

Christian Education

The Church and Education

Lesson #9 for November 28, 2020

Scriptures: Jeremiah 29:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:6-8; Luke 4:18-23; 10:30-37; Matthew 5:14-16; 7:7.

1. What is the role of the church in education? From the very first beginnings of the Christian church when gatherings were in private homes and even in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem, **the purpose of those church gatherings was to welcome and embrace and educate new church members. It was a place where serious and relevant discussions could take place and people could grow in their knowledge of God.**
2. Are we afraid to ask serious questions in church?
3. Based on all of Scripture, a biblical definition of *faith* stated so well so many times by one of God's best modern friends, Dr. A. Graham Maxwell, is as follows:

Faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a Person well-known. The better we know Him, the better the relationship may be. [We cannot say, "will be" because we remember the story of Lucifer!]

Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God based on the more-than-adequate evidence revealed to be willing to believe what He says as soon as we are sure He is the One saying it, to accept what He offers as soon as we are sure He is the One offering it, and to do what He wishes as soon as we are sure He is the One wishing it, without reservation, for the rest of eternity. Anyone who has such faith would be perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven.

***Faith* also means that, like Abraham, [Genesis 18:22-33] Job, [Job 42:7-8] and Moses, [Exodus 32:5-14; Numbers 14:11-25] God's friends, we know God well enough to reverently ask Him, "Why?"** [Sentence in brackets was also stated parenthetically many times by Dr. Maxwell. Bible texts in brackets are added.][†]

4. God is just waiting for us to ask Him all of the most important questions in the universe. Would we dare to ask Him why He allowed sin? In order to have love, we must have freedom—and that includes the freedom to rebel as Lucifer/Satan did.
5. People flocked to Jesus to be healed; but, they also flocked to Him because He did not speak as the scribes and Pharisees did. He used simple stories to illustrate spiritual truths.
6. Are there any stories that immediately come to mind when you think of the way Jesus taught His disciples and followers, trying to help them overcome their natural prejudices and bigotries?

Luke 10:30-37: ³⁰ Jesus answered, "There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. ³¹It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side. ³²In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan who was

travelling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. ³⁴He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he told the innkeeper, 'and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.' "

³⁶ And Jesus concluded, "In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?"

³⁷ The teacher of the Law answered, "The one who was kind to him."

Jesus replied, "You go, then, and do the same."—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Luke 10:30–37). New York: American Bible Society.

In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 497.1.†

This was no imaginary scene, but an actual occurrence, which was known to be exactly as represented. The priest and the Levite who had passed by on the other side were in the company that listened to Christ's words.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 499.1.†

7. They were listening to Him to try to catch Him saying something that they could use against Him, especially to kill Him or to make the common people turn against Him.

The Levite was of the same tribe as was the wounded, bruised sufferer. All Heaven watched as the Levite passed down the road, to see if his heart would be touched with human woe. As he beheld the man, he was convicted of what he ought to do; but as it was not an agreeable duty, he wished he had not come that way, so that he need not have seen the man who was wounded and bruised, naked and perishing, and in want of help from his fellow-men. He passed on his way, persuading himself that it was none of his business, and that he had no need to trouble himself over the case. Claiming to be an expositor of the law, to be a minister in sacred things, he yet passed by on the other side.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald,** January 1, 1895, par. 5. Compare *Welfare Ministry* 47.1 [which has punctuation differences only]. [Note that three of the four men in this story were Levites!][†]

8. So, what should we do today? The church needs to be a place where genuine dialogue can take place, resulting in true education and leading people to a more genuine and deeper commitment to the truth.

The story is told of a rabbi who looking into the sleepy eyes of the young men who sat in his classroom, asked: "Students, when does one know when the night is ended and the day has begun?"

Several of the students cautiously raised their hands. "Rabbi," one asked, "is it when you can tell the difference between a fig tree and an olive tree?"

"No."

Another student raised his hand: “Rabbi, is it when you can tell the difference between a sheep and a goat?”

