About the Pygmalion Effect” in *Discover*, October 29, 2015. Available at: <http://discovermagazine.com/2015/dec/14-great-expectations>. (Accessed: October 22, 2019).





# QUESTIONS

1. When Jesus asked the sick man if he wanted to be healed, he responded with a couple of excuses. In what ways can we be our worst “enemy” when it comes to achieving our goals?

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2. How do we find a balance between trying our best and allowing God to do His part?

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3. “What is worse than being blind is being blind thinking you see 20/20.” Contrast with Luke 6:41. What lessons do you learn about judging, whether it is yourself or others?

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4. “Expectations have a lot to do with results.” Are expectations healthy? Why or why not? How can expectations help you reach higher? What is the role of faith in your expectations?

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5. Embracing change requires you to be brave. The good news is you are not alone, for “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26). Can you think of other examples and Bible references that remind you of God’s power? Keep them in mind as you pursue your goals.

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## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

“Do you want to be healed?” In other words, what are your expectations? What are your biggest dreams? What is the impossible that you would like to accomplish? Clear some time in your agenda for an insight moment with God. Close your eyes and pray to God to give you wisdom.

Then, write down your biggest dream and expectation at this time. It could be something that’s only meaningful to you, like letting go of that grudge that now separates you from your once close friend. Or excelling in that economy class at university. Or starting your own eco-business. Or being the best sibling/son/daughter/parent you could be. Or doing your part to make sure your church is caring and inviting. Or giving one year of your life in mission. The dream is yours, and whether big or small, it is worthy to pursue.

My dream is (be as specific as possible):

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Now that you have written it down, give yourself a timeline to pursue it and a series of small, identifiable and measurable steps to accomplish it. Do weekly, monthly and yearly checkups on your dream. And repeat this process again every time you achieve your goal. Share your journey with a friend!



## GO DEEPER

- John 15:16; John 14:12; Isaiah 40:30-31; Jeremiah 29:11; Hebrews 12:1; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.
- Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, ch. 21, “Bethesda and the Sanhedrin.”
- “You’ll never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.” (FaceBook post by John C. Maxwell from 16 April, 2016. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/JohnCMaxwell/posts/10154014149332954:0>).
- “The name Bethesda may be interpreted as ‘House of Mercy,’ so Jesus shows mercy at the place where people looked for mercy. The Pool of Bethesda was located just north of the temple complex. The pool was fed by an intermittent stream, which may explain the troubling of the waters from time to time.” (“Putting the Past Behind You” in *The Gospel of John. Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, Lesson 6, 2004, pp. 46-52. Available at: <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/SSQ/SS20040101-01.pdf>).
- “A blindness had come over these people at the pool; there they were, and there was Christ, who could heal them, but not a single one of them sought him. Their eyes were fixed on the water, expecting it to be troubled; they were so taken up with their own chosen way that the true way was neglected” (Charles H. Spurgeon).<sup>2</sup>
- The word translated as healed is the Greek word ὑγιής (*hygiē*).<sup>3</sup> A better translation would be “whole.” The question should thus be, “Do you want to be whole?” In this sense, it goes beyond the mere restoration of health, as it includes the transformation of the heart.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Spurgeon. *Jesus at Bethesda; or, Waiting Changed for Believing*. 7 April, 1867. Available at: <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/jesus-at-bethesda-or-waiting-changed-for-believing#flipbook/>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.blueletterbible.org>



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: BLIND SPOT TEST

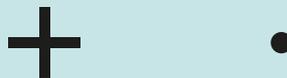
**Materials:** The image of the “plus” sign and the dot.

### Activity Description:

Did you know that we have a blind spot in each eye? It’s in the area of the retina where the optic nerve passes through the optic disc, where there are no light-detecting cells, and thus, no optical sensitivity. We don’t usually notice its existence because the blind spot of one eye is compensated by the visual information the other eye provides and the way the brain virtually “fills in the blanks” of the missing information.

Test your blind spot by doing the following:

- › Close your left eye and place your right eye 50 cm from the “plus” sign.
- › Move closer to the “plus” sign to “see” how the black dot disappears from your field of vision.



### Application:

It may seem that we have it all “under control” in our life, but there are always blind spots around us that elude our control and efforts. Only Jesus can complete them with His perfect vision.

Spend some time in prayer sharing your concerns with Jesus. Ask Him to complete your point of view, by taking care of the blind spots.

## ACTIVITY 2: WHEN I GROW UP, I WANT TO BE...

**Materials:** 1 pen or pencil and 1 sheet of paper per person.

### Activity Description:

- › Think about what you—as a child—wanted to be when you grew up.
- › Draw your dreamed career on a piece of paper.
- › Put the drawings in a visible place (anonymously) and try to guess who is the author of each drawing and what was the dreamed career for each of you.

### Application:

It is wonderful to realize that in spite of our limitations and imperfections, God has dreams and plans for us that surpass our barriers. With Him by our side, we can reach our full potential.

Pray to God asking Him to give you the courage to dream big for Him. Ask Him to guide you in your life plans and to help you make them according to His will.

# DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU?

KEY TEXT: JOHN 13:12-17

"WHEN HE HAD WASHED THEIR FEET AND PUT ON HIS OUTER GARMENTS AND RESUMED HIS PLACE, HE SAID TO THEM, 'DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU?' [...] 'FOR I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE, THAT YOU ALSO SHOULD DO JUST AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU.'"

John 13:12, 15

THREE THIRSTY BROTHERS APPROACHED A DEEP FOUNTAIN TO DRINK SOME WATER. THE SUN BEAT DOWN ON EVERYONE AT THE PARK THAT DAY. THE TWO OLDER BROTHERS STOOD TIGHTLY ON THEIR TIPTOES STRETCHING THEIR TONGUES TOWARD THE STREAM OF COOL WATER. THE YOUNGEST ONE CRIED OUT WITH HIS HANDS HELD HIGH, WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO LIFT HIM UP TO DRINK. ONE MAN MADE HIS WAY TO THE FOUNTAIN TO HELP, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. THE OLDER BROTHERS WERE ON IT.

