



CHECK YOUR MAP AND PROGRAM YOUR GPS (Sermon)

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Introduction

The Bible, wrote Ellen G. White, “is a chart or guidebook to the human family to show them the way to heaven” (*Selected Messages*, Bk.1, pages 15). Today we can add that it acts as a GPS using satellites to inform us of where we are and where we are going.

An inexperienced pilot who had just learned to fly was on his way to a meeting. Knowing almost nothing about navigation or how to lay out a flight plan, he was soon lost. He almost hit a mountain. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the lights of a runway appeared. He ran out of fuel almost the moment his plane touched down.

Then the pilot discovered he had landed in the wrong country—a country at war with the one he was supposed to land in. He filed a new flight plan for a neighboring country, and when in the air, he switched to his original destination. Lost again, he radioed the airport he was headed for. Suddenly a huge airliner appeared and signaled him to follow. The airliner could not go slow enough compared to his small plane, so it circled around him, and led him to the airport.

Later, when he left, an experienced pilot told him, “Set your compass to X heading, fly for X hours, then look straight down.” When he arrived home, the inexperienced pilot exclaimed, “Guess what, I did what you told me - and the airport was right there!”

When you follow a compass reading, or program your GPS to the correct destination, you always arrive where you want to go.

Key Text- Psalms 119:105: “By your words I can see where I’m going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path” (*The Message*).

I. The Compass and GPS for a Christian

No one can function adequately unless they know what they are doing and where they are going.

- Would you board a ship to set sail for a distant port without a captain or pilot, or adequate navigation equipment on board? How long would that shipping firm stay in business?
- If a physician prepares to operate without proper training or ignores the necessary instruments and procedures, would you want to be the patient?

- If a retailer has limited inventory on the shelves and no one working in the store seems to know the prices of anything, how long would that store remain in business?

“Read the Scriptures,” proclaimed the Early Church theologian Augustine of Hippo. “Read them so you will not be a blind man leading the blind. Read the Holy Scriptures, because you will find in them instructions on what to do and what to avoid. Read them, because they are sweeter than honey and more nutritious than any other food.”¹

Ellen G. White recorded a classic statement about the Bible that is worth careful consideration:

“We all need a guide through the many strait places in life as much as the sailor needs a pilot over the sandy bar or up the rocky river, and where is this guide to be found? We point you . . . to the Bible. Inspired of God, written by holy men, it points out with great clearness and precision the duties of both old and young. It elevates the mind, softens the heart, and imparts gladness and holy joy to the spirit. The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of life. Take it as the man of your counsel, the rule of your daily life” (*Testimony Treasures*, Vol. 2, p. 96).

A. The Bible is our source of authority

There are certain non-negotiable truths in Scripture that are objective requirements of the Lord and not subject to anyone’s opinions, feelings, likes, or dislikes. The final authority for decision-making in the Christian life must be the Scriptures, not a person’s own opinion.

For instance, when Job found himself in an assortment of difficulties not of his own making, four friends showed up — each with a personal opinion of why all this was happening. Each claimed to have gotten their personal solution to Job’s problems from what they considered authoritative sources.

1. Eliphaz claimed as his authority a mystical experience: “Now a word was secretly brought to me, and my ear received a whisper of it” (Job 4:12).
2. Bildad claimed he got his solution from the teachings of church tradition: “For inquire, please, of the former age, and consider the things discovered by their fathers” (Job 8:8).
3. Zophar claimed that his personal ideas of right and wrong were the deciding factor: “He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For they would double your prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves” (Job 11:6).

Another friend, Elihu, was closer to the correct source of authority. He claimed to have an innate intuition placed inside him by the Lord: “But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding” (Job 32:8). That may

¹Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 38.

represent his incomplete understanding of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, he made an incorrect application to Job's case.

As far as the Lord was concerned, these so-called friends had not tapped into the correct sources of spiritual authority: "The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right'" (Job 42:7).

B. The Bible as a source of authority

A well-known text points to the Bible as the authoritative spiritual guide, map, or GPS: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psalms 119:105).

(You could have a speech choir read Palms 119:9-16 at this point in the sermon or have the congregation participate in a responsive reading.)

The Bible is different from works of literature or scholarship. The Apostle John recorded the procedure of biblical inspiration: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him . . . and He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John" (Revelation 1:1).

