



WALKING WITH GOD, PART 1

Long Walk to Freedom

April 16, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Genesis 1:27 (NLT) • “So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Matthew 28:20 (NLT) • “And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

John 15:5 (NLT) • “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.”

Acts 2:1-4 (NLT) • “On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. . . . And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “WALKING WITH GOD, PART 1”

We were created to walk with God, to have an intimate everyday relationship with Him. Such was the experience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But sin broke that relationship, and the rest of the sad history of our

earth has been filled with God’s attempts to reconnect with His people. He directed His people to build Him a physical building in which He could live among them but was repeatedly rejected. These attempts culminated in Jesus. Through His life, death, and sacrifice for our sins, God made a way to reconnect with His people eternally.

As people created for a relationship with God, we find our true purpose in that relationship. We live in the midst of the “long walk to freedom” that is God’s plan to bring us back to Him. As we live our everyday lives, there is an unfinished element in our relationship with God, but we are given glimpses of what that friendship might be. We can take positive steps to spend time with God through Bible study and prayer, and get to know Him now through His Holy Spirit. We also look forward to the time when the earth is re-created and God will again dwell with His people (Revelation 21:3).

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “WALKING WITH GOD, PART 1”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Appreciate the role of spending time together as a part of friendship, and particularly as a part of our friendship with God.
2. Learn—or be reminded of—some of the history of God’s attempts to reconnect with His people.
3. Commit to spending time with God every day and forever.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity B) small pieces of paper for each student, pens or pencils of similar colors. (Activity C) a potted plant or weed, preferably of a kind that spreads by roots growing daughter plants; plant identification book.

Connecting • Bibles and/or student lessons.

Applying • Bibles, pens or pencils, student lessons.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Plan to take the students for a five-minute walk, allowing them to talk among themselves as they walk. Plan a safe course for this walk, perhaps around the church grounds, to a nearby park, or other safe place. Have a sufficient number of adults to supervise this activity unobtrusively. Try to avoid distractions to the students or to other Sabbath School classes.

When you return to the room you will discuss the ordinary human interaction involved in going for a walk together.

Get set • Tell the students that a good way to start this week's lesson would be to take a walk. Comment on some of the health and concentration benefits of exercise. Ask them to follow your directions, to stay together as a group, and to be considerate of other classes.

Go • Direct the group along your planned course. Be vigilant but relaxed. Allow the students to interact, talk, and express themselves as comes naturally. Do not rush the walk but try to avoid taking too much of the classtime with this activity. Have students return to the classroom or area and settle again.

Debriefing • **Ask: Who enjoyed the opportunity to get outside and get some exercise?** (A variety of responses are to be expected.)

What did you notice about how you and other students interacted while walking? (Various members of the class will have acted and interacted differently; discuss these differences but highlight the natural interactions that took place.) **How did you interact differently from the way you do in the more formal setting of a classroom?** (more relaxed, more natural, more friendly, more fun)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • The purpose of this activity is to see how well members of the group know one another and to learn more about one another.

Get set • Choose three questions to ask the students. For example, naming their favorite animal, song, food, hero, pet, or anything else other students may not know about them. If possible, have students sit in a circle. Distribute paper and pens or pencils.

Go • Instruct students to number 1 to 3 on their piece of paper and next to each number answer one of the three questions you have posed. They are not to put any other identifying features on their paper. Collect the papers, shuffle them, and hand them out randomly. Go around the circle with each person reading out the three answers on the paper they have been given. The rest of the group then tries to guess whose answers they are reading. Decide how and when to reveal the true writers.

Debriefing • **Ask: Who learned something new about someone else in the class?** (There will usually be something found out that others did not previously know.) **How well or how poorly do we know one another?** (Answers will vary depending on how easily fellow class members were identified.) **How could we get to know one another better?** (spend time together, share common interests, be interested in one another)

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

Bring a plant or weed and a plant book to class. Show photographs or diagrams of how roots work through the soil to find nutrients. If possible, identify the plant and find some interesting facts to teach students about a plant from their local region. Point out how the different parts of the plant support and feed one another and how the plant reproduces itself.

Debriefing • **Ask: How might we compare the Christian life with a plant?** (Suggest the parables of Jesus such as that of the mustard seed [Matthew 13:31, 32] and the vine and the branches [John 15:1-8].) **What do these parables tell us about our connection with God?**

(It is our source of life, it should grow, it should produce fruit.)