Although not much bigger than the toddler, they each took one of his arms and tried to propel the little one upward so he was close enough to reach the faucet. Their efforts were noble, but their arms could only sustain their little brother for a brief moment, not long enough to drink.

So the brothers concocted another plan. It was a sight worth seeing. The oldest brother got down on his hands and knees like a dog next to the wet rocky fountain while the other lad lifted the thirsty child onto his brother's back. He pushed the button with one hand and held the slurping toddler with the other one. The brother laughed as the water trickled down the side of the fountain, totally soaking all three in the process. After an obscene amount of water filled the thirsty youngest child, he crawled down to the ground and they all launched into the next activity, laughing together. Soaking wet, but having quenched their thirst.

People watching the scene were left with the sense that the children had done this before. The act was natural. The selflessness, the collaboration and the commitment welled up like a natural spring.

But it is not always that way:

- You can serve and still not be a servant.
- You can give and not be generous.
- You can go on a mission trip and avoid becoming a missionary.
- You can learn and fail to become a disciple.
- You can keep the law and not have the principles of God's character engraved into a heart of flesh.

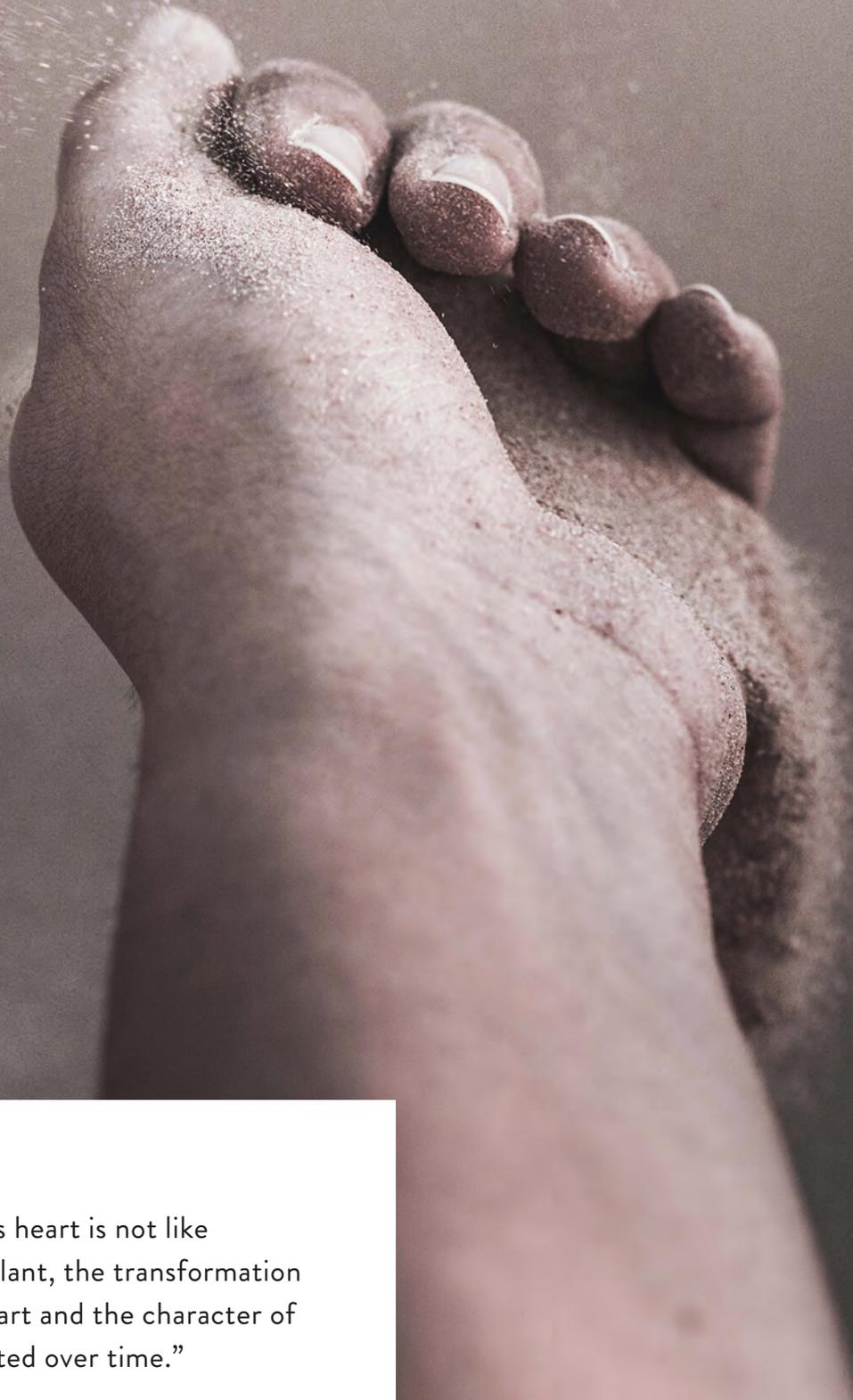
"And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with authority!'" (Mark 1:27). "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29).