The Bible describes itself as:

1. Creative (Hebrews 11:3).
2. Sustaining (Colossians 1:17)
3. Delivering (Exodus 6:6, 7)
4. Healing (Matthew 8:8)
5. Saving (Acts 13:26)

C. How the Bible presents itself as the map and GPS for the believer

1. The Bible uses symbols to describe itself

- a. Living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12)
 - 1) The universe was created through the word (Psalms 33:6, 9)
 - 2) The word is continually authoritative (Hebrews 1:1, 2)
 - 3) Healing comes through the word (Psalms 107:20)
- b. An authentic source (Psalms 12:6)
- c. Cleansing water (Ephesians 5:26)
- d. Light (Psalms 119:105)
- e. A spiritual weapon (Hebrews 4:12)

2. Bible study affects people and events

- a. It conveys eternal life (John 6:51)
- b. It brings satisfaction into human life (Jeremiah 15:16)

- c. It is designed to give counsel, information on doctrine, furnish reproof, furnish guidance for correction, and provide instruction about the Christian way of life. (2 Timothy 3:16)

3. Bible study conveys spiritual blessings

- a. Spiritual growth and maturity (1 Peter 2:2)
- b. Conquest of sin (Psalms 119:9, 11)
- c. Ability to abide in Christ (John 15:4, 7)
- d. Study of the Bible allows the Holy Spirit to make biblical information effective in our lives. (Ephesians 6:17)

Ellen G. White writes:

“No other study will so ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration as the study of the Scriptures. This Sacred Word is the will of God revealed to men. Here we may learn what God expects of the beings formed in His image. Here we learn how to improve the present life and how to secure the future life. No other book can satisfy the questionings of the mind and the craving of the heart. By obtaining a knowledge of God’s word, and giving heed thereto, men may rise from the lowest depths of ignorance and degradation to become the sons of God, the associates of sinless angels” (*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 24).

II. How the Bible Functions as a Spiritual Resource

A. Daily living

The Bible is more than a doctrinal textbook. The Bible is designed to tell us about everyday life and how we as believers should respond to everyday events and experiences.

It is a spiritual resource for instruction about life in general and principles of daily living in particular. It presents real life stories about people who faced the same kinds of issues we all face. Bible study allows you to meet yourself in the Bible and discover the best ways to handle whatever issues we face in a spiritual way.

Some famous historical events you can read about in any history book are not even mentioned in the Bible. For instance, secular history records the story of an historic battle in the town of Qarqar in modern-day Syria (853 BC). The battle is famous because it was the first time in recorded history that people groups such as today’s Arab nations are mentioned. That battle is not even mentioned in the Bible. Even famous historical figures such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar are not directly named in the Bible.

On the other hand, the biblical writers include many human interest items such as the fact that Eglon, a king of Moab, was so fat that it cost him his life (Judges 3:22), and that the Israelite king Asa had gouty feet (2 Chronicles 16:12).

The writer of Second Kings notes that Jezebel, the pagan queen of Israel, tried to seduce the rebel leader Jehu: “She made herself up—put on eyeshadow and arranged her

hair—and posed seductively at the window” (2 Kings 9:30, *The Message*). That is a human-interest type of detail that doesn’t appear in most history books.

The same writer notes that Elisha was bald and didn’t like people to remind him about it (2 Kings 2:23).

B. Ability to change lives

The story is told of a young man named Alfredo who lived beside a river in the Amazon jungles of Peru in South America. His wife was attending Adventist Bible studies, and it made Alfredo angry. He actually beat her up a number of times, because she insisted on going to church.

He wanted nothing to do with this Adventist religion. Adventists did not use cocaine, nor did they get drunk on the local liquors, two of Alfredo’s much-enjoyed habits.

One day, when Alfredo was sitting on the riverbank thinking about his situation, he saw a riverboat hit a rock and capsize. The people on the boat were thrown into the water. A few managed to get to the bank but many drowned. Alfredo and some other bystanders managed to save several people. At one point Alfredo swam around underwater to see if he could find any more survivors.

On yet another attempt, Alfredo saw a black-colored object floating in the water. Thinking it was the head of a passenger, he swam to it only to discover that it was a book. When he looked more closely, he saw that it was a Bible, the very book he hated so much. He wondered how that book had managed to float so far downstream. Everything else from the boat was soaking wet, but the Bible was completely dry! We know, of course, that the Lord kept that Bible dry specifically to open the door for Alfredo’s salvation.

Decidedly impressed, Alfredo went home and, with tears in his eyes, told his wife the story. “You are right,” he remarked. “This is the Word of God.” Today he is a faithful Seventh-day Adventist.

The fast-flowing waters of that Amazonian river are a witness to the ways the Lord uses the Bible as a testimony to unbelievers of its power to change lives.

Scripture pours out a flood of light, pushing back spiritual darkness and revealing the truth about a loving, powerful God. Millions of people can testify to the power of the Word of God and what it has done for their lives. All who surrender themselves in faith and obedience to the God revealed in the Bible will experience just what a dramatic change can occur.

Conclusion

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is very clear in its belief about the value and authority of the Bible. Fundamental Belief No. 1 says: *“The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”*

There is a famous poem written about the Bible:

“Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith’s door,
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

“‘How many anvils have you had,’ said I,
‘To wear and batter all these hammers so?’
‘Just one,’ said he, and then with twinkling eye,
‘The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.’

“And so, I thought, the Anvil of God’s Word
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The Anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone.”

—Attributed to John Clifford

Are you feeling lost and disoriented in confusing and apparently disoriented social or lifestyle surroundings? Pick up the Divine Road Map/GPS called the Bible. Study it and use it as your Guide of Life. It will lead you to the Heavenly Land at the end of life’s road.