

Oneness in Christ Creation and Fall

Lesson #1 for October 6, 2018

Scriptures: Genesis 1:26-27; 3:16-19; 11:1-9; 15:5-6; 1 John 4:7-8,16; Galatians 3:29; Deuteronomy 7:6-11.

1. What was God's original plan for this earth? Try to imagine what this world would be like if sin had not entered. Would Eve still be having children? How many children do you think she did have?
2. If you read Genesis 1&2, it is very clear that God's original plan was for us to live forever together in perfect harmony. Everything and everyone—not only human beings but also animals and the environment—were in perfect balance and peace and interdependence. It was a picture worthy of its Creator.
3. Read Genesis 1:26-27. Clearly, God intended for human beings to rule over all the creatures of the earth in happy harmony.
4. What do you think is implied by the idea that we were made "in God's image"? Do we look like Him? Are our characters supposed to be like His? Are we supposed to act like Him? Theologians have debated these questions for millennia. What is the nature of God Himself?
5. Why do you suppose God chose to turn this world into a place where He could put a special group of children—us—and see how things would work out? Did God want to create beings that would be able to interact with Him with love in a way that was somehow different from how He related to the angels?
6. One of the unifying factors that we must never forget is the Sabbath which came to us from God and Eden. Think of all the ways in which a group of Sabbathkeepers are benefitted and brought together as they worship and fellowship together.

The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God's purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden. It was God's plan for the members of the family to be associated in work and study, in worship and recreation, the father as priest of his household, and both father and mother as teachers and companions of their children. But the results of sin, having changed the conditions of life, to a great degree prevent this association. Often the father hardly sees the faces of his children throughout the week. He is almost wholly deprived of opportunity for companionship or instruction. But God's love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 250.2; *Child Guidance** 535.3-536.0; *FLB** 36.3; *SD** 181.4.

7. Clearly, God's plan was for the Garden of Eden to expand to include whoever would be living on this earth, eventually, presumably to cover the entire earth. But, as we know, that plan was foiled by the sins of Adam and Eve.
8. Try to imagine yourself as one of the angels standing around the throne of God waiting to do His bidding as they watched Eve approach the tree of knowledge of good and evil, take the fruit, and eat it after being deceived by the snake. Didn't the angels want to rush down and warn Eve? Was there something faulty in the way Adam and Eve were made? Why was Eve separated from Adam on that occasion?
9. What options did God have when Adam and Eve sinned?

- (1) He could have destroyed Adam and Eve for their disobedience and started over.
- (2) He could have forgiven them and given them another chance just as we do with our children every day.
- (3) Instead, He decided to tell them and their descendants to be patient while God worked out an answer to the problem. Was that the best solution?
10. As we know, unity fell apart with that first sin. See Genesis 3:12-13. Already, Adam blamed Eve; and Eve blamed the snake! When questioned by God, where did Adam and Eve get the idea that they should blame someone else for their sins?
 11. Following the sin of Adam and Eve, was it God's plan for man to rule over woman? Or, did God just see that was what would happen?
 12. Read Genesis 3:16-19. God told Adam and Eve that life would not be as gentle, kind, and easy as it had been in the Garden of Eden. Women would have pain in childbirth, and men would have to work hard to get the ground to produce its bounty. More than that, for some reason it was at that point that Adam and Eve were told that they could begin to eat vegetables referred to in some translations as "wild plants." Before that, only animals did. Is that because one has to "kill" or destroy the plant to eat a vegetable, whereas, taking fruit does not kill the tree?
 13. After they were expelled from the garden, things deteriorated very rapidly. The next big event in the history of mankind, of course, was the story of Cain and Abel. See Genesis 4:1-15. What happened there? Apparently, Cain did not raise sheep or cattle. Would he have had to purchase a lamb from his brother or his parents in order to offer the required sacrifice? Was he too proud to do that? In any case, Cain chose to worship God in a way that was very different from what God had required. Then, after killing Abel, Cain had that very sad argument with God. Is that a major problem in our day? How many of us are carefully worshiping God in the way God asks? Or, do we worship in the way we want?
 14. Did one of Cain's sisters marry him? Why would she choose to marry him? How did Adam's other descendants relate to Cain and his descendants? (See Genesis 4:15.)
 15. We know very little about society before the flood. Much of what we as Seventh-day Adventists know is from the writings of Ellen White. Why do you think those long-lived, very intelligent people fell so quickly into perversion and sin? Couldn't they see what was happening?