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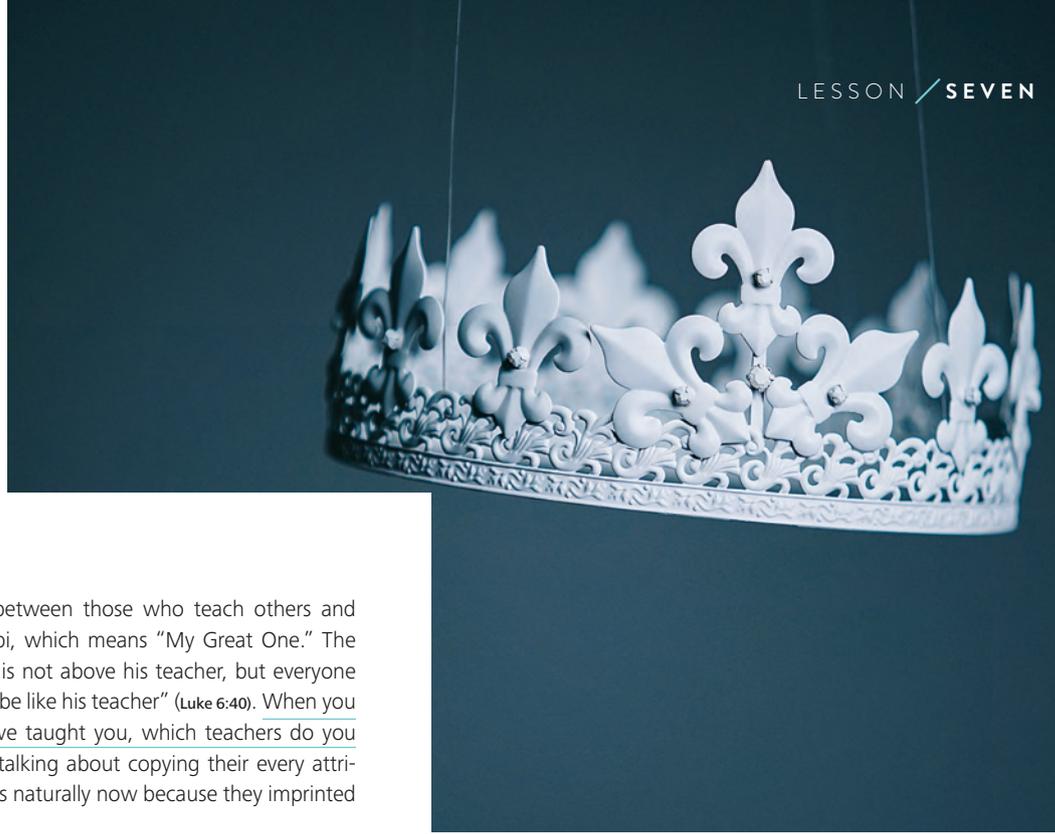
You can keep the law and not have the principles of God's character engraved into a heart of flesh.”

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU?



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Having a servant's heart is not like receiving a transplant, the transformation is gradual. The heart and the character of Christ are cultivated over time.”



Jesus made a distinction between those who teach others and those who become a Rabbi, which means “My Great One.” The Teacher stated, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). When you think about those who have taught you, which teachers do you want to emulate? I’m not talking about copying their every attribute but about doing things naturally now because they imprinted those characteristics in you.

For Jesus, the final exam is very simple: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). The simple disciples learned the essential lesson. Even their critics could tell there was something different about them. “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Paul calls for all believers to emulate Christ, from the inside in the heart to the outside actions of our hands:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus... (Philippians 2:3-7)

Do you long to have the “mind of Jesus?” Having a servant’s heart is not like receiving a transplant, the transformation is gradual. The heart and the character of Christ are cultivated over time. When young people get married, some describe their fiancé as the result of finding your “soulmate.” If you ask an experienced marriage, they will agree that you never find a soulmate, you become a soulmate over time.

When you scan the four gospels for examples where Jesus complimented people you come up with a short list. So when He stops and declares, “This man is remarkable” or “This woman is amazing,” you must take notes. At the top of the short list we find John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was awaiting death in prison, where he struggled with a nagging uncertainty about Jesus’ nature and mission. Like many others, John had expectations about the Son of God. So, he sent his disciples to reach out to Jesus with a direct question, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” (Luke 7:19).

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The characteristics of the King resonated perfectly with the principles of the Kingdom!”

Even though John was known to be so confident and bold, he clearly had doubts about Jesus’ mission and methods. Jesus replied with a cryptic riddle:

“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” (Matthew 11:4-6)

Many would be dumbfounded by the answer, but the words rang like a glorious bell in the ears of John the Baptist. The characteristics of the King resonated perfectly with the principles of the Kingdom! Ellen White described this “light bulb” moment like this:

The disciples bore the message, and it was enough. John recalled the prophecy concerning the Messiah, “The Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:1,2). (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 217)



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In washing the feet of His disciples, Christ gave evidence that He would do any service, however humble, that would make them heirs with Him of the eternal wealth of heaven's treasure. His disciples, in performing the same rite, pledge themselves in like manner to serve their brethren. Whenever this ordinance is rightly celebrated, the children of God are brought into a holy relationship, to help and bless each other.”

Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 651

Even though John the Baptist died in prison, his life of selfless service that paved the way for Jesus is the first and greatest lesson. This is why Jesus uses John as the example of a student who gets the right answer. Jesus declared, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. [...]” However, if Jesus puts John at the top of the class the following phrase in the text highlights the deeper lesson by saying, “[...] Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matthew 11:11). In other words, when you are lesser and others are more, you start to understand the nature of the Kingdom and the King. The main principle is that serving others is essential in our relationship with God.

Many months later, Jesus gathered his students together in the upper room for the final review of the class. Instead of teaching as a Rabbi, Jesus acted like a servant by washing their feet.

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” (John 13:12-15)

In the past lessons, God's questions may have moved you to a deeper place than ever before. But it's not enough to love the story of the Bible. It's not enough to understand the plan of salvation as revealed in the Scriptures. It's not enough to agree that the King is worthy of your adoration and the Kingdom rules are worthy to be followed. The Master Teacher asks you the final test question: “Do you understand what I have done to you? [...] Do just as I have done to you.”

Once you answer the Teacher's question, it is up to you, the student, to teach now. As the teacher has taught you well, you should be like the Master. Practice what you preach, or better yet, preach what you practice. //

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, OPEN MY EYES TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME. I WANT MY SERVICE TO OTHERS TO FLOW FROM THE TRUTH THAT YOU LOVED ME FIRST.



# QUESTIONS

1. In Jesus' day, washing the dusty feet of guests was a task reserved for the lowest servant in the household. What task could Jesus have used today to get his point across? What is the hardest, most unappealing thing you could do for someone else nowadays?

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2. "You can serve and still not be a servant. You can give and not be generous..." Troy lists a series of actions that we can do with the wrong heart and motivation. What item/s of Troy's list impacted you the most? Can you think of more examples? Why is it important to have the right attitude when serving others?

