

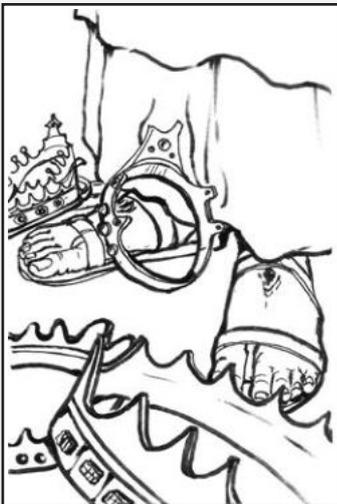
Moving Forward in Faith



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Philippians 2:5–11; Matthew 4:18–20; Acts 9:3–6, 10–20; John 21:15–19.

MEMORY VERSE: “In your lives you must think and act like [the same as] Christ Jesus. Christ himself was like [the same as] God in everything. He was equal with God. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be held on to. He gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like [the same as] a servant” (Philippians 2:5–7, ICB).



“[Jesus] accepted the risk that He may fail and lose everything. When we understand this, we will throw our crowns at His feet.”

JESUS LEFT EVERYTHING to come to this earth. He left behind heaven, the angels, and His face-to-face friendship with God the Father. Jesus came to this evil planet to show us God's love. He came to win back the hearts of humans and to save sinners from death. “We cannot ever understand how much it cost God to save us until we stand with our Savior in front of God's throne. Then we will see heaven's glory. We shall remember that Jesus left all this for us. Jesus left heaven. But He did more than that for us. He accepted the risk that He may fail and lose everything. When we understand this, we will throw our crowns at His feet. We will sing the song, ‘ “The Lamb, who was put to death, is worthy! He is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength! He is worthy to receive honor and glory and praise!” ’ Revelation 5:12 [NirV].”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 131, adapted.

When we work with Jesus to save sinners, we must give up things too. We must move forward in faith and obedience.

JESUS GAVE AT A BIG COST TO HIMSELF (Philippians 2:5–11)

Paul encourages us to let the mind, or thoughts, of Jesus live in us. This leads us to some interesting questions. What was the mind of Jesus? What controlled His thinking? What did He think about?

Read Philippians 2:5–11. How do these verses show what Jesus' thoughts were all about? What important rule controlled His whole life?

From the start, Jesus was equal with God. Paul announces this everlasting truth in these words: “Christ [Jesus] himself was like [the same as] God in everything. He was equal with God. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be held on to” (Philippians 2:6, ICB). The word written as “like” comes from the Greek word “**morphê**.” “**Morphê**” means “what something is made of.” It shows us that two things are equal in worth: the Father and the Son. *The SDA Bible Commentary* says: “Jesus is equal with the Father. He is above every other power. Paul tells us this to show us that Jesus came down very low when He became a human.”—Volume 7, page 154, adapted. Ellen G. White adds, “In Jesus is life. This life does not come from anything else. It was not made. It is not borrowed from anything.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 530, adapted.

Jesus was equal to God from the start. “But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing” (Philippians 2:7, NCV). This wording “made himself nothing,” has an interesting meaning in the Greek. These words can be written as “to empty.” So, Jesus freely chose to “empty Himself” of His honor and glory as God’s equal. Then He chose to become born as a man and live in a human body. He became a servant to humans. He showed heaven’s law of love to everyone in heaven. Then He showed the biggest act of love: He died on the cross for our sins. He gave His life to save ours forever.

Jesus’ thoughts were filled with love. His love made Him give up His life. We follow Jesus when we love as He loved. We also must serve as He served. We must work as He worked. We must let the Holy Spirit empty us of selfish wishes and plans. To do this will cost us something. It cost Jesus everything. But that is why the Bible says, “God raised [honored] Christ to the highest [most important] place. God made the name of Christ greater [gave it more honor and glory] than every other name” (Philippians 2:9, ICB).



