

“The Least of These”: Ministering to Those in Need God Created . . .

Lesson #1 for July 6, 2019

Scriptures: Genesis 1-3; 4:1-9; Acts 17:28; Psalm 24:1; 148; Matthew 22:37-39; Revelation 14:7.

1. Can you think of a time when you worked hard to produce something very creative for a person that you wanted to impress and when you gave it to him, he either broke it or did not appreciate it or even rejected it? Try to imagine how God felt when He created our beautiful world, prepared it for Adam and Eve, and then they rejected Him! We have been assured that this was not because of any fault in God’s creation either of Adam and Eve or of the garden. Also, it was not the fault of God in the way He created Lucifer. But, because He is love, (1 John 4:8,16) God had to allow freedom when He created man—and Lucifer and the other angels. And when God allowed freedom, He opened the door to the possibility of rebellion.
2. Read Genesis 1-3. And if you have time, read chapters 1-4 of *Patriarchs and Prophets* to cover that same time. That is an absolutely incredible story!
3. The remarkable fact is that God still loves us despite all of our foibles, our sins, violence, injustice, and outright rebellion. Not only that, but also He set in motion a very “expensive” plan to win us back. He has even assigned us roles to assist in that redemption program.
4. And make no mistake, God intends for every one of His children to be involved. This is not a program only involving those on the church payroll or just the pastor.
5. Do you recognize that everything you do and think is only possible because God has made you able to do that? (Acts 17:20)
6. We have no idea how God created our universe. We just see the results and thank Him. (Genesis 1:1) Wouldn’t you like to see how He did it?
7. Try to imagine that you are one of God’s angels. Normally, you stand around the throne of God in heaven awaiting assignment to do whatever God in His divine Majesty and love asks you to do. It is your greatest joy to do what He asks you to do.
8. Read Genesis 2:7. Now, try to imagine God saying: “I have a little job to do down on Planet Earth. I’m going to create a new kind of being called a *human!*” I’m sure that all the angels followed very closely and watched as God sculpted out—with chunks of clay, perhaps—a human being and then reached over and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life! Of course, this is only a very picturesque and beautiful way of suggesting that God created all the living, functioning parts of our bodies. Imagine all that God had to design to make it all work—all the structures and metabolic pathways and all the intertwined processes!
9. Look at what God told Moses as recorded in Genesis 1:26-31 about creating human beings. He intended for us to be as much like Himself as possible. More than that, He intended for us to assist in fulfilling His will for Planet Earth by being responsible and caring for all the creatures living here.
10. God made a perfect world for us. He intended for us to take care of all the other creatures on this earth. And He gave us a vegan diet. The diet was fruits, nuts, and grains. (Genesis 1:29)
11. Try to imagine what the Garden of Eden looked like. Fortunately, for those who are willing to follow God’s plan for their lives, one day we will see that garden, created anew even more beautiful than in its original condition.
12. What does it mean *to be like God*? Can we learn about God from nature? What additional things do we learn about God from His Word? If God is, as we know, a God of careful order, then we would expect to find order in His creation. Without order, science would be

impossible. And furthermore, love as we know it could not exist. More than that, God is a God of creativity. When we look at the immense variety of beautiful things that God has created, how could we doubt that?

