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2026 4Q The Gift of Prophecy
Lesson 5: Revelation and Inspiration

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

- What would the Creator of the cosmos have to say to us? Why does He communicate with us? It is because we are fallen human beings in a sinful world and face death, suffering, and trials; God, therefore, speaks to us because He wants us to know why we are here, why things are so bad, and why, despite it all, we can hope in His love for us. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 39.

Is it because we are fallen God speaks to us? Didn't He speak to Adam and Eve before they fell? Doesn't He speak to unfallen angels?

Again, I wonder if there is a typo in this paragraph? I wonder if the question was supposed to read, "Why does He speak to us *in certain ways, like parables, or dreams, or symbols, rather than face to face*?" Not why does He communicate to us at all, and certainly not that He communicates to us because we are fallen, but the method of communication, such as parables, dreams, written word etc. is because we are fallen.

Why does God communicate with us?

Because we are intelligent beings created in His imaged, designed by Him to love, grow, develop, and because of how reality works—we are finite and He is infinite, as long as we stay connected to Him and keep Him central as our standard of all reality, truth, ideal, to whom we are humbly submitted in loyal love, devotion, and trust, then we never stop growing, advancing, developing!

In order for God's intelligent creatures to thrive, to advance and develop, to stay healthy, to not corrupt themselves, God must communicate to them, for we are not infinite beings and if we are not connected to God, checking our ideas, hypothesis, perspectives, conclusions with Him the source of reality, then we will necessarily get it wrong, encode error, and corrupt ourselves. This is the core root to sin, which is what Lucifer did in heaven when he became proud—he placed himself at the center of his heart as the final authority and refused truth, refused correction, and the only outcome is deviation from reality, decay, corruption, which is sin, and unless corrected by truth, results in decoherence, which is death.

What are your thoughts about the rest of the paragraph?

- God, therefore, speaks to us because He wants us to know why we are here, why things are so bad, and why, despite it all, we can hope in His love for us. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 39.

Why are we here?

Why are things so bad?

Why is there hope in God's love for us? What does that mean? Has there been a question about whether God is love? Is there confusion about what love is and how love functions?

What happens inside a human heart/mind if they don't come to experience God as being for them? If, instead, they hold to ideas, attitudes, or perspectives that cause them to believe that God must have something done to Him in order for Him not to punish them for sin?

But what does the Bible teach about God's attitude toward us?

- What, then, shall we say in response to this? **If God is for us**, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will **he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things**? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is **God who justifies**. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is ***also*** interceding for us. Romans 8:31-34 NIV84, emphasis mine.

- God showed how much **he loved us** by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. **This is real love**—not that we loved God, but that **he loved us** and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 1 John 4:9-10 NLT, emphasis mine.

- Now all things are of God, who has **reconciled us to Himself** through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NKJV, emphasis mine.

God is love! If God is not love, then we have no hope. So foundational to reality, to hope, is the truth that God is love.

But does our sinful condition require something more be accomplished, achieved, done in reality by God than just communicating to us that He is love and that He loves us?

Is there a reality-based, objective, action, accomplishment that God had to achieve in order to save humans from sin? How would you describe it?

Consider, if you had warned your child to never consume any pills in your medicine cabinet. Maybe you wanted to make your child understand how serious this is so you said to your child, “In the day you consume pills from the medicine cabinet you will surely die.” And one day you hear a crash in the bathroom and you rush in to find your child writhing on the floor, cramping, incoherent, and physically dying after ingesting some of the pills. Your child has disobeyed you, what do you do?