Those who honored and feared to offend God, at first felt the curse but lightly; while those who turned from God and trampled upon his authority, felt the effects of the curse more heavily, especially in stature and nobleness of form. **The descendants of Seth were called the sons of God—the descendants of Cain, the sons of men.** As the sons of God mingled with the sons of men, they became corrupt, and by intermarriage with them, lost, through the influence of their wives, their peculiar, holy character, and united with the sons of Cain in their idolatry. Many cast aside the fear of God, and trampled upon his commandments. But there were a few that did righteousness, who feared and honored their Creator. Noah and his family were among the righteous few.—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*,* vol. 3, 60.2; *Spirit of Prophecy*,* vol. 1, 66.1; *SR** 62.1.

After the translation of Enoch to heaven, the sons of men that were set against the worship of God were drawing away the sons of God. There were two parties in the world then, and there always will be. **The worshipers of God called themselves the sons of God. The descendants of Seth went up into the mountains and there made themselves homes separate from the sons of Cain.** Here in their mountainous homes they thought to preserve themselves from the prevailing wickedness and idolatry of the descendants of Cain. But after the exhortations and the influence of Enoch were removed from them, they

commenced to unite with the descendants of Cain.—Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant** 39.2. [Bold type is added.]

16. So, why did the antediluvians deteriorate so quickly into moral depravity and wanton sin? In Noah's day, was there truly only Noah and his family who were faithful enough to get into the ark? Methuselah died the year the flood came!
17. For whatever reason, Noah and his three sons and their wives were the only ones who got on the boat before the flood came. Try to imagine yourself either in the boat or outside the boat trying to get in as the worst downpour of rain that you can possibly imagine was happening. When the flood was over and after more than a year of living in that boat, Noah and his family were allowed to emerge and were given a sign that God would never destroy the world by a flood again. See Genesis 9:12-17; Isaiah 54:7-10.
18. The next significant story in biblical history is recorded in Genesis 11:1-9, the story of the tower of Babel. It was God's plan for man to scatter out over the earth to plant and harvest and to live righteous lives. But, it was Satan's plan to bring men together to lead them into sin. Notice in Genesis 11:4 that they were determined not to be scattered all over the earth. So, it became necessary for God to mix up their languages and, thus, to scatter them all over the earth. (Genesis 11:9) Is it still true that, in general, the more people crowd together the more wicked and unloving their behavior becomes?
19. Why did the builders of the tower of Babel choose to do that? It has been suggested that they were determined to directly defy God. Some have suggested that they wanted to build a tower that was tall enough to pierce the clouds to see where the rain came from. Others have suggested that they were hoping to have a tower tall enough so that if another flood came, they would be able to escape into the tower and protect themselves. But, as we know, the confusion of languages destroyed their plans.
20. What factors make it difficult for us to come together as a world church and cooperate to finish God's work? Today, we are different by race, culture, and language. This makes it very difficult for various reasons. While language and race have some impact on our differences, culture is the chief issue. When the ideas and beliefs that we grow up with differ from the ideas and beliefs of others, it is hard for us to see eye to eye.
21. Today, we have all sorts of barriers even within our church: Barriers of language, race, and especially culture. In the times of the New Testament, one of the things that God did to break down some of those barriers was the gift of languages that the apostles received at Pentecost. And we know, that the gift of the Holy Spirit also came down on the family of Cornelius and later on others. Do you think that gift of the Holy Spirit which occurred at Pentecost, giving the apostles the ability to speak any language wherever they went, fluently and well, could be given again in our day? Has it been? To really understand a language, one must know the culture.
22. Is it God's plan for us just to tolerate our differences? Or, does He want us to actually become more like Him and, thus, grow closer to one another? Will we need to ignore our culture to do that? Or, could we recognize which cultural ideas are truly Christian and focus on those, thus, bringing us together?
23. While we know very little about that early history after the flood, archaeology has shown that Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris River and the Euphrates River, was densely populated very early in history. One group of people we do know something about were the Sumerians, who are credited with inventing the art of writing on clay tablets. They had nicely-built houses and produced many precious things such as jewelry, tools, and household utensils that have been recovered. Still surviving are numerous tower-like temples dedicated to the worship of various of their deities.
24. Read Genesis 12:1-3, the first covenant of God with humans. As we know, Abram/Abraham

came to be known as the father of the faithful. He became a key player in God's plan of salvation. Romans 4:1-5 pictures him as a great example of "righteousness by faith." What was it that caused God to pick Abraham for that great privilege? Or, was it a great responsibility? Was Abraham just the only one to respond to God? What about Melchizedek?

