

Christian Education

The Family

Lesson #2 for October 10, 2020

Scriptures: Genesis 3:1-15; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-24; Ephesians 4:15; 1 John 3:18; Deuteronomy 6; Proverbs 1:8.

1. Think of all the instructions the children of God including the children of Israel were given as groups and as individuals down through the generations about educating and caring for their children. When we think about learning from God, aren't we all—ideally—supposed to be learning every day? What did Adam and Eve and others before the flood say to their children about why they were outside the garden? Did they talk to the angels standing there to prevent their entrance? What did the children think as they looked into the garden?

From the earliest times the faithful in Israel had given much care to the education of the youth. The Lord had directed that even from babyhood the children should be taught of His goodness and His greatness, especially as revealed in His law, and shown in the history of Israel. Song and prayer and lessons from the Scriptures were to be adapted to the opening mind. Fathers and mothers were to instruct their children that the law of God is an expression of His character, and that as they received the principles of the law into the heart, the image of God was traced on mind and soul. **Much of the teaching was oral; but the youth also learned to read the Hebrew writings; and the parchment rolls of the Old Testament Scriptures were open to their study.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 69.2.†

2. **Every professional educator will tell you that the earliest and perhaps most important education takes place in the home in the very early years.**
3. Try to imagine what that first family was like.

The system of education established in Eden centered in the family. Adam was “the son of God” (Luke 3:38), and it was from their Father that the children of the Highest received instruction. Theirs, in the truest sense, was a family school.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 33.1.

4. We have already studied the events described in Genesis 1-3:15. It is hard to imagine a story that started out with better circumstances and ended up so sadly. When Satan spoke through that snake or serpent, did the serpent have any choice in the matter? Did that snake voluntarily accept the control of Satan? Or, did Satan force himself on the snake?
5. We do not know much about the initial education Adam and Eve were given at their point of creation. Surely, God implanted in their brains the ability to walk and do many other things or the ability to learn extremely rapidly. How much information was implanted there? We have no idea. But, knowing what was coming, God must have spoken to them—and Ellen White details this—about the events which had already taken place in heaven including the rebellion of Lucifer and the results. Was the presence of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden a test? Or, a protection?

Angels of God visited Adam and Eve, and told them of the fall of Satan, and warned them to be on their guard. They cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. If one of them were alone, they would be in greater danger than if both were together. The angels enjoined upon them

to closely follow the instructions God had given them, for in perfect obedience they were safe, and this fallen foe could then have no power to deceive them. **God would not permit Satan to follow the holy pair with continual temptations. He could have access to them only at the tree of knowledge of good and evil.**—Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*,* vol. 3, 39.1.† Compare *EW* 147.1.

Since Satan was only allowed access to the couple at the tree of knowledge, we could rightly say that tree was a protection; only at that one site could Satan approach them.

The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime. As an illustration of its principles a model school was established in Eden, the home of our first parents.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 20.1.

6. Do Christian parents really understand the challenge they have accepted when they choose to have children? Do they understand their responsibility to educate them in worship? Christian instruction? Fellowship? Evangelism? And Christian service?
7. If more individuals or more families were actively witnessing and the children could see their parents doing that and what the results would be, would the children be more interested in witnessing? Why do our children not see active witnessing all the time?
8. Review what we know about the story of Cain and Abel.

Genesis 4:1-9: ¹ Then Adam had intercourse with his wife, and she became pregnant. She bore a son and said, “By the LORD’s help I have acquired a son.” So she named him Cain. ² Later she gave birth to another son, Abel. Abel became a shepherd, but Cain was a farmer. ³ After some time, Cain brought some of his harvest and gave it as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ Then Abel brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best parts of it as an offering. The LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering, ⁵ but he rejected Cain and his offering. Cain became furious, and he scowled in anger. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? ⁷ If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.”

⁸ Then Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out in the fields.” When they were out in the fields, Cain turned on his brother and killed him.

