

Making Ellen White User-Friendly in the New Millennium

BY CINDY TUTSCH

Several new products, available from the White Estate, are useful tools for introducing Ellen White to children.

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The terrorist bombings on September 11, 2001, in the United States have generated a high level of interest in Adventist eschatology among children and youth around the world. I was traveling in Europe for the Ellen G. White Estate the week of September 11 and returned home to a screen filled with E-mail questions and comments about Ellen White's view of end-time events from young adults and others in various parts of the world. Though the circumstances that precipitated the renewed interest in Ellen White are tragic, they do present an opportunity to introduce her messages of courage, hope, and security centered in Jesus that are so needed at this time.¹

During speaking appointments at Adventist schools and youth convocations in several world divisions, I have found that many Adventist young people don't know

who Ellen White is, why the Seventh-day Adventist Church considers her to be a prophetic messenger from God, or why her messages remain relevant to youth today.

To make Ellen White “come alive,” I adapt the biographical data in the sidebar on page 6 to the age group to whom I am speaking.

Very young children can be introduced to Ellen White through a retelling of her familiar stories and visions. (See page 9 for a bibliography of children’s books available at Adventist Book Centers.) When I tell Bible stories to young children at a Week of Prayer, I first read the biblical account of the story, then the amplified commentary from Ellen White, which I usually find in the Conflict of the Ages Series or through a word search on the Ellen G. White CD-ROM.

The interactive CD, *Legacy of Light*, is also a useful tool to introduce Ellen White to children. Though it was produced primarily for adults, segments of the *Legacy CD* are interesting to children as well, including the time lines for Adventist history, the photo gallery, and the video vignettes relating to the life and ministry of Ellen White. The Learning Center segment, developed for children, teaches them about Ellen White through painting, puzzles, and memory games. The *Legacy of Light CD* is available at Adventist Books Centers or through the Ellen G. White Estate.²

Children aged 10 and older may enjoy listening to segments of Ellen White’s earlier works, such as her vision of heaven in *Early Writings*. The Magabook edition of *Christ’s Object Lessons* titled *He Taught Love* contains several stories that middle-school-aged children appreciate, such as *The Little Lost Lamb*, *The Runaway*, and *Are You My Neighbor?*

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they also want to know about the failures. What better place to find hope and forgiveness drawn out of the failures so honestly described in *Prophets and Kings* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*? From Abraham’s huge mistrust of God; to David’s lying, murder, and adultery; to the almost total failure of the community of God’s people to live

usually preface this with an interactive Bible study on the Spirit of Prophecy (see the sidebar on page 8), helping the children chain-reference the texts in their Bibles for future reference. Non-Adventist students are frequently more open to the idea of modern-day revelation than we might think!

High school and college-aged youth, particularly in Western countries, have been bombarded by postmodern thinking and attitudes from almost every media. However, Ellen White’s writings can also reach the needs of this generation.

Easy or pat answers are simply not acceptable to post-moderns. They know that life is complicated and messy, and they are opposed to simplistic solutions. What post-moderns want most is to see and hear how others are living out their Christianity. They learn best through stories, especially authentic stories. In what better place does God’s story intersect with their story than in the *Desire of Ages*?

Consider the chapter titled “Days of Conflict.” What young person could not identify with the teenage and young adult Jesus described there? As young people read the “Why” of the crucifixion—all that suffering, all that dying, all that love, and all for them—they’re identifying with One who understands their pain, their abandonment, their rejection.

Or consider the grand parable stories of *Christ’s Object Lessons*, or the energy and idealism of the young church in *Acts of the Apostles*. Students want their spirituality to be real and transparent. They don’t want to just hear Christian success stories,

beyond the facade of their own formalized religion, it's all there. But unlike the despair, depression, and futility of much of today's media entertainment, the messages of God brim with hope—and best of all, point unfailingly to Jesus as the solution to all of life's perplexities and conflicting claims.

One subject that rates high with teens is last-day events—including the mark of the beast, the seven last plagues, the time of trouble, Armageddon, the end of probation, 666, the assurance of salvation—all of these. The need for youth to understand and express their thoughts and feelings on these subjects can be used by the Holy Spirit as an opening to prepare them for the crises of life. During my youth ministry over the past 30 years, I have studied Ellen White's book *The Great Controversy* with hundreds of students.

With younger children, I study only selected chapters, particularly the closing ones, reading them together, pausing often for discussion and clarification of unfamiliar terms and vocabulary. Older teens may be capable of reading chapters on their own. In either case, I have found the understanding and appreciation for the book increases with open discussion and comparison with biblical references.