God called Abraham to be a teacher of His word, He chose him to be the father of a great nation, because He saw that Abraham would instruct his children and his household in the principles of God's law. And that which gave power to Abraham's teaching was the influence of his own life. **His great household consisted of more than a thousand souls, many of them heads of families, and not a few but newly converted from heathenism.** Such a household required a firm hand at the helm. No weak, vacillating methods would suffice. Of Abraham God said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him." Genesis 18:19. Yet his authority was exercised with such wisdom and tenderness that hearts were won. The testimony of the divine Watcher is, "They shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Genesis 18:19. And Abraham's influence extended beyond his own household. Wherever he pitched his tent, he set up beside it the altar for sacrifice and worship. When the tent was removed, the altar remained; and many a roving Canaanite, whose knowledge of God had been gained from the life of Abraham His servant, tarried at that altar to offer sacrifice to Jehovah.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 187.2; *OFC** 173.3; *CC** 49.2. [Bold type is added.] [See Gen. 14:14.]

25. What are the characteristics that made Abraham the example of faith? (1) First, he was obedient. He did several things which might to us seem crazy like leaving his home in Ur, moving to Haran, and then, finally, launching out and ending up spending the rest of his life living in a tent in Palestine. God had promised him that Palestine would be the possession of his descendants; but, Abraham never owned any more than a grave site there. (2) Abraham believed God and hoped for a future dwelling place with God. (Hebrews 11:9-10) (3) Despite his advancing age, he trusted that God would give him a son and that, as God had promised, his descendants would be as numerous as the stars.
26. While we accept the fact that Abraham trusted God, it is still true that both Abraham and Sarah laughed when God told them that they were going to have a baby. And then, Sarah lied about her laughing! (Genesis 17:17; 18:10-15) Did those great examples of faith really laugh at God? Even lying to Him? Nevertheless, Abraham was called a "friend of God." (See 2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; and James 2:23.) Do you think that was a fair judgment? Do we ever laugh at God's promises? Do we ever doubt them? What would happen if we honestly determined to follow exactly God's directions for our lives over a period of time? If a number of us did that, would it hasten the second coming of Jesus Christ? (See 2 Peter 3:10-12.)
27. As we know, ultimately, Abraham became known as the father of the three great monotheistic religions of the world: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Abraham is known all through the Bible as the great example of faith. All the nations of the world were supposed to be blessed through him. (Genesis 12:3) What can we learn from the story of Abraham that might help us today in relating to people with different ideas, cultures, and languages?
28. Read Hebrews 11:8-19; Romans 4:1-3; and Galatians 3:28-29. As a modern-day Christian, do you think of yourself as a descendent of Abraham? What does it mean when Paul said as recorded in Galatians 3:29 (*GNB**): "If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised"? Salvation is available to everyone!
29. Considering what you know about the ancient peoples and all their foibles, do you think it was a good idea for God to choose Abraham and his descendants? What about choosing us? (See Exodus 19:5-6 and 1 Peter 2:9.) What was God's plan for the children of Israel? Could

Christians today finally fulfill that plan of carrying God's message of love and kindness and caring to the whole world? What would happen if we did?