- Do you still love your child?
- Do you have a desire to save your child?
- Is there any tension in your heart between your desire to save your child and some aspect of justice?
- For instance, are you required by some sense of justice, or law, or rule to use your power to inflict death as punishment upon your child to make them pay for their disobedience of your instruction?
- If you communicate to your child your love for them, which is deep, pure, uncompromised with any anger or desire for vengeance or judicial inflicted punishment, does the knowledge you love them save them?
- Certainly, if you don’t love your child, if you are now angry and wrathful toward them, that would be a barrier to saving them.
    - And in our salvation if God were not love that would be a barrier to our salvation. But God is love so there is no barrier from God’s heart to our salvation.
    - But what if you are 100% love for your child and seek to save your child, but your child believes that you are not only loving you are “just” and they falsely believe that you must uphold your earlier warning by killing them. If your child believed that, even though it is not true, would that be a barrier to their trusting you? And would that be a barrier to cooperating with you for their healing?
    - And what they believed that the problem is not that they are actually dying, but that having broken a rule you are required to exact a legal death penalty and thus they want their older sibling to be killed by you in their place so you won’t kill them?
    - Do you see how the human law model infects so deeply our thinking and distorts and obstructs God’s reality-based plan of salvation?
- So love of the parent is a prerequisite to saving the child.
- And God’s love for us a prerequisite to saving us. For if God were not love, if God did not love us, then God would not save us from sin. If God were angry and wrathful toward us, then we have no hope. But the Bible is clear God is love, but love alone doesn’t resolve the problem, it doesn’t save us from sin, why not?
- Because the sin condition itself is a terminal condition, it is a lethal condition, it is not a legal condition. Just like if your child who poisoned themselves with pills has a condition that is now terminal and love alone doesn’t resolve the reality of that condition. In addition to love a real remedy, a cure, is needed.

So, what has God objectively accomplished through Jesus that is required because of how He created His universe and life to function to save humanity from sin?

1. The revelation of the truth about God that refute the lies of Satan and wins us to trust and stops the progression of deceit among the angels in heaven.
2. But God also, in Christ, eliminated the corrupt spirit of fear, the breath of life corrupted by Adam, and replaced it with a new sinless breath of life, the life of Christ.

And the only way for God to get a new sinless breath of life, a new sinless spirit, into the species created in Eden, was for Jesus to become human, partake of that very life corrupted by Adam (which He did through Mary), but His humanity was not conceived by another fallen human being, but by the Holy Spirit. Thus, in Jesus a new sinless breath of life was introduced into humanity.

Then, in the person of Jesus, He was tempted in all points like us, but without sin (Hebrews 4:15), and Jesus took that corrupt spirit of fear to the cross and purged it and rose as the second Adam, in a humanity purified, cleansed, renewed, recreated through His self-sacrificial, voluntary, substitutionary death.

He is now the proverbial vine and we are the branches who graft into Him by faith, by trust. And when we trust Him we receive the Holy Spirit and are reborn with a new animating, motiving life, or spirit—the very life of Christ that He shares with us. As Paul said,

- I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me Galatians 2:20 NKJV.

So salvation of humans required the revelation of truth to win us to trust and a new sinless life that replaces the life of fear and selfishness.

The unfallen angels only needed the revelation of truth to have all doubts and misunderstandings originating from Satan's lies purged from their minds and settle them in their loyalty. But humans needed something the unfallen angels did not need, a new sinless spirit, breath of life, and Jesus provides this for us.

Thus, our hope is in God's love, that God is love, and that truth neutralizes the paralyzing hold that the spirit of fear has upon us and provides us the mental, emotional, space to choose to say yes to God, to surrender to Him, to choose despite feeling of fear, to open our hearts in trust to Him. And when we do, then we receive a new life, and become a new creation, restored to unity, at-one-ment with God through the self-sacrifice of Christ. This is reality!

Why does it work this way? Why doesn't God just use His power to save people? Because of how He created reality to work, love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom.

When God chose to create, He was free to create anything He wanted. He could have created robots, puppets, simulation that look like free beings but in reality are all controlled by Him. Or He could create intelligent beings with real freedom to think, act, choose, love, trust, or distrust, rebel, hate. Beings capable of changing themselves by their own choices.