When we come to a passage or statement that stimulates differences of opinion or controversy, I urge the students to read more of what Ellen White wrote on the subject before forming a conclusion about what she meant. I help them examine the context, both internal and external, as we discuss whether the counsel is an enduring principle application that might change with circumstances. I point

About Ellen White

Ellen Harmon was born in Gorham, Maine, on November 26, 1827. From an early age, she had a strong interest in spiritual things. Ellen gave her heart to Jesus at age 12 after hearing William Miller lecture on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. At age 14, Ellen was baptized by immersion and became a member of the Methodist Church, which disfellowshipped her and her family the next year for believing in the literal, imminent return of Jesus.

Two months after the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, Ellen, frail and ill, went by wheelchair to a prayer group at the home of her friend, Mrs. Haines. As they were praying, the Holy Spirit came close with a special sense of assurance, and Ellen received her first vision. She saw a path elevated above the earth. At the beginning of the path was a light, which the angelic commentator told her was the *Midnight Cry*. Those who rejected that message were represented as falling off the path to heaven into the dark world below.

A week after that first vision, God sent Ellen another vision, in which He called her to be His messenger. Because Ellen was shy and sensitive, she was at first very reluctant to speak or pray publicly, and especially to deliver

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of His love and desire for the people to change their lives and be able to enjoy His presence for eternity.

Ellen Harmon married her good friend, James White, in 1846. The couple had four boys, two of whom lived to adulthood. Together with Joseph Bates, Ellen and James founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

During Ellen White's 70 years of public ministry, she received about 2,000 visions, which she incorporated into more than 100,000 handwritten manuscript pages that formed the basis for more than 135 books. She is the world's most-translated woman author and the most-translated American author of either sex. Her writings on salvation (her favorite topic), wellness, education, relationships, parenting, evangelism, social justice, and the authority of Scripture have unified the Seventh-day Adventist Church despite the diversity of culture, understanding,

messages about God's disappointment and disapproval of people's attitudes or activities. Gradually, she came to understand that God sent these messages because

and religious practice of its 12 million members.

During Ellen White's long career, she helped establish schools, colleges, hospitals, and publishing plants in North America, Europe, and Australia. She loved youth and was a favorite devotional speaker of students of all ages. She also enjoyed hiking, sailing, gardening, baby animals, and sewing. Ellen White was a "real" person: She sometimes had her feelings hurt by her friends, struggled with her weight, and had occasional misunderstandings in her marriage. She loved her children and sent them many letters when she was traveling to spread the gospel, occasionally enclosing a piece of candy. Most of all, Ellen White loved Jesus and wrote and preached more about Him than any other topic.

Ellen White promoted social activism in her writings, urging Christians to respond to the needs of the poor and suffering. She practiced continual acts of compassion and mercy in her personal life, even supporting movements to combat systemic injustice, such as slavery. She became a popular orator at temperance rallies. Mrs. White was a bold and fearless champion of the law of God and its claims on humanity, particularly the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as a response to Christ's work of grace upon the heart.

Ellen White urged children and youth to become an army of workers to carry the "Good News" of the gospel to their friends, family, and communities. Ellen White died at age 87 at her home in northern California. Her last words were, "I know in Whom I have believed."

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out that the greatest aid to understanding a prophet's writings is the Holy Spirit and that God's people throughout history have often grieved the Spirit by refusing to accept counsel from prophets who

condemned their unbiblical lifestyle. We discuss the possibility of contemporary parallels to our spiritual condition in Jesus'

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American Division ABCs by camp meeting time in 2002. *A Call to Stand Apart* uses selections from Ellen White's writings that deal with important issues faced by today's young people. To communicate successfully with the potentially large audience of youthful readers who watch satellite television, communicate via E-mail, and gather information from the Internet, sentences and paragraphs have been condensed and outmoded language has been updated. However, every effort has been made to be faithful to the content, ideas,

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY YOUTH BIBLE STUDY

What the Bible Says About Extrabiblical Prophets

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| Matt. 24:24 | Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets." If there were to be no true prophets, He would have said, "Beware of prophets, period." So if there are FALSE prophets, then there must be true prophets. |
| Eph. 4:11-13 | In every list of the gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28), prophecy is listed. |
| Rev. 12:17 | The last church of God will have the gift of prophecy (Revelation 19:10 says the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy). |
| Amos 3:7 | God will reveal to a prophet what we need to know in order to be saved. Prophets are a blessing! Don't despise them! |
| Joel 2:28-30 | God has given the gift of prophecy already many times and will again in the future. Be ready to test the prophets by Scripture. |

Tests of a True Prophet

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| Isa. 8:20 | Many persons claim to be prophets. If they contradict Scripture, they are false prophets. |
| Jer. 28:9 | A true prophet's predictions should come to pass (unless it's a conditional prophecy like Jonah's. See Jeremiah 18:7, 8). |
| Matt. 7:20 | The fruits or lifestyle of a true prophet will be like Jesus. Money-grabbing "prophets" or sexually immoral "prophets" are false prophets. |
| Acts 4:12 | True prophets will direct people to Jesus only for salvation, not for penance, pilgrimages, and human works. The Jesus to whom a true prophet points is God Himself, in whom is "life, original, unborrowed, underived." (See John 1:1-4, 14.) |
| Jer. 23:16, 17 | A true prophet will let us know what we're doing wrong, even if it makes him or her unpopular. |

parables in

Mark 12:1-9 and Luke 16:19-31.