⁹ The LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

He answered, “I don’t know. Am I supposed to take care of my brother?”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 4:1–9). New York: American Bible Society.

9. How could that first family’s experience have deteriorated to that? That is about all we know about the results of that earliest family education.
10. Our Bible study guide encourages us to think of how it was in that very first family. Think of Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel, along with their sisters/wives living together, working together, the entire human population in one family. What did Adam and Eve say to their children about their earlier time in the Garden of Eden? How many questions that the young boys and girls asked were answered as, “The Creator, God, did that”? How much did God teach Adam and Eve about what was coming in the future? We, of course, have

the words in Genesis 3:15, suggesting that a Savior would, one day, be born. No doubt, Adam and Eve thought that their first son would be that Savior!

11. Eventually, that Savior was born to the virgin Mary. We know something about His education.
12. **In order to gain some idea of the ideal education, let us look at the example of Jesus Himself.** Read Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 1:46-55 which tell us about Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel and, later, Mary's visit with Elizabeth and the miraculous pregnancies of both.
13. Scholars generally agree that Mary was still a teenager when this happened to her. It was the hope and dream of every Jewish woman that she might be the mother of the coming Messiah. Almost every girl in those days was married by the time she was 20. More than that, Joseph already had at least six children, and maybe more, from an earlier marriage! (See Matthew 13:53-56.) **If you were God and you could choose any woman in the world to be your mother, whom would you choose?** And do not forget about the ancestors of this couple: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, just to mention a few! (Matthew 1:3-6) Do we know only good about each? Why did God preserve the record of so many of the bad deeds of the human ancestors of His Son? So, why do you think that couple was chosen? God does not make bad choices.
14. Try to imagine the scene when Gabriel appeared to Mary for the first time. As a teenager Mary, no doubt, lived with her parents. What did she say to them about what had happened to her? And what did she say to Joseph?
15. It seems that Joseph was doing everything he could to treat Mary in the best way possible. Did he believe her when she first told him what had happened? Both Mary and Joseph seemed to have been very faithful Jews. In order to avoid embarrassment, she went to see and stay with Elizabeth.
16. What do we know about the education of Jesus?

The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. **The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother's knee.** As He advanced from childhood to youth, He did not seek the schools of the rabbis. He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for **God was His instructor.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 70.1.[†]

He maintained perfect filial obedience; but his spotless life aroused the envy and jealousy of his brethren. His childhood and youth were anything but smooth and joyous. His brethren did not believe on him, and were annoyed because he did not in all things act as they did, and become one of them in the practice of evil. In his home life he was cheerful, but never boisterous. He ever maintained the attitude of a learner. He took great delight in nature, and **God was his teacher.**—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*,* July 30, 1896, par. 11.[†] Compare 5SDABC 1117.5 [which only has different punctuation].[‡] Compare *Youth's Instructor*, November 28, 1895, par. 5.

17. How do you suppose God actually instructed Jesus? How much did Jesus tell His human parents about His communications with His real Father? Compare the story of Samuel and Eli. (1 Samuel 3:1-18) Try to imagine how Samuel felt about that visit? So, how did God

communicate with Jesus?

18. However it took place, there must have been a very close relationship between Mary and her son Jesus. So often, when young people become teenagers, they want to rebel against their parents guidance. There is no hint of that in the story of Jesus.
19. But, in order to instruct children properly and well, the parent or teacher must come close to that child and be a companion and a communicator.

The true teacher can impart to his pupils few gifts so valuable as the gift of his own companionship. It is true of men and women, and how much more of youth and children, that only as we come in touch through sympathy can we understand them; and we need to understand in order most effectively to benefit.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 212.1.†

20. How much of what his parents teach him the child retains and adopts into his life depends to a great deal on how he feels about his parents.
21. Think of some of the instruction we get from Scripture about how to build strong family relationships, in fact, any kind of relationship. Read Psalm 37:7-9; Proverbs 10:31-32; 27:17; Ephesians 4:15; 1 John 3:18; Titus 3:1-2; and James 4:11.
22. In these few verses, parents are told to be patient, not to worry, not to become angry, but to trust in the Lord. Righteous people know what is kind to say. The truth which must be spoken must be spoken in the spirit of love. That love should not be just words and talk, but demonstrated in the life. Parents and children must learn to submit to rulers and authorities, not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, always being gentle toward others. They are not to criticize one another, especially not the husband criticizing the wife or vice versa.