Once God created free beings He cannot make the choices for those beings and they remain free. If God were to use might and power to change the minds/brains of any being against their will He would destroy their individuality and turn them into a robot.

Thus, God has done everything to save us except the one thing He cannot do and still preserve and protect our individualities, souls, identities—and that is choose for us. The only way for truth and love to be encoded into our brains, minds, hearts, is a cooperative relationship between our Creator God and us.

He provides the truth, love, evidence, new life in Christ, inspiration, conviction, opportunities for change, but we must provide the choice, we must say yes, we must choose to trust Him. And then, He provides the power, the new life, the indwelling of His Spirit, and we grow as we continue to freely choose to trust, to say yes, to apply with our power of choice what we know is His leading and He continues to strengthen, comfort, encourage, motivate, animate, heal, regenerate, restore.

God cannot save anyone against their will, and therefore God patiently waits, giving every opportunity and resource heaven has for every person to make their own choice.

Read second paragraph,

- God's general revelation, as seen in the natural world, speaks eloquently of His infinite power and caring love. King David exclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1, NKJV). The apostle Paul added, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20, NASB). *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 39.

So glad to see this included in the lesson—God speaks to us through Scripture, but the Scripture teaches that God's divine nature and eternal power have been clearly seen being understood by what He has made so that men are without excuse.

God is Creator and His laws are the laws upon which reality is built, operates, and is sustained. Thus, we can examine nature and learn truth about God. And science, nature, and Scripture when correctly understood, always harmonize. Thus, we teach the integrative evidenced-based approach to truth—harmonizing Scripture, science/nature, and experience.

When all three come to the same conclusion we can have confidence we stand upon truth.

Separating the three threads leads to problems, science alone has led many to godless theories; experience alone mysticism; and Scripture alone confusion with over 41,000 different Christian groups arguing the Bible back and forth.

We want truth that is reality based and the Scripture is God's inspired book of reality, not fiction, not fantasy, and thus rightly understood harmonizes with God's creation and how He built reality to function.

One place to examine this question is how love actually functions in reality—God is love, this is our focus. And how does love function? It gives for the benefit of others, it sacrifices self,

- Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1Corinthians 13:4-7 NIV84.

It is not self-seeking, and God's divine nature is seen in what He has made, God built life to operate upon the law of love. Many examples we have described in the past such as the law of respiration and others.

But we can apply this to the various theories about the atonement, why Christ had to die, what God does to the wicked in the end, and the impact upon hearts and minds of applying the various theories.

Can love be achieved by using physical might and power to torture and kill those who don't love you?

Can God get love and trust from intelligent beings by threatening to torture and kill those who don't love and trust?

What about if we make it legal first, if we get congress to pass laws that the supreme court upholds that make it the law of the land that people must love and trust or they can no longer buy and sell, travel freely, and it is legal to imprison them and even execute those who refuse to love and worship the god we say they must love and worship. If we make it legal, then can we get love and trust by torture and execution?

Can God get love and trust by imposing a law and then enforcing that law through inflicted punishments?

What about if God makes a law that He enforces through punishment, but says, "love me or I am required to kill you, but before I do, instead of killing you I will torture and kill my own innocent, loyal, faithful, and righteous Son, and if you claim Him as your legal substitute then I will pretend you are righteous and loyal like Him and will legally account that you don't deserve to die, and allow you to come to heaven."

If God set up such a system that created such a fiction, a legal fraud, in which the innocent is punished in place of the guilty, and the guilty are accounted righteous when they are not righteous, would that, in reality, cause you to love and trust God more? Or would it, always cause us to either distrust God because it is irrational, unfair, unjust, and it demonstrates God manipulates and creates lies, fictions,

that are not true or it destroys thinking, reason, and people take that on faith without thinking because it is irrational. And that destroys the image of God within!

