Program Help Outline

Song Service
Theme Song
Worship in Prayer
Welcome
Mission Emphasis
Personal Growth Time
Class Time

Call to Commitment:
The superintendent may invite attendees to review the four goals of Sabbath School orally. The teacher may invite class members to apply the topic of the lesson study to their lives, and invite guests to study for baptism. Ask your pastor for guidance.

Lesson Focus:
The Revelation of God encourages participants to be open to God’s revelation of Himself to them. Find a presenter who has a personal nature collection that can be shared. Or show nature slides to emphasize how God reveals Himself in nature. Consider giving each participant a seashell, pressed leaf, dried or silk flower, or other bit of nature.

Lessons for Life:
Encourage participants not to accept and apply the world’s standards. Find a presenter and an illustrator: artist, cartoonist, or someone who does well in Pictionary game illustrations. Or use PowerPoint® photos.

Song Service
SDA Hymnal: “Love Divine”; “Take My Life and Let It Be”
Church Hymnal: “The Glory Song”; “Baptize Us Anew”
He Is Our Song: “Calvary’s Love”; “My Heart Overflows”
Theme Song: “Bring Me Back, Lord”

Scripture
John 14:9; 1 Samuel 16:7

Welcome
How is your faith this morning? Great!

How many of you have ever reached a plateau? You could do nary another lap in the pool, the bathroom scales were stuck, the rungs on the corporate ladder had ended, your sales figures had bottomed out? Or perhaps your situation is unique. Yet you admit that frustration is rather low on the totem pole of challenges that people face in this world. Let’s remember our own lack of progress when we are given a divine appointment to nurture and lend a hand to others who are stuck, locked in, circumvented, challenged, and harassed by Satan. Our program today encourages you in this area.

**Lesson Focus: The Revelation of God**

Ellen White began her little book entitled *Steps to Christ* with this simple, yet profound line: “Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love” (p. 9). What does this statement mean to you?

It’s interesting that the word “revelation” is derived from the Latin *revelare*, which means to take away a covering, to uncover or unveil something that is hidden, or to make known that which was once a secret.

The meaning fits God’s interaction with us so well because God is in some ways covered or hidden from us. You can’t look up in the sky and see God sitting up there on His throne, although you know He is there.

Years ago when some Soviet cosmonauts were orbiting the earth, they joked about how they looked out in space but didn’t see God.

Theologians like to talk about two kinds of revelation: general, or natural, revelation and special revelation. General revelation is universal and accessible to all humans everywhere. By this means God reveals to people what He is like—for example, through the beauty and harmony of the natural world. What in nature speaks most clearly to you? *(Accept responses, and then share items in a personal nature collection or nature slides/video.)*

Let’s read together Psalm 19:1-3. *(Read.)* This is talking about general revelation. Whether you are living in a tropical rain forest or in a desert or on a small island or amid rough and cold mountains, the beauty of nature is there. There are the wonders of heaven—the sky, the sun, the moon, the clouds, and the stars—all declaring the glory of God.

Although we can learn quite a bit about God from general revelation, that revelation is still limited. There are just some things that it cannot tell us. Let’s recite together John 3:16. Someone might be able to look out in nature and believe that there’s a loving God, but nothing in nature—general revelation—tells me that this God sent His only Son to die for my sins. Let’s read aloud together 1 Thessalonians 4:16. *(Read.)* Again, there’s nothing in general revelation that teaches me that one day the dead are going to be resurrected. So, as you can see, there are a lot of things that we learn from the Bible that we simply can’t learn from nature, things that the heavens don’t declare to us. We need special revelation, and we get it from the Bible.

We need both general, or natural, revelation and special revelation. Each affirms the other. The Bible says that God is a loving God, and we can look in nature and see evidence of that love. Nature gives us glimpses of the character of God that the Bible covers more in depth. Together these forms of revelation offer a clear view of the God
we love and serve.

Lessons for Life

Illustrator/PowerPoint®: (As the presenter speaks, an illustrator draws, or a photo is put on the screen.)