Ephesians 6:4: And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—*King James Version*.*

Proverbs 31:10: Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.—*New King James Version*.*

23. Do we as Christian parents constantly seek to develop the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control? (See Galatians 5:22-23.)
 24. Mothers and fathers need to learn a lot of things, ideally before they become parents. See **Ephesians 5:22-26**; 1 Corinthians 11:3; **2 Corinthians 6:14**; **Romans 13:13-14**; 2 Peter 1:5-7; and **Philippians 4:8**. Parents are instructed to submit themselves to one another because of their reverence for Christ. While wives are encouraged to submit to their husbands, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. If husbands and wives did so, what a transformation would take place in Christian families. Christian young people should avoid marrying those who are not Christians. Orgies, drunkenness, immorality, indecency, fighting, and jealousy are not appropriate for Christians.
- 2 Peter 1:5-7:** ⁵For this very reason do your best to add goodness to your faith; to your goodness add knowledge; ⁶to your knowledge add self-control; to your self-control add endurance; to your endurance add godliness; ⁷to your godliness add Christian affection; and to your Christian affection add love.—*Good News Bible*.*

Philippians 4:8: In conclusion, my brothers and sisters, fill your minds with those

things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable.—*Good News Bible*.*

25. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses gave very clear instructions to the children of Israel and particularly to parents. They were to teach their children in virtually whatever they were doing. **Every activity was to be an educational opportunity.**

26. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9:** ⁴“Israel, remember this! The LORD—and the LORD alone—is our God. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶**Never forget these commands that I am giving you today.** ⁷**Teach them to your children.** Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. ⁸Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder. ⁹Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

27. In the days of Jesus, He talked about wearing those phylacteries.

28. Often in our societies today, fathers are away from home trying to earn a living. Thus:

The child’s first teacher is the mother. During the period of greatest susceptibility and most rapid development his education is to a great degree in her hands.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 275.1.†

Upon fathers as well as mothers rests a responsibility for the child’s earlier as well as its later training, and for both parents the demand for careful and thorough preparation is most urgent. **Before taking upon themselves the possibilities of fatherhood and motherhood, men and women should become acquainted with the laws of physical development...; they should also understand the laws of mental development and moral training.**—Ellen G. White, *Education** 276.1.†

29. There are a number of influences from each parent that affect children even before they are born.

30. **Later in their lives, children spend a great deal of time in school, and the teacher becomes an added model for the children.**

The work of co-operation should begin with the father and mother themselves, in the home life. In the training of their children they have a joint responsibility, and it should be their constant endeavor to act together. Let them yield themselves to God, seeking help from Him to sustain each other....

Parents who give this training are not the ones likely to be found criticizing the teacher. They feel that both the interest of their children and justice to the school demand that, so far as possible, they sustain and honor the one who shares their responsibility.—Ellen G. White, *Education** 283.2-3.

31. Why is it that so many young people today, even those raised in Adventist homes, turn away from their early training? Why do they want to rebel against their parents? Sometimes, it seems like in their process of rebelling against their parents’ guidance, some go even further into sin than those who grew up in non-Christian homes!