13. But, God wants us to be like Him because He wants to relate to us. So, God is a God of relationships. And God intended for each of the parts of this world to relate to all of the others. Thus, with God's input this world becomes a "self-sustaining" unit. Plants take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen; animals take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide; and there are many other similar cycles in nature. In God's original creation, the lambs and the lions could lie down together safely. But, today, things are quite different. We have predators and prey; we have bigger fish that eat smaller fish which eat even smaller fish.
14. Have you ever felt homesick for the Garden of Eden? The little bit that we know about that garden whets our appetite for what is coming. That beautiful garden was also completely functional and designed to sustain human life forever. The gorgeous tree of life in the center of the garden was all that man needed in order to live forever.
15. So, what do you think the angels said after watching each step in this creative process and, finally, seeing Adam and Eve in love together after their marriage, living in the perfect environment of Eden? We do not have the response of the angels; but, God Himself saw that "It was good," "It was good," "It was good," and finally, "He was very pleased." (See Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,25,31.)
16. Unfortunately, we do not have any written or verbal materials preserved for us from the days of the Garden of Eden. We do not even have records from any time before the flood.
17. But, we do have some remarkable commentaries on our world and how it was created in places like Job 38-41 and Psalm 148. In these beautiful passages, we learn about some of the most interesting creatures that God has made.
18. What was God trying to say to Job in those four chapters near the end of the book? Does reading Job 42:7-8 help us?
19. Jesus Himself had some comments about life here on Planet Earth. See Matthew 6:26,28-30. For anyone who has spent some time in nature, it is obvious that the very best works of man do not compare with the glories of a beautiful flower or some of the other beautiful things such as the fish in the sea that God created. Each time we have the opportunity to see some of those glorious and beautiful things, it should make us long for the day when the Creator Himself will come back and welcome us into an even more beautiful environment.
20. Is it still possible to see God's goodness demonstrated in nature?
21. Sometime, try an exercise like this: Take a walk in nature and make a list of the things that you believe remind you of the beauties that God created here in the beginning. Then, list also any things that you observe that you believe have resulted from sin entering our world. What do these two lists teach you? It is quite amazing that after so many millennia of deterioration, our world is still very beautiful in so many places.
22. Read Genesis 2:19. Why do you think God asked Adam to "name" the animals? What did that involve? How long do you think that took? Today, we have millions of different creatures all the way down to millions and millions of species of insects and arthropods. One of the things that Adam learned from that experience was that while the creatures came two-by-two, there was no companion like himself to be his partner. Of course, the sequel is that God then put Adam into a deep sleep and took a rib out of him and made Eve.
23. So, what was God's original plan for Adam and Eve? They were supposed to be in charge of all of nature. Unfortunately, down through the ages, human beings have been responsible for destroying so many species that it is beyond count. Clearly, we have not cared for God's creation as we should have. Remember that it is still His creation.

24. God has given us the job of being stewards. What is a steward? A *steward*, in the biblical definition, is someone who cares for someone else's property. Often, the steward was allowed to get from that property the resources he needed on which to live. But, **he was expected not to misuse the property as a whole.**
25. Finally, it should be clear that Adam and Eve were unique in being given freedom and the ability to exercise moral choice. Did God intentionally make us in ways to help answer Satan's accusations which began in heaven? Why did God give us the ability to procreate—an ability which He did not give to Satan or the angels? Aren't you glad that Satan cannot reproduce himself; if he could, he probably would fill the universe with "little satans"?
26. But, as we know from reading Revelation 12:7-12, a war broke out in heaven. Because of envy and jealousy, Lucifer, the chief angel, tried to climb up in the hierarchy of heaven to make himself equal with God. Eventually, that effort led to the "war" in heaven which resulted in Lucifer/Satan and his one third of the angels being cast out.
27. That must have happened before our world was created because we know that as recorded in Genesis 3:1-5, Satan was there in the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden when Adam and Eve were created.
28. When Eve wandered away from Adam and found herself facing the tree of knowledge of good and evil and was deceived into taking the fruit and eating it, she managed to become the first human to follow Satan. Doubts about God as suggested by the lying serpent were followed by loss of trust in God and, finally, by fear of Him. When God came looking for them in the garden, they were afraid, recognizing their nakedness. The fig leaves were not enough to hide that nakedness. Weren't they already naked? What changed?
29. When Eve persuaded Adam to take the fruit, they took the steps that resulted in their expulsion from the garden. Try to imagine how they felt at that time. God warned them that now Eve would have pain in childbirth and that Adam would have to work hard to get the ground to produce the food, housing materials, and clothing that they would need.
30. So, stop and think for a moment. How does sin affect you each day in your daily activities? Do you deal with sickness? Death? Greed? Selfishness? Jealousy? Misunderstandings? Anger? Or, deceit? These have become very common occurrences in the human family. But, it was certainly not God's original intention when He created this world and humans.
31. Read Proverbs 22:2. In our world today, the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is widening. But, no matter how wide that gap, every human being—no matter where he lives or what his cultural background is—is still a child of God.

