

The Church and Education



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 10:30–37; Matthew 5:14–16; Luke 4:18–23; Jeremiah 29:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:6–8.

MEMORY VERSE: “We were not looking for praise from you or anyone else. We are apostles of Christ. When we were with you, we could have used our authority to make you do things. But we were very gentle with you. We were like a mother caring for her little children. Because we loved you, we were happy to share God’s Good News with you. But not only that, we were also happy to share even our own lives with you” (1 Thessalonians 2:6–8, ICB).



The church is a place where people can grow in their knowledge of God and His plan for their lives.

THE BIBLE SHOWS US people who wish to know God with all their hearts. They want to understand His plan for their lives. The Bible also shows us again and again that the church is a place where people can talk about important topics. The church also is a place where people can grow in their knowledge of God and His plan for their lives.

Sometimes we are afraid to ask questions. But we should not be. The Bible shows us that people ask questions to understand God better. In the same way, people tell stories in the Bible to help each other think about what is important. Jesus used a lot of stories to teach Bible truth to His followers.

The church is a place where we learn. So, it also must be a place where real conversation can happen. We must make the church a safe place for each person to grow and understand God and His plan for their lives.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (Luke 10:30–37)

A rabbi, or Jewish teacher, asked his students, “How do you know when night ends and the day begins?”

Several students raised their hands to answer. “Rabbi,” one student asked, “maybe when we have enough light to help us see that the fig tree is different from the olive tree?”

“No,” the rabbi said.

“Another student raised his hand: “Rabbi, maybe when we have enough light to help us to see that a sheep is not a goat?”

The rabbi listened to many different answers. Then he announced, “Students, you know the night has ended and the day begins when you can look at a face you have never seen and understand that stranger is a brother or sister. Until then, it is night even if the day is very bright.”

Read the story Jesus tells in Luke 10:30–37. What lesson is Jesus trying to teach with this story? What should this lesson tell us about what must be part of any Christian education?

God has given us Seventh-day Adventists a lot of Bible truth. He has shown us Bible truth about what happens when we die, the Sabbath, 1844, God’s work as our Judge, and the worldwide war between good and evil. Most of the Christian religions do not understand these teachings. These truths are very important. But what good do they do us if we are not kind to people? Or if we hate other people? Or if we allow our feelings to cause us to behave as if we are better than some people?

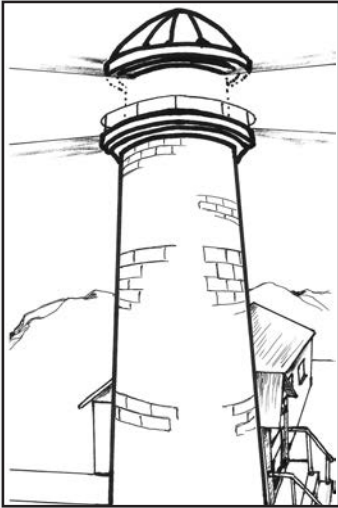
Christian education must help us become better people. We must see people the same way Jesus sees them. Jesus died for each one of us on the cross. He accepted the punishment for our sins. He paid for us all with His blood. If we look to the Cross, then we will see the value and worth of every human. Then we will love them the same way God does. Christian education must include this teaching.

Are there people in your country that everyone feels it is OK to dislike? Why, as a Christian, must you show these same people love?



What good does Bible truth do us if we are not kind people?

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE (Matthew 5:14–16)



Christian education must include teaching our students to be lights on this earth.

Everywhere we look, things keep getting worse on this earth. This planet is becoming a very dark and evil place. We do not need to look too far from home to see the evil. We, too, have our own difficult experiences with pain, sickness, and suffering on this dark earth. We get sick. Our loved ones die. We watch couples divorce and families fall apart. It is hard to understand many of the evil things that happen in life.

Yes, bad things happen. But in the middle of all these ugly things and the spiritual darkness around us, we hear Jesus' words in our hearts:

“ ‘You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven’ ” (Matthew 5:14–16, NIV). What do these verses teach us about how we must live? As Christians, how do our actions and behavior change the way that other people see God?