The only way it all fits is to return to worshiping God as Creator, which requires we understand His laws are the laws only a Creator can make, the design laws life and the universe are built to exist and operate upon. We must stop casting God in our image and teaching that He functions like a creature and stop promoting Satan's lies that God's laws are made up rules enforced through inflicted punishment.

Only by returning to Creator worship does Scripture, science, and experience all harmonize perfectly. For when we break the design laws of God, the laws of health, that results in taking ourselves out of harmony with life, and without intervention from God we will die, not at God's hand, but from the result of sin, of what breaking the laws of life does to us. Just as the Scripture teaches:

- The wages of sin is death Romans 6:23
- Sin when full grown brings forth death James 1:15
- Those who sow to the carnal nature from that nature reap destruction Galatians 6:8

And that

- For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall **not perish** but have eternal life. For God **did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world**, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever **does not believe stands condemned already** because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3:16-18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

What does this mean? Why do they stand condemned already? Because we are not born guilty, we are born terminal.

Every human being is born descended from Adam and Eve, born in sin conceived in iniquity (Ps 51:5). We are born terminal, with a condition we did not choose. Consider a child born HIV infected from and HIV infected mother and father—what did the child do wrong? Nothing, but they have a condition that without remedy results in symptoms and death. That is a perfect object lesson for our sin condition, we all stand condemned already because our state of existence at birth is out of harmony with life. This is why Paul wrote:

- Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12 NIV84.

This is why we must be reborn with a new life a new spirit that God provides for us through Christ.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

- God spoke to Adam and Eve before the Fall (Gen. 2:16, 17) and after (Gen. 3:9–19). In both cases, they perfectly understood His words. His voice was heard in clear terms also at Sinai (Exod. 20:1–20), as well as at the baptism and the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 3:17, Matt. 17:5). We might misinterpret when other people talk to us. But, surely, when God talks to anyone, there will be no mis-communication or deception. *Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2026*, *The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 41.

I had to smile when I read this because this paragraph is not written by God but by humans and therefore, miscommunication can occur—but notice the last sentence:

- But, surely, when God talks to anyone, there will be no mis-communication or deception.

I believe the intention is to say that God does not deceive, God communicates clearly, accurately, precisely, and that God doesn't speak to cause confusion, which might be more accurately written as:

- But, surely, when God talks to anyone, there will be no **mis-speaking** or deception.

But when it comes to communication, communication involves, at a minimum, two minds, and errors in communication can occur from either side. Errors in transmission and errors in reception. So, we can confidently say that when God speaks He makes no errors in His communications, His speaking, His revelations, but that is not the same as saying "surely, when God speaks there will be no mis-communications" because even when God speaks accurately and clearly that does not mean the minds that hear it understand it accurately and clearly.

After Jesus was left by His parents at the temple and they questioned Him, and then we read:

- "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Luke 2:49-50 NIV84.

- In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
  "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" John 3:3-4 NIV84.

Jesus is speaking clearly, but does Nicodemus immediately understand clearly?

And Jesus later said the following to the Pharisees:

- **If God were your Father**, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. **Why is my language not clear to you?** Because **you are unable to hear** what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? **He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God**. John 8:42-47 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Why are they not able to hear?

Because God created intelligent beings with the ability to think and to choose and thereby encode into their own brains, their own selves, truth or lies. And if beings choose lies, fear, selfishness, they create predictive models, systems of understanding through which they filter, process, and interpret life, including communications from God. God did not create drones, or machines, or computers, or robots which simply download God's words into their operating systems like your phones or computers do updates. We each must be fully persuaded in our own minds.

Because of Adam's sin our natural motivation that drives our understanding of reality is fear and survival. We cannot understand reality until we have been reborn with the Spirit of love and trust. Thus the Bible teaches spiritual things are spiritually discerned, Nicodemus had to be reborn with the Spirit of love and trust before he could see God's kingdom—and so do we!