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

In your own words, share the following:

Explain that often when pulling out weeds, we find it interesting to discover that seemingly unconnected plants may in fact be part of the same network of roots. Beneath an area of lawn, a large number of such connections may link together many single plants. There is a reality beneath the surface of the lawn. This network is the real target if one is trying to remove the weeds. It is of limited benefit to keep mowing the surface weeds; they will keep coming back. While it may be less than flattering to compare the kingdom of God with a network of weeds, it is interesting to note the number of times Jesus used plants in His parables. As followers of God, we choose to be connected to the underground network that is the reality of the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit" (John 15:5, NLT). It is a choice to remain in Him, to abide in Him: a living, walking, talking connection to God as the source of life.

Point out that as followers of God, we live in a kingdom that is not yet fully in control of our world. It is a reality, but there is another kingdom competing for our loyalty. We make the choice to become a part of God's kingdom. We become a part of that kingdom by choosing to accept God's offer—made possible by Jesus' death for our sins—to reconnect with Him.

Ask: What image do you think of when you hear "the kingdom of God"? (There might be a variety of responses but guide students back to the kingdom of God as a living, growing plantlike reality.) **How can we be connected to the kingdom plant?** (It is our choice through the influence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.) **How do we**

“**remain in Jesus**”? (Through a daily, conscious decision for prayer, Bible study, and practical activities we can undertake to focus our lives and direction on God.)

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath’s section of the lesson.

Say: Throughout history many people have committed and even sacrificed their lives to restore something to the way they believe it should be. It might be an injustice done that needs to be fixed or a challenge that must be beaten. They are the heroes of human history. The story of Nelson Mandela’s “long walk to freedom” is an example of such a struggle from recent history.

Ask: Who are some of your heroes? (A wide variety of answers are possible.) **What do you look for in a hero?** (a winner, someone who overcomes the bad guys, strength, someone who will help those in need, other possibilities)

In your own words, explain that as followers of Jesus and citizens of the kingdom of God, we are involved in our own “long walk to freedom.” The big history of our world has been to rebuild the connection between us and God—to make a wrong right.

Assign the verses in the Bible Insights or from the Daily Readings of the student lesson to different groups or members in the class and ask them to answer the following questions about their verse.

- >> What does this verse tell us about the long struggle for freedom?
- >> How does this verse portray Jesus as the hero of this struggle?
- >> What does this verse tell us about God’s desire to reconnect with us?

If Bibles are available, ask the students to find their verses and read the few verses before and after the assigned texts to get greater insight into the circumstances from which the particular verse comes.

Have each smaller group share their answers with the larger group. Encourage discussion. **Ask: Does Jesus fit the model of a hero?** (Yes; even before humanity became “hopeless,” Jesus decided to become a human, and give His life to conquer the evil one. Jesus gave His life to save each one of us from sin and eternal death. And finally, He will return triumphantly, and we will all “live happily ever after.”)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Say: When someone asks you to go for a walk with them, what are they expecting? Whether it’s time spent together in a break at school, hanging out at a friend’s house, going for a walk in a park, or heading to a nearby woodland for a longer hike, there is more involved socially than simply covering the distance or filling in the time. It is a time to relax together, to connect, and to encourage one another.

If possible, share a story from your own experience (or ask someone else to come in and share one) in which you became friends with someone or were encouraged in this way. Point out that when we enjoy such a time together, we look forward to and plan toward doing it again. A shared experience such as this can be the beginning of a deepening friendship.

Ask: Do any of you go for walks or hikes with friends to talk as much as for the exercise? (Allow a variety of responses and stories, if students are willing to share.) **What are some of the ways we can “walk with God” today?** (spending time with God, Bible study, prayer, worshipping, serving others)

Remind students of the texts from this week’s student lesson that suggest an intimate friendship with God: Genesis 3:8; Exodus 25:8; Revelation 3:20; 21:3. **Ask: What do these texts tell us about God?** (He is a God of love who wants to have a close personal friendship with us.)

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

As a group (this might be done as a whole group or in smaller working groups that will then report back to the larger group), work through the first graphing activity in the How Does It Work? section of the student lesson. Most of the Bible texts are included in the Bible Insights section; have Bibles available for those texts not already included.

