

Why Should I Listen to Ellen White?

The Mini-Fundamental series

by Chris Famisaran

Man, how many of you are blessed by our worship team? Thank you so much, everyone, greatly appreciate you. Let's pray. Father in heaven. Thank you, Lord for the opportunity to come together and continue our series Lord, be with us in Jesus name, amen.

Several years ago, David Cobb wrote an article on CBS Sports. Back in January of 2020. Noted I should say legendary basketball coach, Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski had to apologize for losing his temper in front of students at the Cameron Indoor Stadium, because he thought that they were jeering and making fun of the opposing coach. And yet it was quite the opposite. They were welcoming him back because coach Jeff Capelle, who was coaching the University of Pittsburgh Panthers, had been a player under Coach K in the 1990s. And so when Coach K heard couple's name being chanted, he was confused. He was enraged students, cameras caught him shouting, while more appropriate way of saying hush up to the students even walked over to the section at the Games. First half concluding, he's one of us. Come to find out later, Coach K was unfortunately embarrassed to find out that the students knew and actually agreed. And he told the reporters after the game, I thought it was something personal. And I apologize to all of the students for that, compelled, told reporters that he was even unaware of the exchange. He said, I heard him I heard them yell, I don't even know what they were saying I was locked into the competition. And so Coach Capelle he was good to go. He was ready, he was ready to fight. And Coach K trying to stand up for one of his own. Now, oftentimes, we sometimes perhaps come to conclude, click to conclusions rather quickly. Have you ever come to a conclusion and then come to find out you were 100% Wrong? Did you maybe feel a sense of embarrassment, a pit in your stomach? And then realize I gotta apologize. You know, truth be told, I think we've all probably made this mistake at least once being misunderstood. happens probably more than we would like to admit where we get things wrong.

One of the things that we have perhaps maybe done over the years, especially in this in the Adventist Church is we've misunderstood Ellen White's role. So today, I'm going to talk about how we should see her as an authority figure here in the church. Last week, we kind of talked about who she was. And again, it was a very brief biography. Today. Again, it's going to be very brief, we could spend days on this topic alone. So I'm just going to give you a very, very quick overview of how she can be beneficial to helping us understand and why she was important to the church. Ellen White has a very she's viewed in different ways. Some love her and appreciate her writings, some completely discount her. Some. Let's put it this way. They sometimes maybe idolize her. And yet what was her purpose? We consider her what? a prophet. But if you read she never called herself a prophet, what did she call herself. Servant of God, also may be a messenger messenger kind of semantics, but it was never her idea to try to be to to build up this church that she could wield with an iron fist. She was simply a part of the group. And yes, God did use her in many ways to be able to help people move forward. He helped her to basically get to conclusions faster, God could have still worked with the people and they could have come to one understanding what God wanted to have them be known to them. But God used Ellen White in a very powerful way, especially early in the church.

Now was Ellen White, perfect? Absolutely not. She was a human being, just like every one of us. She experienced emotions, she experienced hardship. She lost a child. And so, you know, there's many things that we can take, though from her life, and kind of just dispel some of the misunderstandings that we may have of her. So I think oftentimes, we think of her as this, this prophet that we should listen to with utmost authority to, to every thing she said, or wrote. Now, if we take that literally, that can lead us down a very dangerous path, because did everything Ellen White, write, or say, was it inspired? Does that just automatically happen because you're a prophet should be told no, because she was a normal human being. And the span of what she tried to share with people. She didn't just talk about theological matters. She didn't talk just about spiritual matters. She also talked about health, wellness, education, she was a huge advocate for education. And early on, especially to them they they didn't just talk about spiritual matters. They wanted to make sure that people could be able to well, in a sense, be whole. If you're enslaved, could you be whole? No, because you're working for somebody

else, you could be beaten, you could be whipped. And so she fought for the rights of people. She the Adventist movement was not just about hearing that Jesus was returning. It wasn't just to improve the lives of us for the future. But even now, even if you were here for our Sabbath School lesson, that's one of the blessings that God doesn't just want us to be well in the future. But God wants us to have a wonderful, beautiful life, and that it may be a full life. Amen? Do you not want to live a life that is full and joyful?