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3. What are the benefits of serving others? Have you ever experienced someone sharing their faith through service? Share some of your life experiences with service, and how it made you feel.

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4. Imagine Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. What do you learn about Him from His example? How does His example help you understand the principles of His Kingdom better?

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5. What can we do to foster a serving spirit in our church? How can we better serve each other?

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## PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Think of one way you could serve others today. If you want to go further, try including these activities regularly in your schedule, for example, once a week or once a month.

Here are some ideas:

- › Volunteer your time.
- › Put together a care package for a student or a missionary.
- › Clean the house of someone who is sick or pregnant.
- › Visit a local children's hospital.
- › Clean up trash at a local park.
- › Do a random act of kindness.
- › Help an elderly person with their grocery shopping.

Tell the person you help that they can show their gratitude for your service by helping someone else in turn. Let's start a "chain of service" and pay it forward!<sup>1</sup>



## GO DEEPER

- › 1 John 3:16-18; Hebrews 10:24; Galatians 6: 9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5, 6 and 7; Luke 7:36-50.
- › White, Ellen G., *The Desire of Ages*, ch. 71, "A Servant of Servants."
- › "By kneeling down with bowl and towel, Jesus redefined greatness." (Gillespie, Timothy. "Day 3: Transforming Our World" in *The Kingdom of God. Eternity Now. Senior Youth Week of Prayer 2014*, GC Youth Ministries (ed.), p. 33, see also pp. 29-41. Available at: <http://bit.ly/GCWOP2014>
- › "The image of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples represents His forgiveness of sins committed after baptism. The image of the disciples washing one another's feet signifies our willingness to forgive those daily irritations and transgressions that threaten the unity in love that Jesus purposed for His disciples (see also John 13:34-35)." ("Putting the Past Behind You" in *The Gospel of John. Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, Lesson 6, 2004, p. 81). Available at <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/SSQ/SS20040101-01.pdf>.
- › Consider these 7 principles of God's Kingdom: mercy and compassion (Mark 6:34); love (1 John 4:16); grace (1 Corinthians 1:4-5); faith (Mark 11:22-24); God as the authority (Psalm 95:7); power (1 Chronicles 29:11); and unity and fellowship (2 Corinthians 13:14). Can you think of more?

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<sup>1</sup> See *Pay It Forward*. Dir. Mimi Leder. Warner Bros, 2000. Film. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0223897/>



# ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: FREERICE.COM

**Materials:** mobile device, internet connection.

**Activity Description:**

Freerice is an initiative of the World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations (UN). Its goal is to raise funds to fight against world hunger. By playing an educational game, users donate grains of rice that have in turn been donated by the sponsoring companies via their advertisements on the site.

The UN periodically receives the money corresponding to the number of grains won by the users, and then redistributes it to poor communities around the world in the form of rice and food via the World Food Programme.

For this activity, take some minutes to visit the project website [freerice.com](http://freerice.com) using your mobile devices and play together, so that as a group you make your contribution.

**Application:**

Nowadays, we can find numerous tools and initiatives that allow us to make a difference in the lives of other people who find themselves in a more complicated situation than ours, by making a small gesture, just like Jesus did with the people who surrounded Him.

## ACTIVITY 2: THE WITNESSES

**Materials:** 1 Bible, 1 sheet of paper, 1 pencil or pen.

**Activity Description:**

- > Look for Psalm 150 in the Bible.
- > You have 10 seconds to read the Psalm and try to memorize it word by word.
- > As a group, use the sheet of paper to transcribe the text you have just read, being as accurate as possible.

**Application:**

As humans, when we face a situation, each individual brings in their own personal point of view. Jesus valued that uniqueness in people and in serving others, He showed we can do the same in our own special way.

Take time to thank Jesus for the great blessing of helping others.

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# WHAT IS THAT IN YOUR HAND?

KEY TEXT: EXODUS 4:1-4

"THE LORD SAID TO HIM, 'WHAT IS THAT IN  
YOUR HAND?' HE SAID, 'A STAFF.'"

Exodus 4:2

"I'M UNCOMFORTABLE."

"I'M SCARED."

"I FEEL AWKWARD."

"I'M SQUEAMISH."

"I'M NOT GOOD AT THAT."

"I CAN'T."

"I'M NOT ABLE."

These are the kind of answers you give when you think something is impossible for you. Most of the time, it's not so much about the tension between the possible and the impossible, but rather about feeling less than able and thinking of those who can do it better.

If you were asked to preach, you might say, "No way! If I have to go up front and speak, I will die, immediately!" Yet, in truth, more people will die while vigorously brushing their teeth than you will ever die for saying a few words up front.

You can say, "I'm terrified, uncomfortable, awkward, and totally convinced that others are more skilled." And that is likely the truth. However, when you are actually asked to do something for which you feel unprepared, unqualified, and unable, what is your answer?

Driving on a dark, rainy night, three teenagers witnessed how the car ahead of them swerved to the side of the road and hit a tree. They unwaveringly stopped to help. When they approached the wreckage, they found a woman, unconscious, in the driver's seat

and two children crying in the back. Another car also stopped, and a woman joined them and began to assess the situation. She said, "I'm a nurse and I've already called for help and for an ambulance. Can you help me?"

The three girls, who were about 17 years old, didn't feel like they could do anything, but they automatically nodded. After checking the driver's vitals, the nurse spoke calmly but firmly, "I need some help. The mother's leg and side are bleeding and the children need to be removed from the car in their seats." Two of the teenagers unhooked the car seats and carefully took the children into their car for safety, whilst the remaining student heard the nurse's voice calling out to her, "You! Please! Help me stop the bleeding."

