



2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 3 God's Call to Mission

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read Memory Text:

- “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 NIV84).

What power? What kind of power? From who does the power come? What is the purpose of the power?

Are their conditions on receiving this power? What are those conditions?

In the book *The Desire of Ages* it describes the power this way, what do you think?

- Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on **conditions**. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not **surrender the soul** to be **guided** and **controlled** by the divine agencies. **We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us.** Through the Spirit God works in His people “to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Philippians 2:13. **But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves.** This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. **The power of God awaits their demand and reception.** This promised blessing, claimed by faith, **brings all other blessings in its train.** It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive. (*The Desire of Ages* 672)

What are the conditions to receive the Holy Spirit? That we surrender self—our selfishness, our self-promotion, our own agenda, our need to do things our way, or seeking to make ourselves successful. We must be willing to be taught, to be lead, to be instructed, corrected, guided, molded, reshaped, healed, cleansed, renewed.

But what does it mean that the Holy Spirit uses us—does that mean we become pawns, puppets, playthings, toys, disposable objects like we use a dishrag—a dishrag doesn't use us? No!

In order to understand how the Holy Spirit “uses” us correctly, we must understand the character of God and His design law methods. If we do understand this, then we know that God is always for His



people—Romans 8 “If God is for us...” God is always using His energy for the best interest of every person. God doesn’t choose to lead them in ways they would disagree with if they could know all the variables that God knows. Thus, the same author wrote the following, do you believe this to be true?

- God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the purpose they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him. (Ministry of Healing 479).

So God’s “use” of us is for our good, for our higher development, for our eternal life, for our ability to grow, mature, attain, fulfill, and eventually discern and be thankful for our amazing God who condescended to meet us in our ignorant and childlike need.

And this is why the Bible says, when we do surrender to the Holy Spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to use us, to do in us exactly what the Holy Spirit desires we develop fruits of the Spirit which are:

- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and **self-control**. (Galatians 5:22-23 NIV84).

We do NOT become puppets when we are being used by the Holy Spirit, we become freed from fear, freed from selfishness, freed from addictions, old destructive habits, freed from the control and manipulation of other people—and restored to God’s original design to be self-governed, self-controlled, individuals who live out God’s design laws for life in all that we do.

Will God empower people to lie about Him, to misrepresent Him?

If you are an SDA or familiar with the SDA church, have you ever wonder why the SDA church preaches that they have a message that is to lighten the world to hasten the second coming, but the second coming has been delayed? Is it possible that there has been a delay because the church leadership officially rejected the special message that they are to be giving and therefore the Holy Spirit, which empowers the people to do the work, has not been poured out and instead God is waiting for a people to embrace the final message so He can empower them to give it?

Consider these two quotes from the same author, who was at the 1888 GC and is the most influential founder of the SDA church:

“When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the **angel of the Lord** stood by me and said: [The following is a quote is written as coming from the angel of the Lord, which is one of the names for Jesus (see Exodus 3) as the context of the quote has the speaker claiming that the people are His and He is the source of grace given to the people.] "Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. **The people are acting over [re-enacting] the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram**. I have placed you in your proper position, **which those who are not in the light will not acknowledge; they will not heed your testimony**; [What was EGW advocating? The healing view of the gospel promoted by Jones and Waggoner, which recognized design law even though they didn’t label it design law and advocated that the written law that was added