Well, God has provided us an inspired record of this, recorded by His inspired prophetic penmen, in the inspired Bible to teach us to think, reason, comprehend, and understand and NOT to simply follow instructions or rules by rote.

Israel repeatedly did this, followed rules by rote and by the time of Christ they were following the rules by rote and what was the result? They were God's enemies, children of their father the devil, and they killed Christ. But God warned them repeatedly not to do this.

We find one place where God specifically chastises them for this in Isaiah:

- Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, **my people do not understand**." Isaiah 1:2–3 NIV84, emphasis mine.

- Hear **the word of the LORD**, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! "The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? **Stop bringing meaningless offerings!**

> Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. "**Come now, let us reason together**," says the LORD. "**Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow**; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. Isaiah 1:10-18 NIV84, emphasis mine.

Notice what God reveals, what is described, how reality works! God doesn't want mindless adherence to a script, rules, rituals, behavior, He wants us to reason, to think, to understand and respond to truth and say yes. God links reasoning with Him and cleansing from sin, not mindless religious rule performance.

And this is important, because the space between where God speaks and we understand is the space where Satan works, where the father of lies seeks to twist, distort, and corrupt God's truth into error that we believe.

And Satan has inserted the lie that God's law functions like human law, incited fear and distrust, and then inserted his entire penal legal religious system between God and people.

The idea that surely when God speaks there is no miscommunication, is perfect example of the exact type of statement that can lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

And this leads us to **WEDNESDAY's** lesson about written communication.

The idea that when God speaks there is no miscommunication, could lead some to conclude that all we need to do is to find the places where God spoke directly, or where He wrote directly, and then take those words as the final word, the clear truth, no need to think, no need to reason, no need to seek to understand the meaning, but simply acknowledge that God said it and we therefore must believe and do it.

For instance, consider the Ten Commandments, written by God. We don't need to think, understand, seek to interpret, these are the words written by God's finger, therefore they cannot miscommunicate, we must take them as they read and do them.

Thoughts about this?

First question—did God write the Ten Commandments in English?

Have you ever read the Ten Commandments word for word without paraphrasing and adding English words to them?

Here is Exodus 20:2–17, from the Hebrew Masoretic text. Each Hebrew word is kept in its original order. Where a single Hebrew word contains a prefix, noun, and suffix together, the English pieces are joined with hyphens. **[et]** marks the Hebrew direct-object marker (אֵת), which has no English equivalent. No words have been added.

- **v.2 I YHWH God-of-you who brought-out-I-you from-land-of Egypt from-house-of slaves.**
- **v.3 Not will-be to-you gods other upon-faces-of-me.**
- **v.4** Not you-shall-make for-you carved-image and-all form which in-the-heavens from-above and-which in-the-earth from-beneath and-which in-the-waters from-beneath to-the-earth.
- **v.5** Not you-shall-bow-down to-them and-not you-shall-serve-them for I YHWH God-of-you God jealous visiting iniquity-of fathers upon-sons upon-thirds and-upon-fourths to-haters-of-me
- **v.6** and-doing steadfast-love to-thousands to-lovers-of-me and-to-keepers-of commandments-of-me.
- **v.7 Not you-shall-lift [et] name-of YHWH God-of-you to-the-emptiness for not will-hold-innocent YHWH [et] who will-lift [et] name-of-him to-the-emptiness.**
- **v.8** Remember [et] day-of the-Sabbath to-make-holy-it.
- **v.9** Six days you-shall-work and-you-shall-do all work-of-you.
- **v.10** And-day the-seventh Sabbath to-YHWH God-of-you not you-shall-do any work you and-son-of-you and-daughter-of-you servant-of-you and-maidservant-of-you and-beast-of-you and-sojourner-of-you who in-gates-of-you.
- **v.11** For six days made YHWH [et] the-heavens and-[et] the-earth [et] the-sea and-[et] all which in-them and-he-rested in-the-day the-seventh upon-so blessed YHWH [et] day-of the-Sabbath and-he-made-holy-it.
- **v.12** Make-heavy [et] father-of-you and-[et] mother-of-you to-purpose-of they-will-lengthen days-of-you upon the-ground which YHWH God-of-you giving to-you.
- **v.13** Not you-shall-murder.
- **v.14** Not you-shall-commit-adultery.
- **v.15** Not you-shall-steal.
- **v.16** Not you-shall-answer against-neighbor-of-you witness-of falsehood.
- **v.17** Not you-shall-desire house-of neighbor-of-you; not you-shall-desire wife-of neighbor-of-you and-servant-of-him and-maidservant-of-him and-ox-of-him and-donkey-of-him and-all which to-neighbor-of-you.