Make a picture in your mind of the group that Jesus talks to. They sit on a hillside by the Sea of Galilee under the hot sun. How do you think the people understood Jesus' words? The people know all about light and darkness. Sure, they have a lot of darkness to be afraid of. The Romans control their country. The Jews are scared of the Romans.

The Romans are everywhere. The people who sit on the hillside know that anyone who dares to make trouble will end up dying on a Roman cross.

Even so, here is Jesus, asking the Jews to live as light. To show mercy. To have holy hearts and minds. To be makers of peace. Jesus' words show us that Christian education must include teaching our students to be lights on this earth. Christian education also must teach students how to make good choices and decisions. Our choices must show people that God lives and that He is love.

What are ways that we can show other people that God lives and that He loves them?

LIVING AS JESUS' FOLLOWERS (Luke 4:18–23)

If the church wants Christian education to be a success, we must start with Jesus. Jesus invited people to follow Him. Jesus trained His followers to work for God. Jesus gave them chances to help people. Jesus showed them how to love people and care for them too. Daily Jesus showed His followers how life will be better for everyone when we love each other as brothers and sisters.

Read what Jesus says in Luke 4:18–23. What is Jesus' message to each of us as His followers?

For three years Jesus' followers watched Jesus, their Teacher. Jesus showed His followers how to live the important rules of His kingdom. Jesus announced these rules in His first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. A synagogue is the place Jewish people pray and worship God. Jesus showed His followers that they must forgive. They must show mercy and love. Being a follower of Jesus is not always easy. We must separate from the things on this earth. Often, we may feel lonely. Life may be hard at times. Jesus taught His followers another important lesson about following Him. We are followers for life, not just for one day.

"Jesus' command for His followers . . . includes all believers to the end of time. . . . God gives the Good News to each person who follows Jesus. We must share the Good News. God gives work to everyone who accepts Jesus' gift of life. God asks them to save other humans. God started the church to do this work. When we join the church, God expects us to be co-workers with Jesus."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 822, adapted.

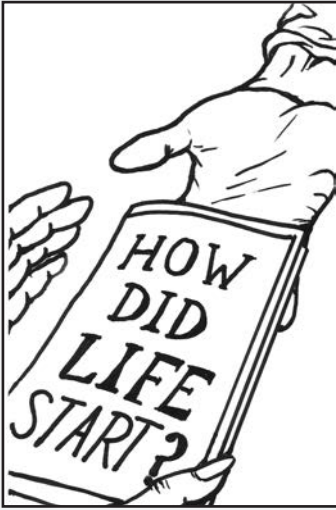
As Jesus' followers today, we must make sure that Jesus always is the center of our fellowship and our worship. It is good to remember that Jesus "invented" our following Him. True, the rabbis, or Jewish teachers, of the day had followers. But Jesus invited men and women to follow Him. The rabbis never believed that being with Jesus was more important than all their rules. But that is just what following Jesus meant.

As Jesus' followers, we respect all people. We work together to make the church a place where all people can grow. Christian education must include this idea too. We follow in Jesus' footsteps by helping people in need and sharing the Good News.



Jesus showed us that life will be better for everyone when we love each other as brothers and sisters.

SEARCHING FOR BIBLE TRUTH (Jeremiah 29:13)



Christian education helps people to understand the Bible answers to the questions they have about life.

Scientist Albert Einstein wrote: “The important thing is not to stop asking questions. We must always want to know and learn new things. Then we will feel surprised and excited when we think about this life, the life beyond this one, and what is real. We should try to understand a little bit of these mysteries every day. Do not ever lose your wish to know and learn new things. That wish is holy.”—Adapted.

Life is filled with mystery. Modern science has shown us that life is more surprising and wonderful than we ever thought possible. And if that is true for nature, then it is more so is for spiritual things.

Read Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7; Acts 17:26, 27; Psalm 25:5; John 16:13; and John 17:17. What do these verses teach about the search for truth and for answers?

The Bible is filled with stories about people who are very much the same as we are. They, too, have questions, fear, hopes, and joys. They also search for truth. They want answers to life’s most difficult questions.