Presenter: When William Miller was about 62 years old, he was described as being of medium height and a little overweight, with kind blue eyes, light-auburn hair, a strong speaking voice, and distinct pronunciation. In addition, his head shook as though he had the palsy. His clothing was very plain and ordinary.

For just a minute, focus on the illustration of this description (by [illustrator’s name] or “on screen”). Think about how you would receive William Miller, a stranger to you, if he came to our church and introduced himself as the guest speaker for a program that was very important to you.

Illustrator/PowerPoint: (Illustrator begins to draw their version of the average female television evangelist or a photo is put on screen.)

Presenter: We’re not going to give names to this illustration. We’re not here to bash television evangelists. We are asking you to consider silently whom you would be most liable to welcome and whose counsel you’d be most likely to accept. For just a couple of minutes, please silently do our own self-check for style prejudice, perhaps gender prejudice, perhaps age prejudice, perhaps “petty” prejudice. (You could have appropriate instrumental music in the background. Then remove the second illustration.)

Timothy Cole, a pastor in Lowell, Massachusetts, had heard of William Miller’s wonderful work and the outstanding results. Although he had never met William Miller, he invited him to come and preach in his church. He went in person to the train depot to meet this man. He had heard that Miller wore a camel cloak and a white hat. Now just imagine Timothy Cole as he stood there on the platform closely inspecting everyone who got off the train and not seeing anyone who fit his image of Miller.

Finally the last person lumbered off the train, a shaking old man—wearing a white hat and a camel cloak. No! No! This can’t be William Miller, Timothy Cole thought. And I imagine that he had to restrain himself from shouting those words. Hoping against hope that it would not be true, he asked, “Are you William Miller?” Upon receiving an affirmative nod, Cole sighed and said, “Well, follow me.”

And he walked on ahead, leaving William Miller to keep up as best he could. Cole was embarrassed that he had invited a man of Miller’s appearance to speak in his church. His thoughts undoubtedly ran in this direction: Surely this man could know nothing of the Bible. Surely his lecture would be his own fantasies.

They must have had some kind of light supper. Cole appeared to be kicking himself for having to deal with what he was sure was a mistake. William Miller, certainly having been shown that he was unwelcome, probably tried doubly hard to control his shaking hands and not spill his food and drink.

After the meal Timothy Cole announced, “I suppose it’s about time to go to the church.” Again he raced ahead, leaving William Miller to bring up the rear. He showed his guest speaker to the platform and without introducing him took a seat with the congregation. Miller was on his own before a strange congregation, with no support from the minister who had invited him.
William Miller read a hymn. After it was sung, he prayed and read another hymn, which also was sung. He felt uncomfortable at being left on the platform alone, but he went ahead and read his text: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13, KJV).

And then he launched into his sermon, forgetting all the unpleasantness as he warmed to his topic. He spoke with authority, proving all his points from the Scriptures. Timothy Cole listened for about 15 minutes. Seeing that nothing was presented except the Word of God and that the Scriptures were opened in a manner that did honor to the occasion, he took his seat on the platform.

We can hope that Timothy Cole made the proper apologies to William Miller for the callous way he had treated him. Apparently William Miller accepted the apologies, for he was a true Christian gentleman, and he did return to preach at Timothy Cole’s church in the summer. A wonderful revival followed, and in late July Cole wrote to Miller that about 60 people had joined the church.

This entire story is a true account of an experience by one of our Adventist heritage figures. It’s recorded by Sylvester Bliss in his book Memoirs of William Miller (pp. 135, 136).

This is more than an interesting story, because it leads us to think about how Christians relate to people inside and outside the church.

(Lead a Bible-based discussion about valuing people as Christ does. Chosen texts might include 1 Timothy 5:21 and Hebrews 13:1, 2. Bible characters could include the widow who gave her mite offering, blind Bartimaeus, and Mary Magdalene. Conclude by commenting that our leaders have taught us many valuable lessons, some quite unexpected.)

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