included the Ten Commandments. They taught that righteousness by faith is actual, real, genuine restoration to righteousness within the heart/mind of those who trust in Jesus, which is also the rebuilding and healing of our characters when we trust in Jesus—which is metaphorically taught in the fulfillment of the day of at-one-ment, the purifying of the bride, the groom receiving His bride bringing her into unity/oneness with Him. But the church leadership rejected this healing view and chose instead to embrace the false imperial legal view of declaring people legally righteous even though they remain unrighteous. Like Korah, they rejected the manna (heavenly bread of truth) and chose the fleshpots of Egypt (worldly ways and methods which are death). This, is, according to the angel of the Lord, like Korah saying “we can’t succeed in going into the promised land.” And church leaders, who prefer the imperial law view, have been telling Adventists ever since that we can’t succeed in experiencing Christ’s righteousness, sin is too great, God can’t give us power to be victorious in our lives so we will be prepared to stand in God’s presence when Jesus returns, no we are only legally declared in courts of heaven to be righteous while we remain unrighteous.] but I will be with you; My grace and power shall sustain you. **It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I send to My people.** [Friends of Come and Reason around the world, realize that when you are told you are not welcome, you cannot teach your Bible class, that you cannot share the wonders of God’s love that has so transformed your life—that it is not you they are rejecting but Christ they are rejecting.] **They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness.** I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they repent and be converted, that I should **heal them.** **They have obscured their spiritual eyesight.** [What does this mean? By refusing the truth of God’s design law, by holding to Rome’s imperial law lie, they have blinded themselves to how reality works and live in a religious legal fantasy of confusion and contradictions mirroring this sinful world with a god who is the source of pain, suffering and death which they call justice. And if they persist in teaching this, they become blind and incapable of seeing the truth or leading others into the promised land. And the SDA church has been wandering in the wilderness for over 135 years. God is waiting for a people to return to worshiping Him as Creator and then His Spirit will empower them to lighten the world for His return.] **They would not that God should manifest His Spirit and His power; for they have a spirit of mockery and disgust at My word.** [This again, is presented as the voice of Jesus talking] Lightness, trifling, jesting and joking are daily practiced. **They have not set their hearts to seek Me.** They walk in the sparks of their own kindling, and unless they repent, they shall lie down in sorrow. Thus saith the Lord: “Stand at your post of duty; for I am with thee, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee.” These words from God I have not dared to disregard.”—Letter 2a, 1892, pp. 4, 5. (To “Dear Nephew and Niece, Frank (F.E.) and Hattie,” Nov. 5, 1892.) {3 Manuscript Release 191}

- **An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth [that the Ten Commandments were added]** lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message through Brethren [E.J.] Waggoner and [A.T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from **our people,**



in a great measure, **the special power of the Holy Spirit** that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in **carrying the truth to the world**, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. **The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world** (1 Selected Messages 234).

Do you see the exact same problems still occurring today? Perhaps even worse as these imperial lies have become imbedded into our schools and published materials.

Do we want the power of the Holy Spirit today?

What are the conditions?

- We must surrender ourselves first to be cleansed in heart, mind, soul, and spirit
- We must be willing to be transformed, changed, renewed, recreated
- We must be willing to give up wrong ideas for the eternal truth as God reveals it to us—thus we must be lovers of truth, not lovers of creeds, or fundamental beliefs, or doctrinal statements, or other people’s opinions, or holding some office, or position in an organization.
- We must know and be willing to share the truth of God’s character of love and His design law methods and principles.

When we do this, then we will receive power to advance the truth.

I must take a minute and discuss the process of what I just did—for invariably I will receive an email expressing dissatisfaction with me, suggesting that I have been attacking the church, suggesting that I am embittered, that I am voicing sour grapes and being negative, and that I should instead focus on the positive, lift up Jesus and stop being so critical of the errors in the system.

Let me be clear—I am not against the SDA church anymore that Jesus and the Apostles were against the Jewish people or the Jewish nation. I love the church like Jesus and the Apostles loved the Jewish nation and people. They were against the lies that had infected the Jewish system that prevented those people from recognizing the Messiah. Likewise, I am against the legal lies, the imposed law imperial Romanization of Christianity that has infected the church and presents God as a dictator who is the source of inflicted pain and suffering and has resulted in the shutting away the power of the Holy Spirit. I want to see those lies removed so the transforming, saving, power of the Holy Spirit might be poured out and the Latter Rain occur and Jesus come.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph:



- In order to reach others, God intends for us to move beyond our comfort zone. The desire to remain only with our own ilk and ethnic or social kind can lead to selfishness, even evil. This danger is one of the lessons derived from the story of Babel. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 23).

What is the problem with this paragraph? It misplaces the problem, it says:

- The desire to remain only with our own ilk and ethnic or social kind can lead to selfishness, even evil.

But it is the reverse—we are born with selfishness, none of us chose to be sinners, we were born in sin conceived in iniquity (Psalms 51:5). This is the carnal nature, the me-first orientation that drives us to choose actions that violate God's design laws, what we call sins.

It is selfishness that is the problem, and selfishness if not replaced in our hearts as our primary motivator with love for God and others—which occurs when we are reborn to love—if the selfish motivation is not replaced with love then we divide into various groups that make us feel good about ourselves and we find others that we can denigrate and project our own flaws and self-dissatisfaction upon.

In other words, instead of hating the evil within our own selfish hearts, we justify our selfishness and see the evil in others and seek to destroy what we believe is evil by dominating, controlling, or destroying others who we identify as evil.

So humans divide—we always divide—because that is what sin and selfishness does, sin breaks down the bonds of love and trust.