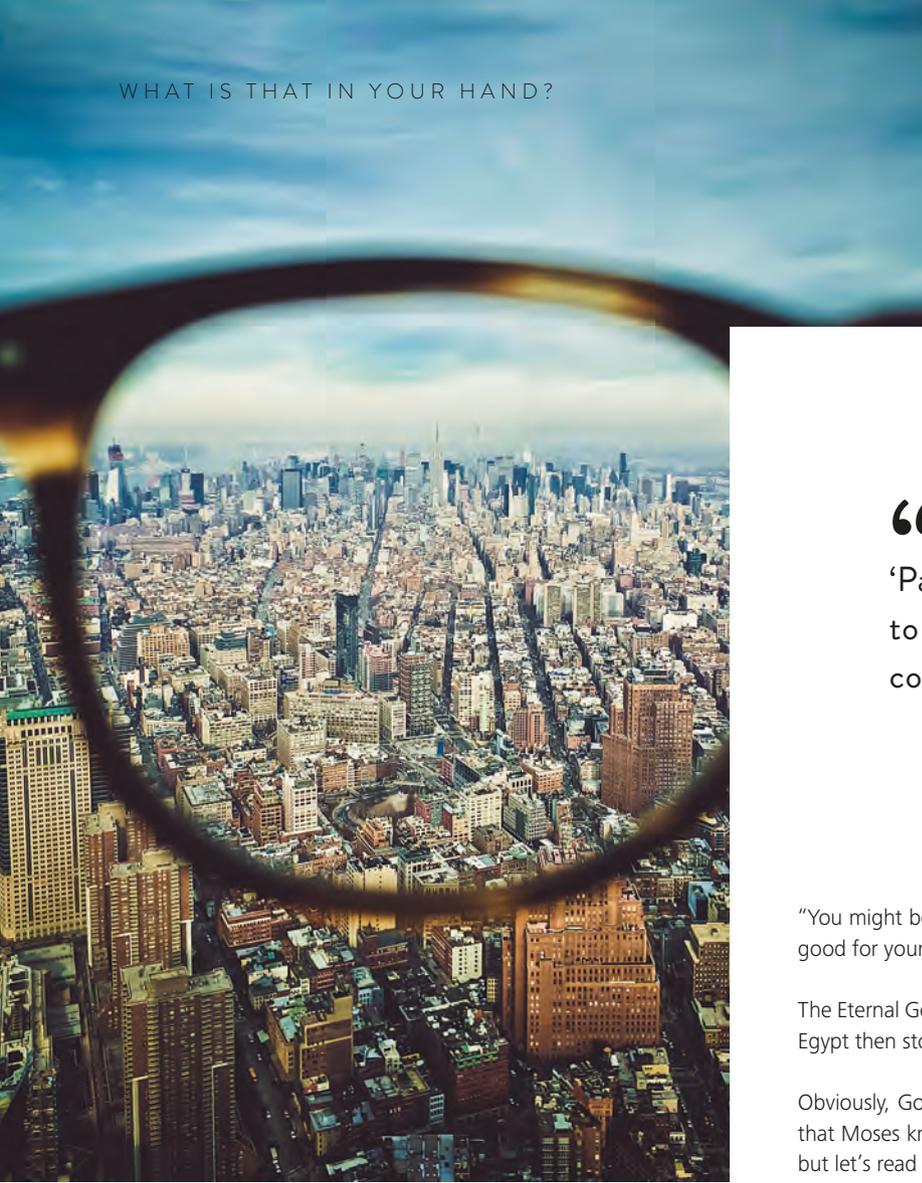
The nurse found some clothes to put pressure on the wound and instructed the girl, "Hold this cloth tight on her leg, right here."

The girl confessed, "The sight of blood makes me dizzy. I'll be sick. I'll throw up!"

“

When you are actually asked to do something for which you feel unprepared, unqualified, and unable, what is your answer?”





“

‘Paying attention’ opens doors to new opportunities to cooperate with people.”

“You might be the I AM but I am who I am and that doesn’t look good for your plan.”

The Eternal God with a master plan to rescue 2 million people from Egypt then stops to ask, “What is that in your hand?”

Obviously, God knows the item in question is a stick. God knows that Moses knows that his staff is just a stick. You know the story, but let’s read it again:

The Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A staff.” And he said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. But the Lord said to Moses, “Put out your hand and catch it by the tail”—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand... (Exodus 4:2-4)

The Bible is filled with moments where God uses ordinary things to do extraordinary acts for God’s kingdom.

“What is that in your hand?”

The staff in your hand is your attention. Throughout your day you take in everything you see; however, you don’t see everything you take in. The human mind creates habits of thought and perception, so after a while you will miss the regular patterns, unless you look carefully.

If you were to look for the color orange, you would seek, focus on and identify the color orange. You wouldn’t notice so much orange around you if you weren’t attentive.

John Stilgoe is a Harvard professor who teaches about the history of landscape.<sup>1</sup> His class is really about seeing and noticing things.

Still in a calm but commanding voice, the nurse replied, “You can sit down next to her and be dizzy if you want. And you can throw up if you want to. Just make sure you keep pressure on the wound.”

She kept pressure and threw up a couple of times as well, but when the ambulance came the whole family was spared.

Clearly, sometimes we are asked not because we are able, but because we are available. When God called Moses to be the mouthpiece for freedom, Moses replied with a series of excuses on why he was unable. God heard Moses’ reservations, and replied, “What is that in your hand?” (Exodus 4:2).

At that moment, God had introduced Himself as the “I AM” and described the mission of a massive revolution in Egypt. God had told Moses why, what, when, where, and how the exodus would occur, only to find Moses sick with uncertainty. I can hear Moses saying, “Great plan. Everything down to the details—it’s a perfect plan, except for one small problem, me!”

If you were in that class and you found yourself gazing out the window you might be doing your homework already. Becoming skilled in paying attention to the world around you is key to being successful. If you only see what you already believe, your lens for seeing life diminishes every day. "Paying attention" opens doors to new opportunities to cooperate with people.

When you look in the gospels, you will discover the phrase, "Jesus saw her" or "Jesus saw the multitudes." Jesus paid attention. Do you see well? Do you ever walk, see the masses and never consider the soul of any one of them? God uses people who are paying



“  
Like Moses, it’s common to be  
tempted to see your own abilities  
and shortcomings instead of seeing  
God’s calling for your life.”

attention. Much like Moses who “saw” a strange burning bush and responded. God can use anyone who is available to answer, “Here I am” (Exodus 3:4).

