

God's Mission My Mission

God's Mission to Us: Part 1

Lesson #1 for October 7, 2023

Scriptures: Genesis 3:9-15; 28:15; Exodus 29:43,45; Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:14-18; 3:16; 14:1-3.

1. *Mission* from a Christian standpoint finds its origin and purpose in God Himself. **Ephesians 4 tells us that before this world was created, God had in mind a mission as to what He would do with this earth and the people who live here.** It did not begin with Paul, or Jesus Christ, or Moses, or Abraham, or even Adam.
2. In a broader sense, the term *mission* can apply to embassies that are a part of some country's efforts to reach out to other countries. When we talk about the American Embassy or the American Mission in African countries, for example, *embassy* and *mission* mean almost the same thing. And what is the purpose of those "missions"? It is to reach out, in whatever way possible, to better relate the United States of America to people of that country. In the same way, **the Christian mission is for the purpose of trying to better educate people about God, our Creator, and His efforts to reach out to each one of us.**

Genesis 1:26-27: ²⁶ Then God said, "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small." ²⁷**So God created human beings, making them to be like himself.** He created them male and female.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Genesis 1:26-27). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] So long as they [Adam and Eve] remained loyal to the divine law, their capacity to know, to enjoy, and to love would continually increase. They would be constantly gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the immeasurable, unending love of God.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 51.1.[‡]

God created Adam and Eve with the intention that they would grow to be like Him. He placed them in a perfect garden with ideal circumstances, hoping that all would go well. However, God's number one characteristic is love; He does not want robots. He wants people who can love Him in return. In order to love, one must also have the freedom not to love or even to hate. So, God has to allow for what we call *freedom* or *free will*. That is a very risky proposition. See the handout entitled, *Love* on Theox.org:

https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_Love_16.pdf

Genesis 2:16-17: ¹⁶He [God] said to him [Adam], "You may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, ¹⁷except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

3. Because God wanted His children to love Him back, He felt it was necessary to allow Satan to have access to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden so humans had free choice. So, how did God allow Satan to have access to Adam and Eve? At “the tree.”

[EGW:] The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. **Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree.** Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 53.3.††

4. **The tree was not placed in the garden primarily to test or tempt Adam and Eve. It was placed there as protection by limiting the access that Satan could have to our first parents. Satan could not follow them wherever they went,** trying to tempt them at every corner. All they had to do to avoid Satan’s temptations was to stay away from that tree! The great controversy had already started, and God knew what Satan was capable of doing! How many Christians understand this point? Very few!

Genesis 3:4-5: ⁴ The snake replied, “**That’s not true;** you will not die. ⁵God said that, because he knows that when you eat it you will be like God and know what is good and what is bad.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] That moment changed God’s original plan and purpose for the newly created planet Earth. **The mission of salvation, which had been designed “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), had now to be implemented.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, October 1.††§

[EGW:] The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. **God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency.** So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 22.2.††

5. Try to imagine the discussions that went on between God and the heavenly angels right after Adam and Eve sinned. What did the angels expect to happen next?
6. How do you think God felt as He watched Eve and Adam eat that forbidden fruit? God knew what possibilities lay before them. Did the angels warn them? Had anyone or

anything ever died anywhere in the universe? **Remember that evil started in heaven next to the throne of God!**

7. What does a good parent do with rebellious children? Think of God's situation. God has an entire universe of beings that love and adore Him. They are all anxious to do His bidding. Why should He care about this earth, one tiny "blue marble" that is the only spot in the universe that is in almost total rebellion against Him? And yet, we see that over the last 6000+ years, God has done almost everything one can think of to try to reach out to us. Almost at the very end of the Bible in Revelation 14:6-7, we are told that God is still trying to reach out and warn us of what is coming.

Revelation 14:6-7: ⁶ Then I saw another angel flying high in the air, with an eternal message of Good News to announce to the peoples of the earth, to every race, tribe, language, and nation. ⁷He said in a loud voice, "Honour [*sic-Br*] God and praise his greatness! For the time has come for him to judge. Worship him who made heaven, earth, sea, and the springs of water!"—*Good News Bible*.*[‡]

Genesis 3:9-15: ⁹But the LORD God called out to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden; I was afraid and hid from you, because I was naked."

¹¹ "Who told you that you were naked?" God asked. "Did you eat the fruit that I told you not to eat?"

¹² The man answered, "The woman you put here with me gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³ The LORD God asked the woman, "Why did you do this?"

She replied, "The snake tricked me into eating it."