What is the point of all of this? That God is truth and truth is communicated in a variety of ways, orally, written languages, symbols, experiences of life, nature, dreams, visions, other people, rarely a donkey spoke to communicate truth to Balaam, and even when we know the words that God Himself wrote or spoke, it still requires us to think, reason, and comprehend the meaning.

Our goal is reality, truth itself, not the form in which truth is communicated, but the reality to which the medium of communication is teaching, whether parable, dream, symbol, letters of an alphabet,

experiences of life, or the voice of God speaking, our intention, desire, longing, is truth, reality, which always leads us in the path of righteousness and ever closer intimacy with God the source of all truth.

MONDAY

How do you understand inspiration of the Bible works?

Are the words of Scripture inspired or were the people who wrote Scripture inspired and they chose the words?

Are we to take the Bible as it reads or are we to read it for the purpose of understanding the truth, the genuine meaning the words are intended to convey?

And if the words are conveying a meaning that is not intended by the original author, is it okay to change the words?

For instance, Jesus is speaking in Revelation 3:20 saying:

- Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20 NIV84.

The Greek word and meaning written by John is "knock." But when translators were translating into a culture in which friends stand at the door of your home and shout a greeting so you hear their voice, and only thieves knock so you won't know who it is and when the thief hears someone move in the house they run away—the translators rendered the verse "I stand at the door and call" or "shout." Did they mistranslate and get it wrong because the original is clearly knock, or did they get it right because the meaning is that Jesus comes as a friend and waits for you to open the door?

Consider this passage:

- All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 NIV84.

Do we take these words as they read and conclude they are true? Or do we stop, pause, reflect, consider, and realize the way this is rendered is not accurate? How is this not accurate?

Consider what it says—"All Scripture is God-breathed." Is that true? If you had an original 1611 KJV of the Bible you would also have, included in that version, the Apocrypha. Roman Catholic Bibles today still have the Apocrypha in them. If you were having a Bible study with a Roman Catholic and the issue of purgatory came up and that there is no need to make atonement for the dead, and our penances or prayers for the dead don't benefit the dead, but that sincere soul pulled out their Bible and

read from 2 Maccabees 12:45, about noble Judas leading the righteous after those who had rebelled against the Lord died, and it says:

- “Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.” 2 Maccabees 12:45

And then they read from 2 Timoth 3:16,17 that all Scripture is inspired of God and useful for teaching…

Is all Scripture inspired by God? What about the book of Mormon or the Koran, or the Pseudepigrapha?

So a better translation is,

- For all Scripture, inspired by God, is beneficial for teaching, redirecting, correcting and training… 2 Timothy 3:16 REM.

What about all parts of the 66 books of the Bible, is everything written in the Bible an inspired message from God?

What about when Paul wrote:

- “To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.” 1 Corinthians 7:12 NIV84.

I believe God inspired Paul to let people know that God did not give this instruction, but Paul did. Does it make a difference to differentiate what God says from what inspired people say?

Can prophets, those inspired by God to write the Scriptures sometimes be wrong—wrong on details and wrong on things involving the church?

- I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) 1Corinthans 1:14-16 NIV84.