If fear and selfishness doesn't lead people to divide by ethnic or social commonality, then they divide into other groups and pit themselves against others such as:

- Nationality (nation states are artificial, yet people will identify with their nations and pit themselves against others, claiming those other nationalities are evil)
- Sports teams—have you noticed the hostility and violence that happens toward others who root for a different team
- Gangs—consider how gangs divide and they make up their artificial standards that members must meet to join
- Political parties—consider how societies divide along these artificial lines

Sin divides, but at the Tower of Babel they were united—why? Because they had what they perceived was a common enemy or a common threat—they were afraid of another Flood, they didn't trust God, and thus they united to protect themselves from what they perceived was a common existential threat.

What would happen to all the divisions we see in the world today if it was known that an asteroid was on a collision course with Earth and it would wipe out all life? Wouldn't all the nation states unite in



common cause to use their military power and technology to try and alter the course of the asteroid? Wouldn't all the peoples begin praying in common cause for protection and success in redirecting the asteroid?

So, we see at the Tower of Babel the people were motivated by fear, by selfishness, and identified God as the enemy and threat and they united against their source of life.

So, what did God do?

- The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. (Genesis 11:6-8 NIV84).

First, what does it mean that if they have begun to do this speaking the same language that nothing they plan will be impossible for them?

Does this mean:

- That if they planned to become angels, then they could become angels?
- That if they planned to create a new planet, that they could create a new planet?
- That if they planned to become God themselves, that they could become God?
- That if their men planned to become women, that the men could actually become women?

So, the text doesn't mean that they could actually do anything they plan, because they cannot do everything or anything, there are limitations by reality on what they can do. So, what might this text mean?

What is the context? What is the meaning of what they are doing? They are rejecting God's Word; they do not trust God; and they are choosing to do their own thing, they are choosing sin and selfishness by building this tower. Thus, the context is that of refusing God and in doing that there is no evil or sin that they plan that they won't be able to do.

Why did God confuse their languages?

What just happened—The human race, having one language from Eden, had just united in selfishness and every single human, except for Noah and his family, hardened their hearts against God and the avenue for Messiah (genesis 3:15) was almost closed. God acted in mercy to keep open the avenue for Jesus to come and save humanity by sending the Flood.

But at Babel the people are already uniting in rebellion against God again, thus God mercifully and therapeutically confused the languages to prevent another worldwide rejection of Him, to prevent the hardening of all human hearts, to slow the spread of evil and sin, and keep open the avenue for Messiah. And the Bible says that the people of the world will not be fully united against heaven as they were at the time of the Flood until the final conclusion when all the world wonders after the beast.



This is described in Revelation 17:

- The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. (Revelation 17:8 NIV84).

The beast described here is the worldwide violent, beastly system of satanic rule of coercion, force, intimidation, domination, and selfishness which was in existence before the Flood when the entire world was united against heaven, but hasn't existed since then, but will exist again right before Jesus comes, but is destroyed by the second coming of Jesus!

So why did God confuse the languages? To keep open the avenue for Messiah, to slow the spread of sin and evil, it was an act of love and mercy.

The Bible is clear that it was at the Tower of Babel that God confused the languages, and it is my conclusion that at that time God also caused the racial differences we see in the different human races on Earth, such as height, facial structure, skin color, eye color and shape etc.

The SDA Bible commentary seems to agree with this:

- By confusing their language and thus forcing them to separate, God designed to forestall future united action. Each of the groups might yet pursue an evil course, but the division of society into many groups would prevent concerted opposition to God. **Upon repeated occasions since the dispersion of the races at Babel**, ambitious men have sought, unsuccessfully, to contravene the divine decree of separation... Evidence from many lands testifies to the presence of human beings within a comparatively short time after the Flood. Archeological discoveries point to the Mesopotamian valley as the first locality to develop a distinct civilization. Similar civilizations sprang up soon afterward in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, India, China, and elsewhere. All available evidence supports the cryptic saying of Holy Writ that “the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth.” (Nichol, F. D., ed. (1978). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 285–286). Review and Herald Publishing Association.)

So God divided humanity in mercy to prevent the human race from uniting in sin against heaven. But God also provided the gift of languages so that the gospel was not obstructed from reaching all the people groups on Earth. And the Bible tells us that when Jesus comes the saved will be:

- a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb (Revelation 7:9 NIV84)

This division of society is only remedied, eliminated, resolved, removed by Jesus, by returning into the hearts of people the living law of love and when that happens we become one, just as Jesus prayed that we would be one as He and the Father are one.