¹⁴ Then the LORD God said to the snake, "You will be punished for this; you alone of all the animals must bear this curse: from now on you will crawl on your belly, and you will have to eat dust as long as you live. ¹⁵I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring's heel."—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Of course, God knew exactly where they were. Dominated by fear, Adam and Eve were the ones who needed to see what was going on. But they also needed to be confronted so they could understand the dreadful consequences of their sin. Satan also needed to be defeated. For that, God then began to present His mission: the plan of redemption (*see Gen. 3:14, 15 [as quoted immediately above]*)—the only hope of "reconciling the world to Himself" (*2 Cor. 5:19, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, October 1.^{‡§}

[BSG:] If Scripture, as a whole, is about God's unrelenting outreach to humanity, Genesis 3:9 could be considered the question that drives it. Genesis 3 is the narrative of the tragic attempt made by Adam and Eve, in a spirit of self-assertion and determination, to be independent of God. This

chapter is also a reminder of the reality of sin and its consequences. The consequences of Adam and Eve's choice led them to hide themselves from God. God's first response to the plight of humanity came in the form of a **question addressed to Adam: "Where are you?" Understanding the purpose of this question is essential to the understanding of the intent of the entire drive of Scripture.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 13.††

Genesis 3:9: But the LORD God called out to the man, "Where are you?"—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] To start with, "Where are you?" is not a theological question. It is a missiological one. This question reveals that, despite their wrong choice, God has not forsaken Adam and Eve. Human rebellion does not subtract anything from God's desire to intimately relate with humans. God still loves and seeks His wandering children.

The question—"Where are you?"—the first one the Bible attributes to God, speaks more of a condition than a location. Thus, the question was not intended to find out where exactly Adam and Eve were hiding away from God. God never asks questions as a means of gathering information. His omniscience is a source of limitless knowledge, even knowledge of what does not yet exist. Being omniscient, God knew exactly where Adam and Eve's hiding place was, what they had done, and what condition they were in.

Adam's absence at his usual meeting place with God was clear evidence that something was wrong. Therefore, the question God asks Adam, in Genesis 3:9, is not "Where are you?" in reference to Adam's geographical location. **The question "Where are you?" was about relationship: "Where are you relationally?"** With the first consequences of sin revealed in the previous verses, God's question was primarily intended to make Adam and Eve think about their relationship with God. The question was intended to make them think about the consequence of their disobedience to God. Adam and Eve were being given the opportunity to examine themselves and acknowledge their guilt. God's question is the equivalent of the following line of inquiry: "Why are you not at our usual rendezvous? **What has happened to our relationship that you are attempting to keep a distance from Me?** What is the meaning of these fig leaves you are covering yourselves with?" Satan's false promise to Adam and Eve was that, through disobedience, they would become like gods. In other words, sin would improve their lives. We know how that turned out. Adam and Eve ended up naked instead of becoming like gods. Their solution to their new plight was to sew fig leaves to hide their nakedness. If this solution had solved their situation, they would not have sought to hide from the presence of God. Rather, they would have confronted God for not wanting their ultimate well-being.

Moreover, “Where are you?” was the earnest cry of a missionary God whose anguished inquiry betrays divine awareness of the gulf that had been created between Him and humans. The question was also His invitation for His lost children to return to a relationship of love and trust with Him. In light of the promise in Genesis 3:15, God’s question bears a promise of hope. Although sin cast its shadow over the divine plan for humanity on account of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, God’s plan has not been defeated. **In the midst of judgment, the promise of a Redeemer is made.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 13-14.††

8. After the fall, came the flood; and then, the tower of Babel. How do you think things were looking for God’s mission? Did it look like God was losing? And like Satan was winning?
9. Abraham’s visit to Egypt and the decree forbidding the Egyptians to associate with foreigners initially seemed like a defeat for God but made it possible further down in history for the Israelites to live in Egypt without just melting into Egyptian society and disappearing completely from history. The Israelites grew from a small group into a nation, living in Egypt but in isolation from the Egyptians! (Read carefully *Patriarchs and Prophets* 130.1-131.2. See Romans 8:28.)

Genesis 39:2,21,23: ²The LORD was with Joseph and made him successful. He lived in the house of his Egyptian master....

²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and blessed him, so that the jailer was pleased with him.... ²³The jailer did not have to look after anything for which Joseph was responsible, because **the LORD was with Joseph and made him succeed in everything he did.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

10. At first, the Egyptians were thankful for Joseph and the miraculous preparations that he arranged for their preservation. But, when the Egyptians rose up and threw out their foreign rulers, a new Pharaoh that “knew not Joseph” forced the children of Israel into slavery. After about 200 years, God called Moses to rescue His people out of Egypt.
11. In the days following the exodus, God chose a new and more direct way of trying to relate to His children. In a kind of sandbox demonstration, God laid out the plan of salvation for them in the tent-tabernacle along with its ceremonies.