**We follow Jesus when
we love as He loved.**

JESUS' INVITATION (Matthew 4:18–22)

Make this picture in your mind: Peter and Andrew are in their boats. It is a beautiful morning in Galilee. The sun takes the chill from the air. Peter and Andrew think about catching fish. A lot of fish. The fishing has been good these days. So, Peter and Andrew hope they will have another good day. Then in the early morning light, Peter and Andrew see someone walking to them. It is Jesus of Nazareth. They have no idea that soon their lives will change forever.

Read Matthew 4:18–22. How do these verses show us that Jesus wants Peter and Andrew to do more than catch fish? Why do you think Peter and Andrew decide to follow Jesus?

John in his Gospel tells us that he and Peter already knew Jesus for more than a year. But John and Peter have not given their lives fully to Jesus. There must be something in Jesus' words, face, or actions that shows Peter and John that Jesus invites them to serve God. Peter and John leave their boats, jobs, and everything they know to follow Jesus. Why? Jesus invites them to do something more with their lives. Peter and John are ordinary fishermen. But they understand that Jesus asks them to do something very special. Maybe God is not asking you to leave your job today. But He wants you to do something special for Him. He wants you to share His love. He also wants you to tell people about His truth and bring glory to His name.



Jesus invites Matthew to follow Him.

Look at Jesus' invitation to Matthew, the tax collector, in Matthew 9:9. Why is this so surprising?

Tax collectors in the kingdom of Rome often took money from other people by force. So, tax collectors were hated in Israel. But Jesus invites this tax collector to follow Him. Jesus' invitation shows us that Matthew heard about Jesus and wished to follow Him with all his heart. When Jesus invites Matthew, Matthew is ready. Matthew is surprised that Jesus wants him to be one of His followers.

Deep in our hearts, we want more in life too. We want to live for something bigger than ourselves. That is why Jesus asks us to follow Him the same as Matthew.

Think about what people have to give up to follow Jesus. Why, in the end, will it always be worth it?

PAUL: GOD'S CHOSEN LEADER (Acts 9:3–6, 10–20)

When Paul accepts Jesus, Paul's whole life changes in every way. Jesus gives Paul a whole new future. Jesus also leads Paul into experiences that he never dreamed were possible. The Holy Spirit guides Paul and helps him to preach Bible truth to thousands of people living around the Mediterranean Sea. Paul's message changes the history of Christianity and the rest of human history too.

Read Acts 9:3–6, 10–20. How do these verses show us that Jesus has a plan for Paul's life?

Jesus often chooses people that we do not expect. Think about the two men filled with demons. Or the Samaritan woman at the well. Mary Magdalene. A tax collector. Fishermen. And now Paul, the man who attacks Christians! All these men and women are changed by God's mercy and love. Then Jesus sends them out to serve Him with joy in their hearts. They tell the story of everything that Jesus did in their lives. They never get tired of telling the story. What Jesus did for them is so wonderful that they must share it. They cannot stay silent.

Compare Acts 28:28–31 and 2 Timothy 4:5–8. What do we see in these verses that shows us that Paul gives his whole life to serve Jesus?

At the end of his life, Paul says, " 'God has sent his salvation [the Good News that Jesus saves sinners from the punishment of sin] to the non-Jewish people. They will listen [hear]!' " (Acts 28:28, ERV). The book of Acts says that Paul meets with anyone who visits him. Paul preaches the Good News to them (Acts 28:30, 31). At the end of his life, Paul tells Timothy to do the work of a preacher. Paul says about himself, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7, ICB).

Maybe our experience is not as exciting as Paul's. God invites us to work with Him anyway. Paul has many hard times in life (2 Corinthians 11:25–30). But Paul stays loyal to God. Paul's story is powerful. It shows what God can do with someone who gives his life fully to God.

What has God asked you to do? Are you doing it?



Jesus often chooses people that we do not expect just as He chose the Samaritan woman.

WHAT LOVE ASKS OF US (John 21:15–19)

Love always shows itself in what we do. Our love for Jesus causes us to do something for people who are lost. Paul tells the same thing to the church at Corinth: “the love of Christ puts us into action” (2 Corinthians 5:14, NLV). Christianity is not only about giving up bad things so that we can be saved. Jesus did not “give up” bad things in heaven so that He could be saved. He gave up good things so that He could save other people. Jesus does not invite us to give only our time, talents, and treasures to His cause. Jesus also invites us to give Him our lives.