Because fewer than seven percent of North American Division Adventist youth are regularly reading Ellen White,³ the Ellen G. White Estate is preparing the first publication of her writings in language adapted to reach contemporary youth. The book, titled *A Call to Stand Apart*, is projected for availability at all North

This Bible study format works well for chain referencing. For the entire series of youth Bible studies in this format, send an E-mail to CindyTutsch@compuserve.com/.

Bibliography of Ellen White-Related Children's/Youth Books Available at Adventist Book Centers

1. *Michael Asks Why*, Ellen G. White's Classic *The Great Controversy* adapted for children.
Author: Sally Pierson Dillon
Age: Early Readers
Publisher: Pacific Press
2. *Ellen: The Girl With the Two Angels*
Author: Mabel Miller
Age: 7-9 Years
Publisher: Pacific Press
3. *Grandma Ellen and Me*
Author: Mabel Miller
Age: 7-9 Years
Publisher: Pacific Press
4. *Stories of My Grandmother*
Author: Ella M. Robinson
Age: 9 to Adult
Publisher: Review and Herald
5. *Ellen White: Friend of Angels*
Author: Paul B. Ricchiuti
Age: High School to Adult
Publisher: Pacific Press
6. *Camp Meeting Angel/The Little Girl Who Giggled*
Author: Paul B. Ricchiuti
Age: 6-9 Years
Publisher: Review and Herald
7. *Charlie Horse/Mrs. White's Secret Sock*
Author: Paul B. Ricchiuti
Age: 6-9 Years
Publisher: Review and Herald
8. *Where's Moo Cow?*
Author: Paul B. Ricchiuti
Age: 6-9 Years
Publisher: Review and Herald
9. *God Spoke to a Girl*
Author: Dorothy Nelson
Age: Preschool 0-5 Years
Publisher: Pacific Press
10. *Heal the World*
Author: Adaptation of *The Ministry of Healing*
Age: Teens
Publisher: Pacific Press
11. *Victory of the Warrior King*
Author: Sally Pierson Dillon
Age: Junior High
Publisher: Review and Herald
12. *Steps to Christ* Youth Edition
Author: Ellen G. White
Age: 12-20 years
Publisher: Review and Herald
13. *War of the Invisibles: The Story of the Great Controversy*
Author: Sally Pierson Dillon
Age: Juniors
Publisher: Review and Herald
14. *Messiah* (Derived from the *Desire of Ages*)
Author: Jerry Thomas
Age: 15-18 years
Publisher: Pacific Press

These Review and Herald books and others are available at your local Adventist Book Center. Call 1-800-765-6955 or shop online at www.adventistbookcenter.com.

and principles set forth by Ellen White.

Each chapter is prefaced by the testimony of a young adult who has found in Ellen White's books the inspiration that he or she would like to have others share. A companion video, *eDream*, introduces Ellen White to student viewers. It features an unexpected story line and testimonials from young adults around the world, as well as credible responses by scholars from various Adventist universities to negative Web site accusations about Ellen White.

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The trustees of the White Estate, who have endorsed this project, hope that thousands of young readers will find *A Call to Stand Apart* so compelling, interesting, and inspiring that they will go on to explore the deep spiritual riches found in Ellen White's standard writings.

As events in our world remind us that "our redemption draweth nigh," may we as teachers and educators make renewed and creative efforts to help our students catch the vision and live out the dream!

For more information about Ellen White and her contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, visit www.whiteestate.org/. ☞

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Cindy Tutsch is an Associate Director of the Ellen White Estate at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her focus is to present to youth the joy of reading and living God's counsel as expressed in Ellen White's writings. She has received the Zapara Award for excellence in teaching and the Master Teacher commendation from the Michigan Conference. She can be contacted at CindyTutsch@compuserve.com.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See, for example, *Great Controversy*, pages 677, 678; *Desire of Ages*, page 91; *Steps to Christ*, page 100; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, page 148; *The Ministry of Healing*, page 398; *God's Amazing Grace*, page 157; and *Maryanatha*, page 352.
2. The Ellen G. White Estate has commissioned development of a state-of-the-art Ellen White interactive CD exclusively for children ages 4-12, which is expected to be available by Christmas of 2002.
3. *Valuegenesis2Update*, John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry (October 2001), p. 2.