[EGW:] **The sacrificial offerings, and the priesthood of the Jewish system, were instituted to represent the death and mediatorial work of Christ. All those ceremonies had no meaning, and no virtue, only as they related to Christ, who was himself the foundation of, and who brought into existence, the entire system. The Lord had made known to Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the ancient worthies, especially Moses, that the ceremonial system of sacrifices and the priesthood, of themselves, were not sufficient to secure the salvation of one soul.**—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*,* December 17, 1872; *Spirit of Prophecy*,*€ vol. 2, 10.3; *SDA Bible Commentary*,*¶ vol. 7, 474.1.††

Exodus 29:43-46: ⁴³ [The LORD said through Moses:] “There I will meet the people of Israel, and **the dazzling light of my presence will make the place holy.** ⁴⁴I will make the Tent and the altar holy, and I will set Aaron and his sons apart to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵**I will live among the people of Israel, and I will be their God.** ⁴⁶They will know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of Egypt so that I could live among them. I am the LORD their God.”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

12. In light of the stories that we have looked at already, how has your life been impacted by God? God has attempted again and again to draw His children closer to Him.

Isaiah 46:9-10: ⁹ [The LORD said:] “Remember what happened long ago; acknowledge that I alone am God and that there is no one else like me. ¹⁰ **From the beginning I predicted the outcome;** long ago I foretold what would happen. I said that my plans would never fail, that I would do everything I intended to do.”—*Good News Bible*.*†‡

13. Finally, more than five hundred years later, it was necessary for God to take the ultimate step and come in person to correctly represent Himself to human beings.

Matthew 1:18-23: ¹⁸ This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so **he made plans to break the engagement privately.** ²⁰While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. ²¹She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus—because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² Now all this happened in order to make what the Lord had said through the prophet come true, ²³ “A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel” (which means, “God is with us”).—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] “**God with us.**” Immanuel. **God had dwelt among His people within the sanctuary, and now He dwelt with them in the physical person of Jesus of Nazareth.** Indeed, with the birth of Jesus, God presented in concrete ways His continuous desire to be with us in nature and mission: the Son of God was fully human and fully divine, and He is the One who affirmed, “ ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me’ ” (*John 14:6, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, October 4.†‡§

John 14:6: Jesus answered him, “**I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.**”—*Good News Bible*.*†

John 1:14-18: ¹⁴ The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.

¹⁵ John spoke about him. He cried out, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'He comes after me, but he is greater than I am, because he existed before I was born.' "

¹⁶ Out of the fullness of his grace he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another. ¹⁷God gave the Law through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is the same as God and is at the Father's side, he has made him known.—*Good News Bible*.*

14. How has the humanity of Jesus Christ and all that He did as a human being affected your personal life? Without a doubt, **the life and death of Jesus was God's ultimate revelation**. Everything He did during His entire life and especially during the three and half years of His ministry was a representation of the truth about God.

Colossians 1:15,19-20: ¹⁵ Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God. He is the firstborn Son, superior to all created things.... ¹⁹For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. ²⁰Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.—*Good News Bible*.*

[EGW:] **Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed.... In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father.**—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him** 338.4.†

15. Then, at the end of His life, Jesus agreed to die that awful death, not from crucifixion or the beatings or blood loss, but rather, from separation from His Father who is the only Source of life. That is what is known as the second death, the ultimate death that sinners will die in the end. (See *The Desire of Ages* 753-754.)
16. But, while His disciples thought that the end had come and there was nothing more for them, in fact, the real mission was just beginning. And what did Christ expect His disciples to do?

Matthew 28:18-20: ¹⁸Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹**Go**, then, to all peoples everywhere and **make them my disciples: baptize** them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and **teach** them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."—*Good News Bible*.*†

17. Notice that He promised that while asking us to spread the truth about Him throughout the entire world; **He would be with us always**.

18. If you personally went out and tried to witness to your neighbors and friends, do you think you could rely on the Holy Spirit to guide you? Has God ever failed in anything that He set out to do? Does the presence of sin in the universe indicate that God has failed? Is it heresy even to ask that question? Some would think so!

19. But, Jesus still was not done! During that last evening that He spent with His disciples before His arrest, persecution, and death, He said:

John 14:1-3: ¹ “Do not be worried and upset,” Jesus told them. “Believe in God and believe also in me. ²There are many rooms in my Father’s house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. ³And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am.”—*Good News Bible*.*

20. Notice that He said once again: “I will come back and take you **to be with me**.”[†] What still needs to happen before that can take place? How much work still needs to be done?