Read last paragraph,

- Though Scripture does not say it explicitly, Ellen White says that **they didn't trust God's promise that He would never destroy the earth with water again** (Gen. 9:14, 15). They intended to build for their own perceived safety rather than to trust God's Word. Whatever their ultimate motives, God knew that **their intentions were not pure** but were filled with **selfish ambition**, and so He prevented them from achieving their stated goals. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 23).

This beast that existed before the Flood the Bible tells us will exist again before Jesus comes. The people after the Flood were uniting against heaven because they didn't believe God's promise to never destroy the world again by water, with a Flood.

What about today? Will a similar lie be used to unite the world against heaven? Do you see the same disbelief, distrust of God and His promise made right after the Flood uniting the world against heaven today?

- **As long as the earth endures**, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, **summer and winter**, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22 NIV 84).

God made a promise about our climate—is that promise believed or is the world uniting again against heaven, against God, on the lie about climate change?

Understand how evil people and angels work:

- They identify some threat that you yourself cannot see, touch, taste, feel, hear, or identify with any means God has given you—such as climate change.
- They bombard us with propaganda from all sources to promote a lie, a false narrative, they take unrelated events and claim those events are due to climate change—such as a heat wave, or a hurricane, or a fire.
- Then, they make decisions to artificially create consequences they can attribute to climate change—like shutting down our production of oil, which raises energy costs, and decreases the production of fertilizers and result in reduction of crop production thus increasing food and energy prices—which results in the mega rich getting richer as they can charge more for the artificially reduce products their corporations produce, and the poor getting poorer and lose freedoms.
- All of this increases fear in the people who believe the lie that it is all happening because of climate change, so they go along with the artificial interventions claimed to stop climate change, such as—climate saving light bulbs and straws that have no evidence of protecting the environment, but do result in enriching the companies that are producing them at the expense of the poor who are forced to buy them.



Do you see how the nation states are uniting on the climate change lies, because they reject God, and they reject God's promise and they are using fear to exploit, dominate, and enslave the masses. Jesus said:

- **As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and **they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood** came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:37–39 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Despite Noah's preaching of the impending flood for 120 years, the people didn't know, they didn't understand, they didn't recognize what was about to happen. Why? Because they accepted the false narrative and rejected the message of truth coming from God.

If you lived back in Noah's day, with your current belief in God and the Bible, who would you have believed: Noah or the media and scientific experts of the day?

Jesus said something similar would happen in our day: As His second coming approaches, people will be unaware of it and will be unprepared for His return. Why? Because they, like the wicked antediluvians, will reject the message of God and, instead, choose to believe the false narratives that comes from Satan.

And one of Satan's false narratives deluding the world today is a direct denial, rejection, and replacement of a promise given to humanity by God in the aftermath of the Flood.

God's promise is that our climate and seasons will continue until the second coming of Christ—that is, "as long as the earth endures." But the lie of Satan, the false narrative of this corrupt world, is that of "climate change," climate disaster, the ending of human life through the destruction of the climate.

And just like the antediluvians, we must decide which view we believe: the godless, the evolutionists, the pundits of this world, the same people who foisted COVID mandates upon the world, restricted our liberties, and injured our children—or our Creator?

We are not facing a global climate disaster—we are facing a global spiritual disaster.

We are not facing man-made global warming—we are facing man-made global coldness of heart; Jesus said,

- "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12 NIV84).

Satan blinds people to reality by getting them to focus on something emotional as a distraction to what is really happening:



- The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV84).

Satan's end-time push is active and aggressive and turns the mind away from God, away from the Bible, away from the hope of a new heaven and new earth, to a future in which we supposedly destroy ourselves through overpopulation and climate disaster. And he offers the false solution that we must save ourselves **through activities that actually harm the people**—the many various solutions proposed by the so-called “green” movement. Their proposed solutions are anti-human, anti-science, and anti-liberty, and they are pro-elite, designed to help the ruling class dominate and control others. The green movement of climate change propogandists is a movement of the godless bent on destroying the image of God in people and the liberty of conscience.

MONDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the focal point of the Bible, the key to understanding the Old Testament, the most important text that anchors the rest of Scripture—Genesis 3:15, God is speaking to the serpent after the fall of Adam and Eve:

- “And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15 NKJV)

What is the significance of this passage?

This passage sets the stage, the context, the focus of the entire Old Testament. Everything recorded in the Old Testament is about the fulfillment of this promise—the war between God and Satan. Satan is working to stop the fulfillment of this promise and God is working to keep it.