After listening to a host of answers, the rabbi announced, “Students, one knows the night has ended and the day has begun when you can look at a face never before seen and recognize the stranger as a brother or sister. Until that moment, no matter how bright the day, it is still the night.”—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, November 22.

9. Seventh-day Adventists have more light available to them than any other group in history! We have unusual beliefs which are clearly supported in the Bible on our understanding of these truths: (1) The nature of man and the state of the dead, (2) the Sabbath, (3) 1844 and the judgment, and (4) the great controversy and all that it says about God—just to mention a few of our unique beliefs. How good are we at introducing these ideas to friends and neighbors in a winsome way? What cultural and social biases are holding us back? True Christianity must raise us above these problems. The people you meet on the street and the customers or patients or friends you meet each day are beings for whom Christ died. Think of the price He paid for them. So, what are you willing to do to try to help them?

10. As we look about us, it is obvious that things are not getting better. Light seems to be fading, and darkness taking over. So, what should we do about all of the darkness?

Matthew 5:14-16: ¹⁴ “You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.”—*Good News Bible.**

11. How can we become better “lights”? Do people praise God because of you?

12. Try to imagine yourself sitting on a hillside near the Sea of Galilee as Jesus addressed those words to His followers. There must have been a huge crowd. What did *darkness* mean to them? They were living under Roman occupation in a militarized society. Romans were everywhere, threatening them with terrible death, maybe even crucifixion if they did not do what the Romans demanded.

13. And yet, Jesus was calling them to be lights, to be merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. How would that sound to someone living in the times of Jesus? What did they understand it to mean?

14. If we are to be true Christians, then we must start by being disciples of Jesus. Try to imagine yourself along with other men and women following Jesus every day as He was preaching and teaching and healing.

15. One and one-half years into His ministry, Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth and was invited to speak in the synagogue.

Luke 4:16-24: ¹⁶ Then Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath he went as usual to the synagogue. He stood up to read the Scriptures ¹⁷and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind;
to set free the oppressed

¹⁹ and announce that the time has come
when the Lord will save his people.”

²⁰ Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All the people in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him, ²¹as he said to them, “This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read.” [All of the Jews believed that this was a Messianic prophecy.]

²² They were all well impressed with him and marvelled at the eloquent words that he spoke. They said, “Isn’t he the son of Joseph?”

²³ He said to them, “I am sure that you will quote this proverb to me, ‘Doctor, heal yourself.’ You will also tell me to do here in my home town the same things you heard were done in Capernaum. ²⁴I tell you this,” Jesus added, “prophets are never welcomed in their home town.”—*Good News Bible*. *†

16. Jesus must have been crowded by people asking for help almost all day long every day. Those who work in a service industry can imagine what that must have been like. And yet, He never became impatient. He lived out the ideals of the kingdom. He was always forgiving, full of grace and love. The disciples realized that to be a disciple of Jesus is a lifelong commitment.

The Saviour’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 822.2†

17. Many of the people in Jesus’s day had to work hard to make a living. But, somehow, many of them found time to come, see, and hear Jesus heal and preach. And those who became disciples of Jesus must have sensed a commitment to mission, a purpose, not just to survive but also to really live as Jesus did, following in His footsteps, ministering to those in need, sharing the good news of the gospel.

Albert Einstein, often regarded as the father of modern physics, wrote:

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.”—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, November 25.

18. For those who have had an opportunity to get a good education, it should be apparent that the more we learn, the more we realize how complex our world is. Scientists and researchers of all types are constantly seeking answers to ever more complex questions

and issues.

19. And what about Christians? What should we know about the search for truth and answers to our questions?

Jeremiah 29:13: “You will seek me, and you will find me because you will seek me with all your heart.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Matthew 7:7: “Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Acts 17:26-27: ²⁶ “From one human being he created all races on earth and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live. ²⁷He did this so that they would look for him, and perhaps find him as they felt about for him. Yet God is actually not far from any one of us.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Psalms 25:5: Teach me to live according to your truth,

for you are my God, who saves me.

I always trust in you.

Teach me to live according to your truth,

for you are my God, who saves me.