[EGW:] The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God’s grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted.... Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men.... And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—Immanuel, “God with us”. [sic]—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Age** 26.3.‡ [We will never be able to praise Him or thank Him enough!][‡]

21. Are we prepared to work with God in hastening that wonderful day?

[BSG:] Weekly Challenges. Throughout this quarter you will be invited to engage intentionally in God’s mission. This will be an opportunity to see and experience the God of mission at work in your life. Take advantage of this moment for personal reflection and be ready to share what you have learned with your class.... Additionally, the Challenge Up will encourage you to increase your involvement in God’s mission.

Challenge: Pray every day of the coming week for God to open your heart to be part of His mission.

Challenge Up: Learn the name of someone in your life you don’t already know—a neighbor, coworker, shopkeeper, bus driver, janitor, etc. Begin praying for him or her each day.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, October 5.‡

[EGW:] Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy.... But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence.... So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe and be assured that My presence will be with you even there. Labor in faith and confidence; for the

time will never come when I will forsake you. I will be with you always, helping you to perform your duty, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, sustaining you, giving you success in speaking words that shall draw the attention of others to heaven.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 29.1.‡

[BSG:] Think about what it means that God’s first words to fallen humanity were not “What have you done?” Or “Why have you disobeyed Me?” Instead the first words were, “Where are you?” What comfort should this truth give us regarding God’s intention for us and our loved ones?

Think about what it means that God Himself, in the person of Jesus, came to this world in order to save us. Christ on the cross was the ultimate manifestation of God as a God of mission. What does this tell us about His character?

The mission belongs to God. Therefore, He will equip and empower people for the task. In light of this reality, when you look at the challenges of worldwide evangelization, how can you deal with feelings and attitudes of inadequacy or fear?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, October 6.‡

22. God did not give up on His mission; He was determined to redeem and to reconcile His lost children. Even today, as so much evil has exploded in our world, God refuses to give up on us.

23. As we have already mentioned, **the ultimate revelation of God’s ministry, His character and His love, happened when Jesus came to this earth.**

[BSG:] Through the different aspects of His ministry, Christ not only announced God’s reign with prophetic urgency, but He also embodied it by giving God’s redemptive mission a face, a voice, and hands. By healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead, **Christ demonstrated God’s power to fully reverse the curse of the Fall.** By so doing, Christ reformulated the concept of God’s love so that people could understand it, experience it, and be drawn to God. The substitutionary death of Christ was God’s ultimate way of seeking to reconcile alienated humanity to Himself (*John 3:16*). Christ’s ministry and sacrifice are mission par excellence!—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 15.†§

24. The life of Jesus Christ was “substitutionary” in the sense that His coming and living and dying made it clear what choices we need to make to experience God’s salvation. His life and His death give us a clear choice: We can live lives as close to His pattern as possible and live forever; or, we will die the death that He died, separated from God the only Source of life and be dead forever.

25. The last words of Jesus recorded in the Bible, spoken to John and written down in the book of Revelation, are: “Yes, I am coming soon.” (*Revelation 22:20, NIV**)

26. **God has guaranteed that His mission will be successful. The peace and harmony that once existed throughout the universe will be restored when sin and sinners cease to exist and the righteous will again enjoy the fruit from the tree of life.**

Revelation 22:2: [The river of the water of life is] flowing down the middle of the city's street. On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.—*Good News Bible*.*†

27. Did the tree of life do that when it was located in the Garden of Eden?

28. Let us remember that:

[BSG:] Every attempt to cover our own nakedness before God is just as unwise as Adam and Eve's attempt to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Every humanly designed solution to deal with sin and guilt is utterly inadequate and worthless. The fig leaves of our good works, reputation, and church titles do not suffice as spiritual coverings. Only God can supply us with the adequate spiritual covering. The only lasting solution is the covering He offers to us through Jesus. God does not cover our sin and guilt. He takes them away first and then covers us instead with Christ's righteousness.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 16.‡

Zechariah 3:1-5: ¹In another vision the LORD showed me the High Priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD. **And there beside Joshua stood Satan, ready to bring an accusation against him.** ²The angel of the LORD said to Satan, "May the LORD condemn you, Satan! May the LORD, who loves Jerusalem, condemn you. This man is like a stick snatched from the fire."

³ Joshua was standing there, wearing filthy clothes. ⁴The angel said to his heavenly attendants, "Take away the filthy clothes this man is wearing." Then he said to Joshua, "I have taken away your sin and will give you new clothes to wear."

⁵ He commanded the attendants to put a clean turban on Joshua's head. They did so, and then they put the new clothes on him while the angel of the LORD stood there.—*Good News Bible*.*†

[BSG:] **Just as God went out seeking Adam and Eve, He also is out seeking us, not to punish us but to offer us reconciliation for the sake of saving us from the judgment our sins deserve.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 16.†‡

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Modified: October 6, 2023