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has put thoughts of the forever [everlasting life] in man’s mind, yet [but] man cannot understand the work God has done from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NLV). What is Solomon saying in this verse? Some people write the Hebrew word “**olam**” as “forever.” But other people write it as “having an understanding about the past and the future.” So, this verse shows us that God has put in our hearts and minds a wish for everlasting life. God put in all human hearts a wish to think about the “big questions” about life.

Of course, the Bible has a big part in the answer to these questions. Who are we? Why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die? Why is there evil and suffering on the earth? People have been asking these questions since men started to make a record of this earth’s history. God blesses us when we help people understand the answers to some of these questions now. Christian education helps to show people these answers in God’s Word, the Bible.

Why must the Bible be important in our answering the big questions about life?

SHARING OUR LIVES (1 Thessalonians 2:6–8)

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:6–8. What is Paul saying in these verses? How can we show this rule in our schools and churches? Why is it important that we do so?

All around us we see that communities are attacked and broken. We live in an age in which the Bible teaching about the church is needed more than ever. As Matthew 18:20 (ERV) says: “‘Yes, if two or three people are together believing in me, I am there with them.’” The New Testament church started in the homes of believers. The church and Christian community grew out of these meetings. Here, in these home churches, the Christian community met in small groups. They prayed, sang, and celebrated the Lord’s Supper together. They also learned and shared Jesus’ words with each other.

These worship groups also became the first church schools. There, new members first learned about the Bible and the new life in Jesus. The church cared deeply about the education of its new members, as we see from Paul’s writings. In Romans 12:2 (ERV) Paul writes, “Don’t change yourselves to be like [the same as] the people of this world, but let God change you inside [your heart and mind] with a new way of thinking.” The New Testament Christians soon learned that the faith community, or church, is the best place to follow the Good News. In the church, we have reason to sing louder, to pray harder, and to be more caring. When we hear Christians talk about God’s love, we understand that God has been good to us. When we hear Christians talk about their pain, we understand God’s healing in our lives. We feel a new wish to be examples of God’s mercy and healing.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:6–8, Paul says that the Good News is everything. The Good News shows us the Cross. The Good News is the promise of the Second Coming. There is no better news on the earth. That is why Paul spent his life sharing the story about Jesus. And that is why we should too.

Paul also tells us in these verses that the best way to understand the Good News is to share it with people and to share life with them. Remember, people watch us carefully to see if our lives show the message of mercy found in the Bible.

Think about how you live. What do people see about Jesus when they look at your life?



The best way to understand the Good News is to share it with people and to share life with them.



Jesus told the people what they needed to do to enter His kingdom.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus wanted to fix all the problems that false education caused. Jesus wanted to give people a correct understanding about His kingdom and who He was. But Jesus did not do this by making an attack on the wrong beliefs of the people. Jesus saw the pain caused by sin. But He did not show the people that they were awful. Jesus taught them about something better than what they knew. Jesus did not fight with them or argue against their ideas about God’s kingdom. But He told them what they needed to do to enter His kingdom. Jesus let them make up their own minds about His rules and what those rules showed them about His kingdom. The Bible truths that Jesus taught are just as important today as they were back then. We, too, need to learn the basic rules for the kingdom of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 299, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Writer Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1850. Stevenson tells a story from his childhood. One night, his nurse was getting him ready for bed. Stevenson looked out the window. He saw a man with a lamp. The man was lighting each gas lamp on the street. With childish joy, Stevenson told his nurse to come to the window. “Look at that man!” he said. “He’s punching holes in the dark!” What job has God given you to bring light into your community? Maybe you are not sure about the job God gave you. If you are not, ask several church members to talk with you. Talk about what job you can do together to help your church “punch holes in the dark.”
- ② Look at the life of Jesus on this earth: He was God who came to live with us. He lived on our earth. He suffered, He laughed, He cried with us. This helps us to remember that God asks us to care for people around us. How will you do this? Remember, the church is the place where we work together with God to share His love with people. How can you work together with the young people in your church to help you do this work?
- ③ As Seventh-day Adventists, we must teach God’s truth to other people. How can and should the local church teach these truths to people in the community? At the same time, how can we make the church a safe place where people can talk about the difficult questions they have about life?