Encourage students to consider the spaces between the specified points, which tend to be the high points and big events of this analysis of the history of our world. Explore the significance of each of the plotted events and how they impact upon the relationship between God and us. There may be some variations in interpretation of the events, and these variations can be explained and discussed. Note that this is not a measure of how far God is from us—He promises to be always with us (Matthew 28:20)—rather it explores the distance sin has caused in the relationship between God with His perfect goodness and us with our sin. Having worked through this graphing process, encourage students to complete their personal graph during the coming week. (Some students will have already begun or completed this activity. If so, encourage them to give some additional thought to how they can walk more “with” God rather than “away from” or merely “toward” Him.)

Debriefing • Ask: What can we learn from a graph like this? (We can see a representation of God’s attempts to reconnect with us and humanity’s repeated failures to respond to that.) How important is the renewed closeness of the relationship between God and humanity to the end of the history of this world? (Very important—in fact, it is the point of the whole plan of salvation.) How much do and will our choices affect a graph of our relationship with God? (Our choices determine our “graph” and more important our relationship with God as such.)

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How does recognizing God as a hero affect how we relate to Him?
2. How does recognizing God as a friend affect how we relate to Him?
3. What can we learn from our relationships with others about our relationship with God?
4. Is it important to monitor our relationship with God and how close we are to Him?
5. How do we monitor our closeness to God?
6. What impact does it have on your life to realize the larger history of God’s longing to walk with His people?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

God wants to be friends with us. Throughout the Bible, He repeatedly asks His people for a place and time He can share with them. The language God uses suggests some of the simplest forms of personal interaction: talking, walking, spending time, sharing a meal. Jesus was the living example of this as He lived with humanity and died to pay the price of our sin and to remove the gap sin had created between God and us. One of the key elements of the description of our eternal home in heaven is the statement that now God can live with His people forever. He gives us the invitation to begin this walk today and start growing that incredible friendship that will last forever.



STUDENT LESSON

WALKING WITH GOD, PART 1

Long Walk to Freedom

April 16, 2022

Sabbath

FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 1, The Holy Scriptures:** “The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 7-9.

LONG WALK TO FREEDOM

Nelson Mandela was one of the true heroes of the twentieth century. From his rural upbringing, he struggled to become a lawyer and became involved in the struggle to rid his home country—South Africa—of the system of apartheid, a legal system that forcibly separated people of different colors and races.

Mandela’s work with the African National Congress and his leadership in the Black community attracted the attention of the minority White government. He spent some years living

and traveling in secret, trying to stay out of sight of the authorities.

Inevitably Mandela was arrested, tried for treason, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Mandela was imprisoned with hard labor on Robben Island. Over the 27 years he spent there, Mandela became a still more powerful leader and symbol of the struggle for equality and freedom in South Africa.

In the late 1980s Mandela began secret negotiations with the White South African government—at great personal risk. These delicate talks led to Mandela’s release from prison in early 1990, the reform of South Africa’s political system and the first free elections in South Africa’s modern history, at which Mandela was elected the first Black president of South Africa.

Like all human stories, there are highs and lows, but Mandela’s commitment to the possibility of a peaceful transition to majority rule in South Africa is an inspiring example of noble struggle against seemingly overwhelming odds. It was a struggle to reclaim what Mandela and his people considered rightfully theirs.

Reflecting on his life journey in his autobiography, Mandela comments, “I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare

not linger, for my walk is not yet ended.”—Nelson

Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson*

Mandela (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), p. 617.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 18:20.
- » A group of five teens from your church meet one night each week to do Bible study with some older church members. You have been enjoying the studies and the time spent with the older people. You feel that you are learning a lot and are glad you are coming. Three of the teens told you they are not going to come anymore because they do not feel engaged.
- » What would you say to them? Do you have any ideas that might help the meeting be more interesting for everyone? Why is Bible study and time with God important?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

- » Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.
- » God has given us everything we need to figure out how we should live and how to be ready for heaven. His Word, the Bible, gives us examples of men and women—both their failures and successes. The New Testament tells us about the life and death of God’s Son, Jesus. His life is an example of how we should live and treat others. The Bible tells us what is important and explains the great controversy between God and Satan. It tells us that Jesus is coming again, and explains how to be ready for His coming and life eternal spent with Him in heaven. The Bible was given to us to help us live in a world of sin and prepare us for a world without sin.
- » In what ways do you apply the truths found

in the Bible in your everyday life?

