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**Sabbath
School
Personal
Ministries**

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of the Sabbath School Publications Board, a subcommittee of the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM), publisher of the Bible study guides. The published guide reflects the input of worldwide evaluation committees and the approval of the Sabbath School Publications Board and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).



The mind, someone said, is never satisfied, never. That's because it faces a cruel paradox: the mind, which can contemplate the eternal, is composed of matter that isn't eternal—and, worst of all, the mind knows that it is not eternal. Like chickens and oysters, we are going to die. The difference, however, is that chickens and oysters don't know it. We do—and that realization causes us a great deal of anguish and suffering.

How did we get into this mess? The answer is, of course, one word: *sin*. Sin leads to death. Humans sin—therefore, humans die. It doesn't get simpler than that.

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned” (*Rom. 5:12, NRSV*).

Yes, humans die. And here's the rub: we were never supposed to. We were originally created for eternal life. The plan, from the start, was that we would live forever. Death, then, is an intruder—the most unnatural of all acts. We're so used to death that we take it for granted; we just accept it as “part of life.”

Death as part of life? If that sounds absurd and paradoxical, it's because it is. Death is the negation of life, not some aspect of it.

In this context, we come to this quarter's lesson. Perhaps it can be best expressed by the famous quote, in which Ellen G. White writes that the great theme of the Bible is “the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man

that which it is not in his power to do for himself.”—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 109.

And what is it that God does for us that we don't have the power to do for ourselves? Of course, He saves us from the most unnatural of acts, death—the eternal death that would be ours were it not for God's grace as revealed in the plan of salvation. In other words, it's the call to us, both as individuals and as a church, “to seek the Lord and live.”

That's the theme we are going to study, that of God doing for us what we can never do for ourselves, which is to give us the gift of life, eternal life in Jesus. We are, however, going to explore it in a place where we don't often go, the “Minor Prophets,” the twelve short books that end the Old Testament. These prophets have been dubbed “the Minor Prophets,” not because they are of less importance than the Major ones but only because their books are much shorter than those from the other Old Testament writers.

Indeed, whether through the marriage of Hosea to an unfaithful wife, or Jonah's attempt to flee God's prophetic call, or Zechariah's amazing vision of Joshua and the angel (and with all the others, as well)—the Minor Prophets together have a powerful message, one that comes through again and again, which is about God's grace toward undeserving sinners. The message is that God wants to save us from our sins, to save us from the devastation that sin, rebellion, and disobedience bring. Over and over in these books we see the Lord pleading with His people to repent, to put away their sins, to return unto Him, and to find life, not death, salvation, not damnation, hope, not despair.

There is nothing “minor” about that theme. It's present truth—God's message to us today is the same one He gave to those who lived in the time of these twelve writers who, though long gone, still speak.

The question is, will we listen? The answer is Yes, for it is a matter of life and death.

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LIFT THEM UP



The Adventist medical clinic in Mwanza, Tanzania, eastern Africa, treats up to 3,000 patients a month. People come from the city and from a hundred miles out in the bush to receive reliable, compassionate care. The clinic's 15 beds are full, and patients often prefer to wait for treatment until the clinic can accommodate them rather than be treated at another medical facility in the city.

The Adventist members in Tanzania have joined

hands to build a 160-bed, fully equipped, hospital to serve the millions who live in its treatment area. They've built half the building; now they need our help to finish. I'm glad that part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help make this hospital a reality and save lives—physically and spiritually—in Tanzania.

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