30. There are many people who are not sure about God's ability to predict the future. Did God take a huge risk when He chose Abraham? How did He know how things were going to work out for Abraham and his descendants? Could God have chosen another group of people and done just as well as He did with Abraham and his descendants? Think of the things that God promised Abraham: (1) A land that would belong to him; (2) Many descendants among whom would be kings; (3) A great name as the father of the faithful; (4) And, if he was faithful, that he would be a blessing to all nations. How would you like God to make such a promise to you?
31. In trying to answer the question of why God chose Abraham and his descendants, it is important to read Deuteronomy 7:6-11. Is it possible that God chose Israel because He knew, in advance, that they would represent all the good and bad things that all the peoples of the world would experience? Do you think God would have been better off if He had chosen some group from Europe or maybe Asia instead of Abraham? Or, did God choose many, and only Abraham responded?
32. Has God given up on His original plan that He set out for Israel? Or, does that plan still apply to us as Seventh-day Adventist Christians? How far have we departed from the original mission, enthusiasm, and zeal that characterized the early adventists in 1844 and the Adventist Church in the 1860s? Are our differences mainly due to misunderstandings? If we could understand the culture of others and why they do and think the way they do, would that solve the problem? Clearly, God intended for us to live together as a unified, happy, holy, healthy people.
33. Sin is rooted in selfishness and egocentricity. Abraham as the father of the faithful came to be known as a friend of God because he was willing to do what God asked him to do instead of what he wanted to do and was comfortable with doing that.
34. Every human relationship has been seriously affected by selfishness and sin. Marriages fall apart. Even churches are sometimes split over issues.
35. Think of how we choose leaders in our day. We look at people who demonstrate ability to exercise power, wisdom, self-confidence, and some kind of leadership skills. God chose people who were few in number, were weak, had recently come from slavery, and were despised by their neighbors. Were they really supposed to bring glory to His name? (1 Corinthians 1:26-31) What was God's original plan for the children of Israel?

God desired to make of His people Israel a praise and a glory. Every spiritual advantage was given them. God withheld from them nothing favorable to the formation of character that would make them representatives of Himself.

Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. He who could give them wisdom and skill in all cunning work would continue to be their teacher, and would ennoble and elevate them through obedience to His laws. If obedient, they would be preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations, and would be blessed with vigor of intellect. The glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes. God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*,* 288.2-3. [Bold type is added.]

36. What should we learn from the prayer of Jesus as recorded in John 17? Ultimately, could we ever have a relationship with God similar to the relationship between the Father and the Son? Did God create us so He could have another group of beings to love?
37. In this sinful world, one unavoidable fact is that we all die—sooner or later. And unfortunately, the life and death of Jesus will not bring about the peace that God wants until Jesus comes

again and, ultimately, sin is eliminated.

38. If we take the Scriptures and passages like 1 John 4:7-8,16 seriously, it is clear that God's basic nature is loving. Virtually everything about God is loving—all He does, the way He treats His children, etc. How many of God's children today are acting truly loving in all they do and say? Aren't human beings capable of loving like no other creature on this earth?
39. Why is it that so many of us have trouble truly loving? More than 50% of marriages end in divorce! That does not sound like truly loving. So, what was God's original plan for marriage? If we have trouble getting along with one spouse in our day, how will we live for eternity with people from all cultures and all generations from Adam's time until ours? Is learning how to get along with our spouses and our children a preparation for heaven?
40. Why does sin cause so many problems? Selfishness is the centerpiece of Satan's government. He does not really care about anyone except himself! By contrast, love is the basis of God's government. It should be easy to see why selfishness brings animosity and disharmony.
41. In summary, consider the following questions: What does it mean to you that we were created in the image of God? Does that idea impact your day-by-day actions? How well are we as a church doing today to represent God's character? In what ways could we better represent God to those with whom we associate every day?
42. Do you think it will ever be possible for a group of people from the world, as we know it, to live together harmoniously in the City of God? Think of how it was when Adam and Eve lived together in the Garden of Eden. God walked and talked with them on a regular basis. Angels walked with them in the garden.
43. When God chose Noah and, later, Abraham, was it because He loved them more than others? Or, did He feel that He had to choose them because they were maybe the only ones still listening to Him?
44. Notice these following comments about our lives and how they might be better.

The most convincing argument we can give to the world of Christ's mission is to be found in perfect unity.... In proportion to our unity with Christ will be our power to save souls.—Ellen G. White, *Bible Training School*,* February 1, 1906, par. 6-7; *Our High Calling** 170.4.

A true, lovable Christian is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Bible truth.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* January 14, 1904, par. 11.

A well-ordered Christian household is a powerful argument in favor of the reality of the Christian religion—an argument that the infidel cannot gainsay.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 144.3.

A kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument in favor of the gospel that can be produced.—Ellen G. White, *3SM** 238.4.

Let us remember that a Christlike life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity, and that a cheap Christian character works more harm in the world than the character of a worldling.—Ellen G. White, *9T** 21.1. [Bold type is added.]

45. Could you suggest some ways in which your local church and the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church could improve its unity and harmony?

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Last Modified: August 6, 2018

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