Perhaps you feel you are unskilled and unprepared. Perhaps you feel uncertain about whether you are 100% committed to God. Well, get in line and join the club! Still, God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary tasks for His plan.

“What is that in your hand?”

God wants your attention, and He also needs your *effort*. It’s not a contradiction to say, “God uses your weaknesses,” and then say, “Give your best to God.” Paul shared a conversation about strengths and weaknesses with the Corinthians. God had spoken to him directly:

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Consider the Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11. All the names listed are not heroes nor did they always act in a heroic way. But they all answered, “I am here.” Are you available?

Peter adds to the conversation about the effort part in our cooperation with God. After reminding the believers that they are saved by God’s grace, his advice is:

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

For those who are willing to give all to God there is a journey of growth as a result. But, don’t mistake the cooperation with God that produces growth with accepting God’s salvation as a gift. The growth comes from being available; your eternal salvation is receiving the gift of grace given at the cross. It’s easy to get confused because both (growth and accepting God’s grace) happen in a relationship with God. Peter clarifies this even more when he says,

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:8-9)

If you struggle with guilt and disappointment from all of your broken promises and uncompleted commitments to God in the past,

read that passage again. You are not lost, but you have an “I” problem. Like Moses, it’s common to be tempted to see your own abilities and shortcomings instead of seeing God’s calling for your life. To see yourself, your skills and abilities—or even your personality—as the source is “nearsighted.” God invites you to come on a journey with “your staff” in your hand that He will use.

God uses your attention and your effort, but there is still one more staff that you possess in your hand that God asks you to think about. Today is the most useful gift you have to give to God. When you wait to surrender yourself to God’s call your procrastination takes a toll on your heart. You are quietly and continually pestered by your indecision, which in turn causes guilt and shame. Avoiding, delaying, denying, and distracting yourself become your focus. This will only prevent you from finding the peace, joy, and love you hope for. The lie is to think you can wait until tomorrow expecting it will be easier then or you will be more confident or clear about God’s invitation.

The same Voice that spoke from a burning bush long ago still calls today with seemingly impossible requests. The question is, “What is that in your hand?” The simple metaphor that reminds you that God is calling you to be available because He will make you able. //

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

LORD, HELP ME BE BRAVE AND USE MY GIFTS FOR YOUR SERVICE. I WANT THEM TO BE MULTIPLIED LIKE IT HAPPENED WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS. HELP ME TRUST THAT YOU MAKE ME ABLE WHEN I FEEL UNABLE.

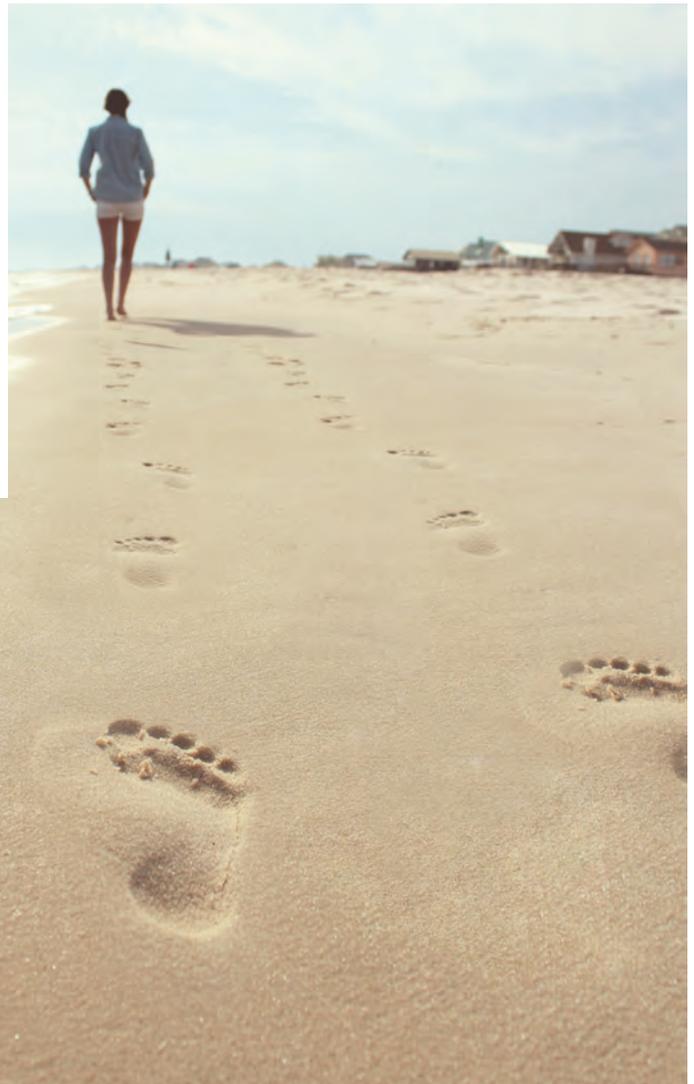
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1 Petey E. Menz. “John Stilgoe’s Secret History”, *The Harvard Crimson*, April 2, 2015. Available at <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/4/2/scrutiny-john-stilgoe/>. (Accessed: October 22, 2019).

“

The same compassionate Saviour lives today, and He is as willing to listen to the prayer of faith as when He walked visibly among men. The natural cooperates with the supernatural. It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.”

Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 525





# QUESTIONS

1. What are you good at? Share some of your gifts and talents with the group. How can you use those gifts in the church?

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2. Moses clearly felt out of his comfort zone when God called him. How do you face doubt, insecurity and fear?

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3. Have you ever avoided doing something you felt God calling you to do? What excuses did you make? What was the outcome?

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4. Does God generally call us to do things we are comfortable with because He has given us the gifts for it? Or do you think God purposely calls us to do something outside of our comfort zone to help us grow? Explain your answer. Now contrast with Matthew 25:14-30.