We are all woven together in the web of humanity. The evil that befalls any part of the great human brotherhood brings peril to all.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing** 345.1.

32. When asked by the scribes and Pharisees about the greatest commandment, Jesus paraphrased Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 and summed it up saying:

Matthew 22:37-40: ³⁷ Jesus answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the greatest and the most important commandment. ³⁹The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' ⁴⁰The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Matthew 22:37-40). New York: American Bible Society.

33. There is no question about the fact that all the way through the Scripture, there are multiple references to the fact that God is our Creator. For those of us living at the end of human history, Revelation 14:7 should remind us of the Sabbath commandment recorded in Exodus

20:11 and point unmistakably to our Creator, God.

34. We do not know exactly how many years it has been since creation. But, we do know that at least half of human history is recorded in the book of Genesis. Obviously, a great deal has been left out. It did not take long for greed, jealousy, envy, and hatred to develop among the members of God's family. The sad story recorded in Genesis 4:1-9 is just a reminder. So, today, we need to ask ourselves that important question that Cain asked God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The answer implied by God was: "Yes, absolutely!"
35. Every one of us will stand in judgment before the throne of God and before the entire universe.

Proverbs 14:31: If you oppress poor people, you insult the God who made them; but **kindness shown to the poor is an act of worship.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

God as our Creator has a claim on us that demands our entire life, including our worship and our service and care for others. As difficult and frustrating and inconvenient as it might be at times, we are, indeed, our "brother's keeper."—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, July 4.

36. What are the implications of being our *brother's keeper* in our daily lives? Do we think about others every day and wonder how we can reach out to help those less fortunate? Read Matthew 25:31-46. Could it be true that in God's judgment of us, the evidence about us that the entire universe will be examining will be based on the question: "How have we reached out to our fellow human beings?" Consider these quotations from Ellen White.

"God is love."... His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be. "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," whose "ways are everlasting," changeth not. With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Isaiah 57:15; Habbakkuk 3:6; James 1:17.

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 33.1-2.

If men would do their duty as faithful stewards of their Lord's goods, there would be no cry for bread, none suffering in destitution, none naked and in want. It is the unfaithfulness of men that brings about the state of suffering in which humanity is plunged....—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* June 26, 1894, par. 2; *Welfare Ministry** 16.3.

God has made men his stewards, and he is not to be charged with the sufferings, the misery, the nakedness, and the want of humanity. The Lord has made ample provision for all.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* June 26, 1894, par. 1; compare *Welfare Ministry** 16.1.

37. Could it be that the poverty which has afflicted so many in our world is largely our responsibility as the human family? What does that say about our stewardship?
38. Those who "have" are to share with those who "do not have." That was clearly God's instruction. But, that is to be done in a voluntary way by Christians reaching out to help others in their local community. We have failed to do that. It was never God's plan to have the care of the needy taken over by a government agency.
39. So, what does stewardship involve? *Stewardship* means a wise and careful use of the bounties that God has given us while at the same time sharing with those who do not have.
40. Try to imagine our world and how it might impact us if every person we met each day had a sign on him/her saying: "Created by God in His image and loved by Him"! No matter how ugly some may be in their exterior or even in their behavior, they are still God's children. Despite

the fact that we live in a broken world, the work of Christians is to bring a little bit of heaven into this world.

41. Read Psalm 8:3-4. If you have ever had the opportunity to observe the starry heavens on a clear night with a good telescope, what words might you have that would resemble those of David as recorded in Psalm 8?
42. We live in a world, at least in the more developed countries, that is being overrun with the concepts of evolution. There is a story told about Sir Isaac Newton who had a friend who was an atheist.

Because the friend did not believe in God, he preferred the position that the universe just happened. One day when Newton's friend was visiting him, Newton showed him a model of the solar system. The sun, planets, and moons were all in their proper place. The sizes of the planetary and lunar spheres were in proportion and revolved around the sun at their relative speeds. The atheist was impressed with the model. "It's intriguing," he said, "who made it?" "Nobody," said Newton, "It just happened."—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 13.