The focus on Abraham and the promises made to him are the outworking of this promise made in Eden. Abraham doesn't get a new promise with a different Messiah—he and his descendants are the branch of the human family through whom the Genesis 3:15 promise will be fulfilled.

And thus the Bible narrows its focus from the entire world at the time of the Flood, to the family of Abraham, and the Bible continues to narrow its focus staying with the Isaac, not Ishmael's children, then Jacob, not Esau's children, and then keeping the focus on the tribe of Judah after the ten tribes to the north broke away and were dispersed, because the Messiah, the fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 3:15 was coming through Judah.

And while it was difficult, while the children of Abraham were to a great degree unfaithful, rebellious, and failed to prepare the world for the Messiah—they did survive with enough faithful people that Jesus was born to a Jewish woman in Bethlehem, and He was able to call from the descendants of



Abraham a following of disciples who were able to throw of the legal misunderstandings that corrupted the system that God had given them and embrace the reality it was all designed to teach.

And then the Bible focus shifts away from the Jewish people because their purpose in being the avenue through whom Messiah would be born was accomplished and focuses on the good news that Jesus brought and accomplished for the completion of the promise of Genesis 3:15 the crushing of the serpent and all the sin and evil he has caused.

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses on Abraham's call and how when he initially arrived in the new land he lied to Pharaoh and Abimelech about his wife being his sister—and she was his half-sister, so it wasn't a full lie, he just didn't tell the truth about her status as his wife.

Why did Abraham do this? Because he was afraid—and when in Abraham's life did such fear get into his heart and mind?

He was born with it, just like you and me. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid because they were afraid—fear is part of the infection of sin that causes people to act selfishly, like Abraham did.

While he trusted God enough to leave his home and go to a new land, he still was not free of fear and suffered temptation that in these two occasions caused him to act out of fear and not out of faith or trust in God. And “everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

So, with this in mind, what does God want for Abraham? He wants to heal Abraham; God wants to free Abraham from being controlled by fear, from making fear-based decisions and increase Abraham's faith in Him.

So God intervenes in both of this situations to protect Sarah and teach Abraham some lessons, but then God later puts Abraham in a situation that was specifically designed to get Abraham over this vulnerability—what therapeutic measure did God bring to Abraham?

God placed Abraham in a position where Abraham had to choose to trust or not trust God.

This is the only way God can heal the heart of a person and have that person's individuality, identity, and personhood retained. We must actively choose to participate with God. When we trust Him, receive the indwelling Spirit, and then choose to do God's will, despite feelings of fear and insecurity, then our brains rewire and our characters become changed.

Abraham was a sinner, just like the rest of us, and he needed the same divine Remedy, so what does Abraham's experience teach us about God's plan to heal and restore?



We see in Abraham our model of faith, but he *became* a model of faith; he was not born as a model of faith. Abraham struggled with the same temptations and failings with which you and I struggle. God led Abraham on a path designed to mature him and instill in him a trusting, god-like character.

The only way this could happen was to bring Abraham to points of decision where he had to exercise his will—to choose—to trust God, open his heart to the Spirit, and then choose to do what he knew was right in the face of powerful feelings tempting him to move in the opposite direction. One Bible commentary describes it this way:

- God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar. That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering upon a mountain that should be shown him. (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 147).

Why did God call Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? For multiple reasons.

The first reason was for Abraham's character development. Abraham needed to choose to trust God and overcome his own fear, insecurity, and patterns of seeking to save self.

- You fool! Do you want to be shown that faith without actions is useless? How was our ancestor Abraham put right with God? It was through his actions, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. Can't you see? His faith and his actions worked together; his faith was made perfect through his actions. And the scripture came true that said, "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous." And so Abraham was called God's friend. You see, then, that it is by people's actions that they are put right with God, and not by their faith alone (James 2:20–24 GNT).

We must come to know the truth, but the knowledge of truth is not enough; we must put the truth into action before we are changed by the truth.

If you are sick with pneumonia and the doctor gives you an antibiotic, and you believe the antibiotic will help you (and in truth it will), but you never take the antibiotic, does your belief of the truth without applying it (taking the antibiotic) heal you? Of course not. Likewise, believing the truth without putting it into action doesn't result in healing and transformation in our lives. Why? Because the only way our individuality can be retained and our characters transformed is for each of us to choose to trust God, open our hearts to the Spirit, and *then apply* to our own lives His directions.