I always trust in you.—*Good News Bible*.*

John 16:13: “When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears, and will tell you of things to come.”—*Good News Bible*.*

John 17:17: “Dedicate them to yourself by means of the truth; your word is truth.”—*Good News Bible*.*

20. **A careful look at the most outstanding people in the Old Testament and the New Testament will reveal that those were people who did not hesitate to ask questions. They were constantly seeking more and better answers.** For example, look at the whole book of Habakkuk. Also consider:

Ecclesiastes 3:11: He has set the right time for everything. He has given us a desire to know the future, but never gives us the satisfaction of fully understanding what he does.—*Good News Bible*.*

21. Scripture deals with the fundamental, existential questions which affect all of us: (1) Who are we? (2) Why are we here? (3) How should we live? (4) What happens when we die? (5) Why do evil and suffering exist? Christian education must deal with these questions satisfactorily. **And only God has the answers.** Therefore, Scripture must be our source.

1 Thessalonians 2:6-8: ⁶We did not try to get praise from anyone, either from you or from others, ⁷even though as apostles of Christ we could have made demands on you. But we were gentle when we were with you, like a mother taking care of her children. ⁸Because of our love for you we were ready to share with you not only the Good News from God but even our own lives. You were so dear to us!—*Good News Bible*.*

22. Try to imagine what one of those small groups meeting in the city of Thessalonica was like

with Paul leading out. They prayed, sang, celebrated the Lord's supper, and struggled to better understand God and life.

23. We do not know exactly what kind of schools were built up around Christian ideals; but, certainly, the small Christian groups must have been the place where the young people got their information.

Romans 12:2: Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.—*Good News Bible*.*

24. Don't these words suggest to you that Paul was concerned about what the young people were learning? Communities are the settings for spreading the gospel. When we share with others and they share with us, we understand one another's struggles and pain, and we experience God's healing and seek to grow in our knowledge of God.
25. But, think of what the gospel promises us: Not only is it healing from our pain and "hurts," but also it is a renewal in the image of Jesus Christ and an eternal home in the earth made new. Could there be any better news than that?
26. **But good news is to be shared.** People are watching us. What do they see? What kind of witnesses are we?
27. As we know, the Jews really believed that the Messiah was going to deliver them from Roman oppression. They had no idea that His main goal was to deliver them from sin!

Christ disappointed the hope of worldly greatness. In the Sermon on the Mount **He sought to undo the work that had been wrought by false education, and to give His hearers a right conception of His kingdom and of His own character.** Yet He did not make a direct attack on the errors of the people. He saw the misery of the world on account of sin, yet He did not present before them a vivid delineation of their wretchedness. **He taught them of something infinitely better than they had known.** Without combating their ideas of the kingdom of God, He told them the conditions of entrance therein, leaving them to draw their own conclusions as to its nature. The truths He taught are no less important to us than to the multitude that followed Him. We no less than they need to learn the foundation principles of the kingdom of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 299.3.†

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1850. Stevenson recounts how one night, as his nanny was getting him ready for bed, he slipped over to the window and saw a captivating sight. It was a lamplighter, going from one gas lamp to the next. With childish delight, he called his nanny over to him and said, "Look at that man! He's punching holes in the darkness!" What role has God given you in bringing light and love to your community? If you are not sure, invite several church members to sit with you and discuss what you might accomplish together.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, November 27.

28. How can we reach out to the people around us—our neighbors, our associates at work, and others? God has offered to partner with us in that task. Have you thought of the implications of having God as a partner? How can we address serious questions and get them answered?
29. Our world is awash with information overload, much of which is not true. How do we pick

out what we really need to know? If we are to be lights in the world, we need all the help we can get.