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5. Troy proposes you have three things in your hand that you can use for God: your attention, your effort, and your today. He then ends with a powerful claim, "God is calling you to be available because He will make you able." What does God's question, "What is that in your hand?" say to you, personally?

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# PERSONAL CHALLENGE

**We have now reached the end of this series of studies, which have taken us on a journey of discovery, as we encountered 8 different questions God asked throughout history. Those questions still apply to us today. We now present you with four different challenges, for you to choose how you want to end this journey and start a new one.**



1

Take some time to review all of the lessons, especially the one about your expectations and dreams (lesson 6). Also consider the activities on pages 76 to 77. Now use page 74 to write your own conclusions to this journey. What has impacted you the most? What are the next steps for you?



2

Did you run out of time to complete any of the personal challenges? Now is a perfect time to go for it. You can choose to focus on one personal challenge and transform it into a weekly, monthly or yearly goal.



3

Use the key text in each lesson during your personal devotion time. Use these 5 questions to get the most out of the text. Write down your answers in a journal.

- › What is new?
- › What surprises you?
- › What don't you understand?
- › What will you obey or apply?
- › What will you share with someone this week?



4

Grow in your prayer life.<sup>1</sup> Prayer is a vital part of the Christian faith. It's how you communicate with God. Ellen G. White says that "prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 93). With that in mind, here are some steps that can help you:

- › Establish a regular schedule to pray to God. We usually make time for what is important to us, like our friends, special events or even our favorite TV series. Do the same with your conversations with God. Set a time to meet him daily. Even if it is only for ten minutes at the beginning. The more you practice prayer, the easier it will become.
- › Now choose a special spot for your encounter with God. Make it your unique gathering place with the Creator of the Universe, a location that is significant in your relationship with God.
- › Use the acronym A.C.T.S.<sup>2</sup> (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication) to guide your prayer time:

- **Adoration** is prayer that praises and worships God.  
 "In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him."<sup>3</sup>  
 "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name." (Hebrews 13:15)  
 Psalm 150 is an invitation to praise God with all that we have.  
 Proclaim God's goodness and mercy. Praise Him for His unfailing love.  
 Acknowledge Him as Creator. Express your wonder for His name. Fix your eyes and mind on God's character. Focus on who God is.
  - **Confession** is prayer that gets honest about sin.  
 "Nothing in our lives is too sinful for Him to know about. No problem is so great He cannot solve it." (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 100)  
 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9)  
 Be honest. Be specific. Be open. Admit your wrongdoing. Deal with your own darkness.  
 Confessing will allow God to help you move forward. To Heal. To start afresh.
  - **Thanksgiving** is God-directed, humbly expressed gratitude.  
 "We do not give thanks enough. We are always receiving God's blessings, and yet how little we give thanks!" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 102)  
 "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."  
 (1 Thessalonians 5:18)  
 Highlight what God is doing or what He has done. Think of what you have. Remember the important people in your life. Rejoice in the special moments you've lived. Recall your blessings and life opportunities. Gratitude changes our attitude for the best.
  - **Supplication** is asking for something from God.  
 "Something happens when I pray for others in this way. Bringing them into God's presence changes my attitudes toward them and ultimately affects our relationship."<sup>4</sup>  
 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)  
 Make your specific requests to God, for yourself and for others (intercession).
- › Leave some quiet time at the end to allow God's Spirit to guide your heart.

For more inspiration on prayer, you can watch the movie *War Room*. See [www.warroomthemovie.com](http://www.warroomthemovie.com) for more information. Also available on Netflix.

And remember, you can also pray throughout your day, wherever you are. "At any time or any place it is proper to offer a silent prayer to God. Nothing can keep us from lifting our hearts in prayer. We can pray when we are on a crowded street and when we are carrying on our business." (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 99)

1 This prayer plan proposal is based on several resources: Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, ch. 11, "The Privilege of Prayer"; A prayer devotion plan by Samuel Gil, presented at the *II Jornadas de Estudiantes Adventistas* (2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of Adventist Students) in Spain (2015); and Stephen & Alex Kendrick, *The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies*. Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2015, pp. 40-47.

2 Based on: Stephen & Alex Kendrick, *The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies*. Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 2015, pp. 40-47.

3 C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2017, p. 112. Lewis also adds, "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment... It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is... The worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be" (*Idem*, p. 111).

4 Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make a Difference?* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010, p. 303.



# MY PERSONAL THOUGHTS

**What has impacted you the most of these 8 lessons? How will you apply it in your life?**



## GO DEEPER

- › Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-13; Ephesians 4:7-8;
- › Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, ch. 22, “Moses” and *Christ’s Object Lessons*, ch. 25 “Talents.”
- › Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, ch. 11, “The Privilege of Prayer.”
- › Spiritual Gifts Assessment Test. Available online at: <http://bit.ly/spiritualgiftsweb><sup>1</sup>
- › “Moses at forty we like. But Moses at eighty? No way. Too old. Too tired... What impact would he have on Pharaoh? He’s the wrong man for the job. [...] Moses wouldn’t have gone. You wouldn’t have sent him. I wouldn’t have sent him. But God did. How do you figure? [...] Poor Moses. He didn’t even know he was enrolled. But he was. And, guess what? So are you. The voice from the bush is the voice that whispers to you. It reminds you that God is not finished with you yet.” (Max Lucado. *Cast of Characters*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2008, pp. 117-118).
- › “It’s not the activities or accomplishments we string together that make lives well lived as much as it is the hearts of wisdom we gain and use along the way.” (Lysa TerKeurst. *The Best Yes: Making Wise Decisions in the Midst of Endless Demands*. Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Books, 2014, pp. 228-229).
- › “...every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different than it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing into a heavenly creature or a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself. [...] Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.” (C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*. London: Fount Paperbacks, 1997, p. 76).
- › “One of the most effective ‘evangelists’ I’ve ever known was a young girl with cystic fibrosis, lying in a hospital room, terminally ill. Two years earlier, she had received a double lung transplant but quickly began to experience complications. A few months later, she was diagnosed with a very aggressive kind of cancer. The doctors told her that there was nothing more they could do and that she had less than a year to live. To most, her story seemed devastatingly tragic — a young girl cut down in the prime of her life. But I can’t remember ever being in the presence of another person who exuded such consistent serenity and joy. She told the doctors and nurses on her floor and anyone else who would listen that what she was going through was nothing compared to what God had prepared for her in eternity — that our lives, whether we live to be 20 or 120, are only small drops of water compared to the expansive beauty of eternity’s ocean. During her last few months, I seemed to meet new people in our church every week impacted by her testimony. Her life was a burning bush that beckoned many to turn aside. Are you encountering one of these burning bushes now? Have you turned aside to listen?” (J.D. Greear. *Not God Enough: Why Your Small God Leads to Big Problems*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018, pp. 51-52).
- › What did you think of this Bible Study Resource? Please give us your feedback here: <http://bit.ly/8Qs2020>