What does this mean? Does it give us insight into how inspiration works? That God inspired Paul to write about his imperfect memory so we can know that no human is flawless, even an apostle and thus we don’t trust because an apostle says it, but because after hearing what an apostle has said we examine the evidence for ourselves.

Or do we believe the Bible is divine dictation? The Holy Spirit did not dictate the Scripture but inspired people with truth that the writer then recorded with their own words, experiences, and memories.

- When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. Galatians 2:11-13 NIV84.

Does this tell us about how inspiration works?

Can people who are inspired of God still make mistakes?

If a person is inspired by God, do we believe what they say? Why?

Do we believe because they say it? Do we believe because we believe they are inspired? Do we believe only if we have examined what they say and are convinced it is in harmony with Scripture and His design laws, methods, and character?

Do you remember the story of the old and young prophet recorded in 1 Kings 13?

The young prophet was sent with a message to Jeroboam. This is the story where the altar breaks in two, the king points his hand at the prophet and tells the soldiers to arrest him. The king's hand withers, and he cries for the prophet to pray for him, which he does and his hand is restored. Then the king invites him to stay and eat with him. And the prophet replies with:

- "Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.' " So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel." 1 Kings 13:8-10 NIV84.

On the way home he is met by another prophet, the older prophet, who invites him home to eat with him. The young prophet tells the older prophet the same thing, that he was instructed by the Lord not to stop to eat or drink. But the older prophet replies with,

- "I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: 'Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.' " (But he was lying to him.) 1 Kings 13:18 NIV84.

The younger prophet went home with him and ate with him, and then the scripture says:

- While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "This is what the LORD says: 'You have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers.' " 1 Kings 13:20-22 NIV84.

The Bible doesn't say the older prophet is a false prophet, a prophet of Baal, or another false god, but that the word of the Lord came upon the older prophet and he prophesied what was going to happen and this is what the Bible says:

- As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was thrown down on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. 1 Kings 13:24 NIV84.

Notice the lion killed the younger prophet, but not the donkey and the donkey didn't run away, indicating this is not a natural event.

What is the lesson in all of this?

Do we believe what prophets say because we believe they are true prophets blessed with the special gift of prophesy by God and we are not allowed to think and question?

Or do we still have a responsibility to think, reason, study, and discern for ourselves if what the prophet says is true and applicable to our lives?

- Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Acts 17:11 NIV84.

What made the Bereans more noble? They thought for themselves, reasoned for themselves, and didn't believe until they confirmed with Scripture that what was taught was true.

In other words, they did not believe based on the personal weight of testimony of an Apostle.

Does Jesus want us to believe Him merely because He said so? How did He deal with the men on the road to Emmaus?

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on Revelation and drama, symbols, and parables.

But it seems to overlook that all language is symbolism. Words are not reality. TREE is not a living plant from which you can get wood, or fruit, it is a symbolic representation of the living reality we call a tree.

All language is like this, it is not about the words, but the reality to which we use words to represent.

FRIDAY

Focuses on EGW and the position of the SDA church that she was blessed with the special gift of prophesy.

What is interesting is that for those who do accept that God did reveal things to her in visions and other direct communications, they often fail to realize that not everything she wrote was inspired of God. Far too many people I have met use EGWs writings as the final arbiter of what is true and they live in fear if they find anything in her writings that turns out not to be true. That is because they don't differentiate things which were revealed by God to her, and the things which she reasoned out for herself as a wise human being.

I have already given examples of this with Peter who was inspired of God but did not have everything correct and had to be corrected on more than one occasion, yet that does not diminish the prophetic validity of what was revealed to him.

So, when considering the writings of EGW, do you consider all her writings inspired? What letters to family and friends? What about her grocery lists? What about her own reasoning through problems in which she gives her perspective on things without a direction from the Lord, like Paul said he did?

In the fifth paragraph they quote the following from EGW:

- "There are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written and information given that has passed from one to another of the workers. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God."—Selected Messages, book 1, p. 39.