Albert Einstein is reported to have said:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.—[https://www.forbes.com/quotes/search/who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed/](https://www.forbes.com/quotes/search/who%20can%20no%20longer%20pause%20to%20wonder%20and%20stand%20rapt%20in%20awe,%20is%20as%20good%20as%20dead%3A%20his%20eyes%20are%20closed/) [Retrieved on April 15, 2019.][‡]

Many, many scientists, even many who do not question or who are not willing to say so openly, realize that our world demands an intelligent Maker. See books like Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* or his new book *Darwin Devolved*.

43. Some have speculated that maybe God made a mistake that prepared the way for sin when He first created Lucifer or maybe even when He created Adam and Eve. That is absolutely not true.

When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his **physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker**.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 15.1.[†]

44. Is God using you and your church to restore the image of God in humanity? In what ways is that happening?

God endowed man with so great vital force that he has withstood the accumulation of disease brought upon the race in consequence of perverted habits, and has continued for six thousand years. This fact of itself is enough to evidence to us the strength and electrical energy that God gave to man at his creation. It took more than two thousand years of crime and indulgence of base passions to bring bodily disease upon the race to any great extent. **If Adam, at his creation, had not been endowed with twenty times as much vital force as men [139] now have, the race, with their present habits of living in violation of natural law, would have become extinct.** At the time of Christ's first advent the race had degenerated so rapidly that an accumulation of disease pressed upon that generation, bringing in a tide of woe and a weight of misery inexpressible.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 3, 138.2-139.0; *FE** 22.2. Compare *HR*,* November 1, 1872, par.

2; *LHU** 64.3; *CC** 21.3; *HL** 45.2-3; *LDE** 289.4; *ML** 126.5-6; *OFC** 170.2.[†]

45. What do you think Ellen White had in mind, or perhaps what did God have in mind inspiring Ellen White, to say “vital force”? Is it something that maintains our lives? Some have suggested that it is a reflection of the number of mitochondria in our cells. Mitochondria are little energy producing organelles or powerhouses in each cell of our bodies.
46. Careful microscopic research has demonstrated that endurance athletes such as marathon runners have up to 200% more mitochondria than do non-athletes. When the level of energy is measured in such athletes, it is shown to be about 25% greater than among the non-athletes. So, what if Adam had 20 times the vital force that men now have? Did Adam have many more mitochondria?
47. What else can we learn about Adam and Eve?

As Adam came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of noble height, and of beautiful symmetry. He was more than **twice as tall** as men now living upon the earth, and was well proportioned.—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*,* vol. 3, 33.2.[†]

48. Imagine yourself standing next to Adam and reaching up to his waist! Imagine running a race with him in which he would go two or three times faster than the fastest athlete today.
49. Considering what we know about creation and the marvelous God who created us, how should we consider the evolutionary perspective in contrast? If evolution were true, we are nothing more than a lucky accident in time. And, ultimately, we have no moral responsibility to anyone.
50. We need to have a clearer picture of those to whom we relate each day. No matter what they look like or how they behave, it is important for us to reach out to others with the *agape* love that God has shown us.

The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 668.1.

51. In the beginning, God gave to Adam and Eve dominion over the animals, birds, and fish. How is that dominion being exercised in our day?
52. Are we allowed to use or abuse the bounties of nature in any way we want? Surely not!
53. The fact that we all descended from a single pair of human beings means that we are linked by genetics to every other human being.
54. Read Acts 17:24-26. Think of the ways in which we are related to other human beings and animals in our world even today.
55. So, should our theology—our understanding of God—be linked to our ecology—how we care about nature and our world? How much is included in our stewardship of all this earth?
56. What things are your church doing to reach out to the poor and needy? Are we helping them not just to get a meal for today, or even for this week, but also to find ways in which they can improve their lives through careful budgeting? Some literary skills? Improving their language skills? Or, even their job skills?

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