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish version is available for download and print here: <https://www.interamerica.org/es/resource/prueba-de-dones-espirituales/>



# ACTIVITIES

We have now reached the last lesson of this resource, so we want to finish with a series of meaningful activities, to make a difference in your life journey. We hope they inspire you to go further.

Create a special atmosphere with your youth group, by decorating the room and choosing some special background music. You could even plan a picnic or dinner together to make it even more memorable.

## ACTIVITY 1: WHAT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU?

### Activity Description:

From this list, choose what you consider to be impossible for you right now:

- › Preaching a sermon to the whole church
- › Being the Pathfinder club director
- › Preparing the devotion for the week of prayer
- › Giving the Sabbath School lesson to a group of youth
- › Giving a Bible Study
- › Talking about God to a stranger
- › Talking about God to a neighbor
- › Being a Children's Sabbath School teacher
- › Preparing an activity for the youth
- › \_\_\_\_\_ (add your own phrase here)

Think about why you think it is impossible. What would you need to make it possible?

Pray to God, and ask Him, from the bottom of your heart, for all that you want Him to make possible in your life.

## ACTIVITY 2: HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

**Materials:** 1 sheet of paper and 1 pen or marker per person.

### Activity Description:

- › Do a drawing of how you see yourself in the church right now.
- › Now draw how you see yourself in the church in five years.
- › Think: are your actions today leading you to the person you envision in 5 years?

### ACTIVITY 3: WHAT ARE YOUR GIFTS?

**Materials:** 1 printed version of the Spiritual Gifts Assessment and 1 pen or marker per person.

**Activity Description:**

- › Do the Spiritual Gifts Assessment test to identify your gifts. It is available here: <http://bit.ly/spiritualgiftsweb><sup>1</sup>
- › In the group, look for the people that have the same gift as you.
- › Think together about a project or initiative that you could do at your church.
- › What do you need to make it happen?
- › Share your project with the rest of the group.

### ACTIVITY 4: OUR MANIFESTO

**Materials:** Sheets of paper and pens. Activity 3.

**Activity Description:**

After listening to every group's project (see Activity 3), write a Manifesto together for you to present to your church, sharing your conclusion to this 8-lesson journey (or week of prayer) in the shape of your project proposal/s.

Choose a "secretary" to write down this Manifesto, prepare a presentation and share it with your church pastor. Ask your pastor for a time to present it to the church board to gain their support, and finally to the whole church.

### ACTIVITY 5: PRAYER

**Activity Description:**

In groups of 3 to 4 people, think of the following points and then pray for them:

- › Motives for gratitude to God for your journey throughout this resource (or week);
- › Personal motives for gratitude;
- › Personal requests;
- › The projects you thought of together (see Activity 3 and Activity 4);
- › Your local church and the world church; and
- › The soon coming of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish version is available for download and print here: <https://www.interamerica.org/es/resource/prueba-de-dones-espirituales/>

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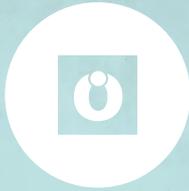
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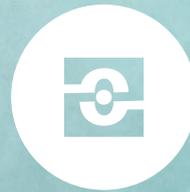
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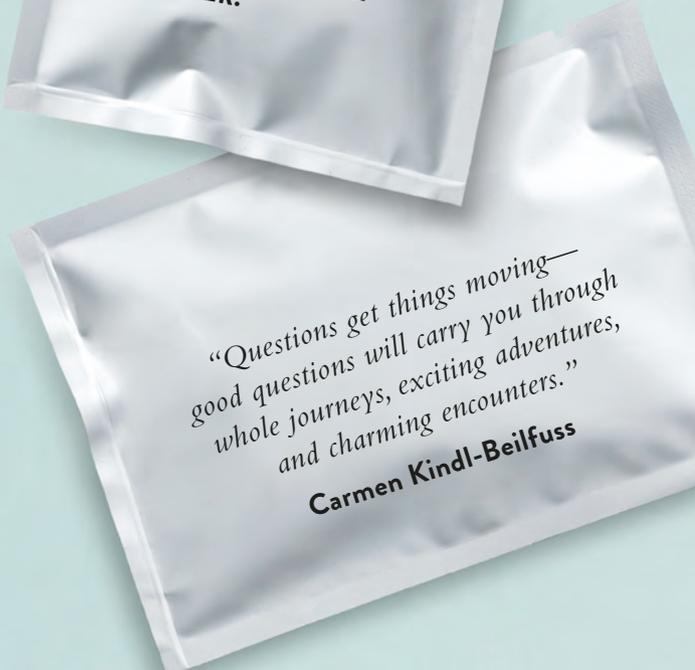
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**QUESTIONS ARE INVITING. THEY SHIFT THE FOCUS FROM US TO THE OTHER, WHICH GIVES THEM THE POWER TO BRING US CLOSER TOGETHER.**



*“Questions get things moving—  
good questions will carry you through  
whole journeys, exciting adventures,  
and charming encounters.”*  
**Carmen Kindl-Beilfuss**



These 8 lessons based on eight of God's questions to humanity aim to take you on an unforgettable spiritual journey.

**8**  
**QUESTIONS**



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