30. **Why is it that so many people who come to the Adventist Church soon fade away and stop coming?** Are they being socially accepted into the church? Do they feel welcome? Is your church full of small groups that associate together but do not reach out to anyone outside their groups? Can we get the new members to fall in love with Jesus?
31. Of what value is it to have all the doctrines lined up correctly and even to be prepared to explain them if we do not treat those who come to our churches in a kind and accepting manner? There is an ancient Indian proverb that says: "There is no point in giving a man a rose to smell after you cut off his nose."
32. We have already said that the plan of salvation is the best news that anyone could have. Do we make it seem good to people attracted by what we say and what we do?
33. Why did Paul cast the demon out of that woman in Philippi? She had been bothering him for a couple weeks already. But, she kept saying: "These men [Paul and Silas] are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." (Acts 16:17, *KJV**) Unfortunately, even if it is the right message but if it is given with the wrong spirit, it will drive people into Satan's camp rather than bringing them to God. How often do people accept or leave the church based on how well they are treated by the church members?
34. We may be fortunate in having the best answers and explanations of Bible doctrines of any group. But, **do we chase people away by the way we treat them?** What good is that?

1 Corinthians 12:7-11: ⁷The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all. ⁸The Spirit gives one person a message full of wisdom, while to another person the same Spirit gives a message full of knowledge. ⁹One and the same Spirit gives faith to one person, while to another person he gives the power to heal. ¹⁰The Spirit gives one person the power to work miracles; to another, the gift of speaking God's message; and to yet another, the ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not. To one person he gives the ability to speak in strange tongues, and to another he gives the ability to explain what is said. ¹¹But it is one and the same Spirit who does all this; as he wishes, he gives a different gift to each person.—*Good News Bible*.*

1 Corinthians 12:28-13:1: ²⁸In the church God has put all in place: in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets, and in the third place teachers; then those who perform miracles, followed by those who are given the power to heal or to help others or to direct them or to speak in strange tongues. ²⁹They are not all apostles or prophets or teachers. Not everyone has the power to work miracles ³⁰or to heal diseases or to speak in strange tongues or to explain what is said. ³¹Set your hearts, then, on the more important gifts.

Best of all, however, is the following way.

^{13:1} **I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell.**—*Good News Bible*.*[†]

35. Christians are supposed to be known for their love.

John 13:34-35: ³⁴ "And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵If you have love for one

another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”—*Good News Bible*.* [What does it mean by the term *to love as Jesus loved?*][‡]

36. So, what is a Christian? How many times were the early church followers of Jesus called *Christians*?

Acts 11:19-26: ¹⁹ Some of the believers who were scattered by the persecution which took place when Stephen was killed went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, **telling the message to Jews only.** ²⁰**But other believers, who were from Cyprus and Cyrene [Libya], went to Antioch and proclaimed the message to Gentiles also, telling them the Good News about the Lord Jesus.** ²¹The Lord’s power was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. [We do not even know those people’s names.]

²² The news about this reached the church in Jerusalem, so they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw how God had blessed the people, he was glad and urged them all to be faithful and true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and many people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. ²⁶When he found him, he took him to Antioch, and for a whole year the two met with the people of the church and taught a large group. **It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.**—*Good News Bible*.*^{†‡}

37. The number of occurrences of the word *Christian* in the Bible is only three. (Acts 11:26; Acts 26:28; and 1 Peter 4:16)
38. So, those early Christians, if there were not called *Christians*, what were they called? *Disciples*! And while it is easy for a person to self-designate himself as Christian, to be a *disciple* means one is a hands-on learner and apprentice of Jesus Christ. Are we learning the skills necessary to spread the gospel to others around us? Are we making a life career of witnessing for Jesus?
39. We need to understand very clearly that in order for the gospel message to get to the world, we need a lot of disciples. And Jesus did not intend for the disciple terminology to be only applied to His original group. Ananias, Tabatha, and Timothy were also called *disciples*. (Acts 9:10,36; 16:1)
40. Remember that Matthew 28:19 (NKJV*) tells us: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” Are we doing that? The church has been called a hospital for the spiritually hurting. Some people want the church to be a kind of university for those in ignorance and spiritual darkness. But, a hospital and a university taken together would be a good place for disciples in the 21st century. Are we scholars in residence? Do we study our Bible seriously on a regular basis? Do our Sabbath school classes lead us to ask questions and to think of what we really believe? Has church become a little boring? What can we do to, once again, make it alive? We may be very comfortable with our small group of friends in our church; but, are we reaching out to others?

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