One morning, Jesus met with His followers on the beach in front of the Sea of Galilee. There, Jesus told His followers all about love and what love asks of us.

Read John 21:15–19. As we see from these verses, what question does Jesus ask Peter three times? What is Peter’s answer? Why does Jesus ask Peter this question three times?



Love causes us to help people in time of need.

Peter rejected Jesus by his words three times. So, Jesus asks Peter for an answer of love from Peter’s own lips three times. Jesus does this in front of His followers to rebuild their trust in Peter and Peter’s trust in Him. Jesus wants Peter to believe that God forgives him. Also, Jesus wants Peter to see that God has work for him to do.

Read John 21:15–19 again. This time pay special attention to Jesus’ answer to Peter’s love for Jesus. What does Jesus tell Peter to do?

God’s love always takes action. Real love is more than a warm feeling and a nice idea. Real love is about giving yourself fully to someone. Love causes us to act. Love causes us to help people in need. Jesus says to Peter, “‘Take care of my lambs,’” (John 21:15, ERV). This is both a command and words of comfort. Jesus asks Peter to answer His love. Jesus also encourages Peter to believe that God wants him to continue to work for Him, even after Peter turned away from Jesus. Peter behaved as if he did not know Jesus. Worse, Jesus told Peter it would happen.

Why are we talking about this topic? Because you may have failed your Lord many times the same as Peter. The good news is that God forgives you. He is not done with you. He has work for you to do if you are willing to do it.

LOVE'S PROMISE (John 21:18, 19)

Jesus and Peter finish their conversation. They walk along the beach. As the waves come to shore, Jesus tells Peter how much it costs to be His follower. Jesus wants Peter to understand fully what he will experience if he accepts Jesus' invitation to " 'Take care of my lambs,' " (John 21:15, ERV).

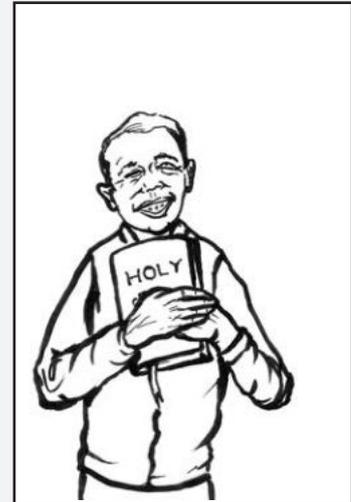
Read John 21:18, 19. What does Jesus tell Peter about how much it costs to follow Him? Why do you think Jesus shows something so surprising to Peter at this time?

In John 21:18, 19, Jesus tells Peter how he will die. Peter's hands will be stretched on a cross. Why does Jesus tell Peter about his death before it happens? Jesus wants to give Peter a choice. Jesus offers Peter life's biggest joy: seeing people saved for God's kingdom. On the day of Pentecost, Peter will see thousands of people accept Jesus. Pentecost is the time when God pours His Spirit on His church after Jesus goes back to heaven. Peter will do miracles in Jesus' name. Peter also will give glory to God in front of many more thousands of people. Peter will have the everlasting joy of working with Jesus. But that reward will come with a price. Peter must give up his life. Jesus does not hide this truth from Peter. Peter now knows that he will give up anything that Jesus asks him to give.

Read 1 John 3:16–18. What does John say that real love is? How do we show that our love is real?

In heaven, we will feel that we did not do enough for Jesus. Jesus will give us far more in heaven than we ever gave Him in this life. That is why we should be happy to show our love for Jesus by our words and actions. We show God we love Him when we do not hold anything back from Him. God's love also helps us to share Bible truth with people and show them Jesus. Then we live out God's plan for our lives. Jesus says, " 'Now you know these things. So you will be blessed if you do them' " (John 13:17, NIV). Share God's truth and His love. Live your life for Him. When you give God glory, you will know real joy and lasting happiness.

Make a picture in your mind of everlasting life with Jesus. How does that picture look? Share it with the class.