The second reason God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is found in John 8:56. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad" (NIV84).



Abraham longed to know God more intimately, to understand God's character and plan of salvation, and to comprehend and see the Savior. God instructed Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a means to fulfill Abraham's desire of understanding, connecting with, empathizing with, knowing, and moving into greater intimacy with God. It was God's answer to Abraham's own request. In the agonizing struggle to sacrifice his son, Abraham identified with and gained insight into the heart of God.

The third reason God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was to demonstrate to the intelligent beings in heaven, the sinless angels, that those who trust God are healed and restored—to show that God's methods work!

The apostle Paul wrote:

- “I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle [theater] to the world, both to angels and to men” (1 Corinthians 4:9 NKJV).

The apostle Peter wrote:

- “It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things” (1 Peter 1:12 NIV84).

Angels cannot read the secrets of the heart—only God can. If angels could see the secrets of the heart, then a third of them would not have been deceived by Lucifer. Therefore, God must demonstrate that His methods work.

Just as he did in the case of Job, Satan, in heaven before God and the angels, made allegations against Abraham—claiming he had lied and broke trust with God. Therefore, Satan accused that Abraham was not fit to be the father of the faithful, the father of the family through whom the Messiah would come. But God knew Abraham's heart and that, though Abraham struggled with fear and selfishness, he had come to trust God. Therefore, God provided this unorthodox intervention to give Abraham the opportunity to choose to trust God under careful observation of the intelligences in heaven, to show them that Abraham was transformed within and that selfishness no longer ruled in his heart.

The book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 154, describes it this way:

- The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out—is the lesson book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate



that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation. (Patriarchs and Prophets p. 154)

One More Reason

We must also remember that in the instructions for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, God never intended for Abraham to actually kill his son. God already knew what Abraham was willing to do, so while God called Abraham to sacrifice his son for the reasons already stated, he also accomplished one more thing: **to demonstrate that human sacrifice is not what God wants, nor will God accept it.**

Many pagan cultures in Abraham's time and throughout history have promoted human sacrifice. God, through Abraham, demonstrated that He does not require, nor accept, human sacrifice as payment. Through the prophet Micah, the Bible states:

- With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:6–8).

When we embrace God's design law, we can read frightening stories like God's instructions to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac and realize there is much more to them than what we have been led to believe. They are meant to show us that, yes, humans are sick in sin, but that God is the source of goodness, truth, love, and life, and that He is always working to heal and restore all who trust Him.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Peter and how he identified with the "circumcision" group, the Jewish converts who were still strongly dedicated to the forms and customs of Judaism and wanted to bring many of those over into Christianity. And how Peter shied away from the uncircumcised and had to be corrected by Paul.

This is such a powerful story and lesson for us, because it teaches us some important truths.

First, was Peter an Apostle blessed by Jesus to carry forward the gospel? Was Peter inspired to write Scripture?

And yet, despite being an inspired Apostle and Bible writer, Peter was wrong on some matters of theology and had to be corrected by Paul.

What does that mean?



- Does inspiration of an individual make them sinless?
- Does inspiration of an individual make them all knowing?
- Does inspiration of an individual make them flawless?
- Does inspiration of an individual mean they get everything on Bible matters correct?
- Does the fact an inspired individual make mistakes, like Peter, does that mean they are not inspired and that we should throw away their writings?

So what is the point? Romans 14:5 every person must be fully persuaded in their own mind—we cannot surrender our thinking, our judgment to another person even if that person is inspired by God and has the gift of prophecy.

One of the problems some have within Christianity is proof text or quote approach, finding some statement, instruction, declaration written by an inspired writer and then applying it without thought, without understanding, as a rule to be kept.

And often using quotes as proofs if the Bible said it I believe it and there is nothing more to say about it.

Am I saying that the Bible can't be trusted or the Bible has errors? Absolutely not—the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is completely trustworthy on all matters related to salvation from sin. But, the Bible is not the authority on music theory, or mathematics, or mechanical engineering, or the practice of medicine.

The Bible sets the standards of morality and the design laws of God upon which life and health operate, reveals the eternal truths of God's character, and the protocols for life—but the application of God's principles require individual thought and understanding to the life and situation.

FRIDAY

The lesson is about missions and carrying out the gospel mission, being missionaries to the world.

Why do you think many of our institutions have removed “missionary” from their names:

- Emmanuel Missionary College changed its name to Andrews University
- Southern Missionary College changed its name to Southern Adventist University

Why?