- » What are you doing to take the messages given in the Bible seriously?

- » Unscramble this verse and find out what will help you in this life and prepare you for heaven. Write what it is on the line below.

my lamp Your path a 105 on feet a Psalm
word my 119: light is NIV for

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Revelation 21:3.
- » When God perfectly created our world, He personally spent time with Adam and Eve, walking with them in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, this close relationship was no longer possible—in fact, they hid from God when they heard Him walking in the Garden (see Genesis 3:8).
- » But God already had a plan to rebuild that relationship. He first worked through the people of Israel and lived among them, first in the Sanctuary tent and then in the Temple built in Jerusalem. However, this plan found its fullest reality in Jesus, who was God once again walking with people on the streets of our world. He was “God with us” (see Matthew 1:23).
- » In dying for us, Jesus paid the price for and made the way for our permanent reconnection with God. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to live in us as a continuing presence of God with us, and He promised that one day we will live in the actual presence of God (Revelation 21:3).

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Look up the texts from the New Living Translation and fill in the blanks. If you do not have a New Living Translation, go to www.BibleGateway.com, where you will find many translations of the Bible.

1. Genesis 3:8: "When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God _____ about in the _____. So they _____ from the Lord God among the _____."
2. Exodus 25:8: "Have the _____ of _____ build me a holy _____ so I can live among them."
3. Matthew 18:20: "For where _____ or _____ gather together as my _____, I am there _____ them."
4. Luke 24:15, 27: "As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly _____ and began _____ with them. . . . Then _____ took them _____ the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the _____ the _____ concerning _____."
5. John 1:14: "So the _____ became _____ and made his _____ among us. He was full of _____ and _____. And we have seen his _____, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."
6. Ephesians 3:17: "Then Christ will _____ his home in your _____ as you _____ in him. Your _____ will _____ down into God's _____ and keep you _____."
7. Revelation 3:20: "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you _____ my

_____ and _____ the door, I will come _____, and we will share a meal together as friends."

8. Revelation 21:3: "I _____ a loud shout from the _____ saying, 'Look, God's home is now among his _____! He will live with _____, and they will be _____. God himself will be _____ them.'"

Thursday

CONNECTING

- » Read Revelation 3:20.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Some Bible descriptions of God can be overwhelming to our human minds. Others are more comforting, like of a loving father or mother. All are important and help us have a balanced picture of God and His love. But the most appealing is God wanting to be with us, to share our days, to eat together, and to talk—sometimes seriously, sometimes more lightheartedly. And ultimately, to live with you forever. Wouldn't it be incredible to have such a relationship with God! In fact, this is truly possible. Jesus is willing and ready to start a genuine friendship with you right now!

Friday

APPLYING

- » Read Ephesians 3:12-20.
- » Monitoring the relationship. On these two tables, plot the progress of the relationship between God and humanity. On the first, observe the course of human history and how it reflects humanity's walk with God. For each event listed on the left, decide whether this was a step with God, toward God, or away from God.
- » On the second table, monitor your walk with God. Use the blank spaces to write in

important life events in your own life and walk with God. Note some of the future choices you may have to make. In which

direction do you want those decisions to move you?

TABLE 1:

	With God	Away From God	Toward God
Beginning—Genesis 1:27			
The Fall—Genesis 3:8-10			
Flood—Genesis 6:5-7			
God’s covenant promise to Noah—Genesis 9:14-18			
Sanctuary—Exodus 25:8			
Temple—1 Kings 6:13, 14			
Israel continues to turn away from God—(rest of the Old Testament)			
Jesus—John 1:14			
Resurrection—Luke 24:15, 27			
Holy Spirit—Acts 2:1, 2			
Babylon and this world’s system falls—Revelation 18:1-3			
Forever—Revelation 21:3			

TABLE 2:

	With God	Away From God	Toward God
Birth—Psalm 139:13-16			
A choice—Revelation 3:20			
Growing closer—Ephesians 3:17			
Your future walk			
Forever—Revelation 21:3			