When you give God glory, you will know real joy and lasting happiness.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “The leaders in charge of the church should find ways to include every church member in some part of God’s work. This has not been done enough in the past. The talents of everyone in the church should be used to serve God. Plans should be made and followed to do that. Very few people understand how much we as a church have lost because we have not followed this advice.

“The leaders in God’s cause must be wise as generals. They must make plans to move forward. They must study the work that can be done by church members for their friends and neighbors. God’s work on this earth cannot be finished until church members do the work that needs to be done. They must join with the pastors and church leaders.

“The work to save people includes personal work that we all must do. We must share with other people Bible truth. We must not wait for people to come to us. I wish I could find the right words to say to men and women to wake them up and cause them to work! We do not have much time left. We are standing on the border to everlasting life. We have no time to waste. Every second is important. Time is too precious to use it to please ourselves. Who will seek God? Who will get strength and power from God to be His loyal workers on this earth?

“In every church there are skills. These skills may be developed to become a wonderful help in God’s work. That will happen when our people use these skills in the right jobs. What we now need the most to build up our churches are workers who understand the talents that are in the church. These talents must be developed. We must educate ourselves to use our talents for God.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, pages 116, 117, adapted.



“I wish I could find the right words to say to men and women to wake them up and cause them to work!”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What is the most important idea in the Ellen G. White quote above? How can developing our gifts and talents change the way we share Jesus with people? How can it make your church’s message about Jesus to other people stronger too?
- ② How is real love always shown? What are some examples of love that are not real?
- ③ Talk about the things that people give up for the Lord. What about people who lost their lives for their faith? What can you learn from these stories?

INSIDE
Story

by GLENN ERNFORD LIE

**A WOMAN WHO HAD
A BABY INSIDE HER
BELLY FOR TWO
YEARS**

Fanta Camara was excited when she saw the bump on her belly. But as the bump grew big, she started to feel sick. So she went to the hospital in Conakry, Guinea. A doctor examined her belly. "You aren't going to have a baby," he said.

Fanta didn't believe the doctor. She asked a nurse in her family to look at her. "There is a baby in your belly," she said. "You will have a baby!"

Fanta was happy but still sick. The family member wasn't sure how to help Fanta. So Fanta went to another hospital. The doctor there said, "You are not going to have a baby." Fanta visited a third hospital. "You are going to have a baby," the doctor said. But he didn't know how to help Fanta. As the weeks passed, Fanta felt worse. She could hardly walk.

Five months passed. Then a stranger showed up in her bedroom. He had a man's feet and legs. But he had a leopard's face and chest. Fanta was scared. "You will not have that child in your belly!" the stranger said. He turned and walked out the bedroom wall. Or at least it looked that way to Fanta.

The next night, the stranger again showed up in her bedroom. "You will not have that child in your belly," he said. Every night he visited Fanta and said the same awful words.

A year passed. Then two years. Fanta felt awful. Then she remembered Tranquille Fassinadouno. He was the only Christian in her neighborhood. So Fanta stayed away from him. But Fanta was in deep trouble. Tranquille was a Global Mission worker. He heard Fanta's story. Then he prayed and ate no food for three days. During that time, Tranquille asked God for wisdom.

Then Tranquille went to Fanta. He opened his Bible to Ephesians 6:12 and read, "Our fight is not with people. It is against the leaders and the powers and the spirits of darkness in this world [on this earth]. It is against the demon world [powers of darkness] that works in [against] the heavens [God's government]" (NLV).

Tranquille said, "All spirits who do not confess the name of Jesus Christ leave right now in the name of Jesus Christ." Then Tranquille turned to Fanta and said, "If you see that evil spirit again, you must command it to leave in Jesus' name."

That night, Fanta lay on her bed when the evil spirit showed up again. Before he said anything, she said, "Leave in the name of Jesus Christ." The evil spirit disappeared. It never came back again.

Three days later, Fanta's baby was born. It was a healthy baby girl. "I believe in Jesus now," Fanta said.



"You will not have that child in your belly!" the stranger said.



Thank you for your 13th Sabbath gifts of money. They will help people in Guinea and in other places in West-Central Africa learn about Jesus. Fanta Camara is pictured above with her baby.