How frequently do parents and children share matters of the heart with each

other? Does the child feel safe to share hopes, fears, and troubles with his or her parents? Do the parents continually seek to affirm where the child is doing well, or does the child only hear criticism when he or she makes a mistake? Are the parents patient as the child stumbles along in learning new activities or responsibilities? Do the parents express empathy toward their children, remembering what it was like to be a child themselves? Do the parents gently guide the children to have a relationship with God? Or do they simply ramrod religious instruction instead? Are the parents secure and adult enough to admit to their children when they make a mistake and to ask for forgiveness? Or do they continually maintain a façade of perfection that the children see through anyway? Have the parents devoted time to give exclusive attention to their children? Do they play with their children? Has respect been cultivated and earned between both parent and child? Do the parents apply discipline in a calm, controlled environment, or impulsively in frustration or anger? Do they communicate words and actions of love and tender care to the child, so that the child knows that they love him or her unconditionally? And the list goes on . . .—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 27-28.

Both parents and teachers are in danger of commanding and dictating too much, while they fail to come sufficiently into social relation with their children or their scholars. They maintain too great a reserve, and exercise their authority in a cold, unsympathizing manner, which tends to repel instead of winning confidence and affection. **If they would oftener gather the children about them, and manifest an interest in their work, and even in their sports, they would gain the love and confidence of the little ones, and the lesson of respect and obedience would be far more readily learned; for love is the best teacher. A similar interest manifested for the youth will secure like results.** The young heart is quick to respond to the touch of sympathy.—Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education** 58.1.†

32. In Luke 2:41-50, we have just a few words about the time Jesus spent listening to and questioning the rabbis at that first visit to Jerusalem at the age of 12. Fortunately for us, Ellen White expanded considerably on what happened on that occasion.

At that day an apartment connected with the temple was devoted to a sacred school, after the manner of the schools of the prophets. Here leading rabbis with their pupils assembled, and hither the child Jesus came. Seating Himself at the feet of these grave, learned men, He listened to their instruction. As one seeking for wisdom, He questioned these teachers in regard to the prophecies, and to events then taking place that pointed to the advent of the Messiah.

Jesus presented Himself as one thirsting for a knowledge of God.... The doctors turned upon Him with questions, and they were amazed at His answers. **With the humility of a child He repeated the words of Scripture, giving them a depth of meaning that the wise men had not conceived of. If followed, the lines of truth He pointed out would have worked a reformation in the religion of the day. A deep interest in spiritual things would have been awakened; and when Jesus began His ministry, many would have been prepared to receive Him.**

The rabbis knew that Jesus had not been instructed in their schools; yet His understanding of the prophecies far exceeded theirs. In this thoughtful Galilean boy they discerned great promise. They desired to gain Him as a student, that He might become a teacher in Israel. They wanted to have charge of His education, feeling that a mind so original must be brought under their molding.

The words of Jesus had moved their hearts as they had never before been moved by words from human lips.... The youthful modesty and grace of Jesus disarmed their prejudices. Unconsciously their minds were opened to the word of God, and the Holy Spirit spoke to their hearts.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 78.4-80.2.†

33. There is a story told about an older African-American pastor living in the southeastern part of the United States who was preaching a sermon about this event in the life of Christ. He suggested that as the discussion progressed, one of the scholars must have turned to Jesus and asked: "Son, how old are you?" And the pastor suggested that Jesus might have hesitated briefly and then replied: "Well, on my mother's side, I am twelve years old; but, on my Father's side, I am older than time!" (See Micah 5:2.)
34. Did any of those leaders later become followers of Jesus? (See Acts 6:7; 15:5.)
35. Surely, we all know that Jesus was the very best Teacher of all time. But, **do we recognize that He was also the very best Student?**
36. What was special about His student days? **Remember, first of all, that He was taught by God Himself and the angels. He had a natural curiosity and a hunger for any knowledge about God. He was an active learner and not just a passive learner.** He absorbed knowledge and thought it out carefully. He discussed His ideas with others, listening to their judgments, criticisms, and suggestions.
37. In what kind of "family school" did you grow up? What did you learn from your parents? Were there negative things which you later had to discard? Did you do a better job with your children than your parents did with you? How can we ask God to help us do the very best possible job with our children?

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