Okay, so today, we're going to primarily talk about how can we better understand and just for transparency, I may or may not have borrowed quite a bit of material from our unofficial church historian George Knight, do you want to understand the history of the Adventist church, going get his books, wonderful, love that guy. He writes with enthusiasm, he's very passionate. And he is able to kind of dispel a lot of the rumors and misunderstandings. And so when we, when we look at Ellen White's writings, and I do quote her maybe not as often as you probably think, just because I don't use her name, necessarily, I may say an inspired writer, whatever. But when you look at her writings, you have to look at first, the big picture. Okay, what are some of the themes? What are what is she focusing on? What are some of the central issues? Oftentimes, when you when you look at her writings, there's this idea of the great controversy, right? Kind of talked about that a little bit last week. What does that mean? The Great Controversy is the what? The battle between good and evil. Who are you going to allow to rule your life? Are you going to allow God? Or do you want to let the world through you? Where are you going to have a better life? We're supposed to say God, right. But yet the world is it not so tempting every once in a while? Because there's so many flashy things, I want this, I want that. And if we follow that path, for sure, we could probably find it. But are we going to be happy? Are we going to be fulfilled, because you can only try to fulfill your selfish desires. And at some point, you realize, this is a dead end road. Amen. So look at the big, big picture of what she was trying to, to share, obviously, second coming of Jesus Christ, it was important, but also the great plan, the great controversy, but especially to later in her life. This was very, very pivotal of the plan of redemption of how Jesus saves us. Amen. And when she wrote she didn't write, "well, this is what I think" She points to Scripture. Just as the Bible has taught us that in everything in our beliefs and everything, if it's not rooted in Scripture, should we trust it? Okay, so is it does it

align with the biblical principles? And you also have to remember that when you look at her writings, you have to emphasize what what's the important things and when you read her writings, we should be able to look at

All the material to have a balanced perspective, much like when we go to the Bible, am I going to just want to read part of a verse and take that as gospel? If you do that, you can come up with some crazy ideas. Amen. And if you try to do that, okay, so how many of you truth be told, maybe when you were a baby Christian, you would take a book, you take the Bible, and this is your Bible study, this is your devotion. You open it up, and then you just [opens Bible and points to a random verse] and you come to whatever passage Joshua 1:2, right? And I'm not saying that's wrong, like it's good to be able to understand it, and maybe try to find something new to try to surprise yourself. But if you don't understand the bigger picture of what that passage is talking about, and you only take maybe even part of the passage, could we get it wrong? When we look at Jesus Sermon on the Mount, okay. What does Jesus say f our right eye is causing us to sin? pluck it out. Or if your right hand is causing you to sin, cut it off, right? Is Jesus being literal? No little hyperbole there. Okay, a little tongue in cheek. And we have to understand, what is it that she is writing? Oftentimes, have you ever tried to maybe get information to make an argument, your argument better? All the time, okay, we want to make sure that we have all the ammunition to be able to make sure that we can conclude that our ideas are right. But if you don't look at the big perspective, boy, that can cause us to get in some trouble. Amen. So understanding context, and the thing, too, is, when you when you when you look at Ellen White's writings, what is she talking about? Is she focusing on a big picture idea? Or she focusing on the smaller ideas? What do you take from that? There's a quote that my, my uncle Mike once told me, we often tend to major in the minors, and not look at the bigger picture, when we focus on the little things that really don't have a big emphasis or a big impact. And take that towards faith. Okay. Well, you see, Brother Jones down the street, he's doing something that is not true, should not be done as a Christian. And we could harp on him and say, You're doing this throughout wrong or whatever, when maybe let's what's what can we do bigger picture, hey, let's get to know this person. Let's learn their story. And why do you believe what you believe? Or how can I help you grow in faith? We sometimes want to take the, we want to take the small things and focus on

them. And yet, if we do that, what ends up happening, we run around in circles or we're wrong. So look at the context, study all the info. And one thing about I think that will probably surprise you about Ellen White is she was actually very moderate. She didn't take extreme measures necessarily. She always tried to have balance, she tried to have an ideal. And let's aim for the ideal, but let's also be realistic.

Now, what are the core ideas that she writes about? Grace? Love, especially after 1880? As I mentioned, she focused primarily on Jesus. And you know what? The church didn't like that. Those of you who know a little bit of Adventist history when she talks about Jesus more, it goes against the church leadership. So what did they do to her? They abandoned her, they sent her off to Australia to hopefully make, make her presence and her voice not be so strong. But while she was over there, she was writing, she was creating. They built the school there. And when she came back, she came back even stronger. And so be mindful of what she's trying to say. And look at it from its context.

Sometimes she would write things too. That just does not make sense. So for instance, she wrote, ladies, your dresses need to be a little higher. I think it was like eight inches and you would think eight inches. That's horrible. But back in the day, did they have paved roads It wasn't it was dirt. And how long were the dresses to the floor? Who was walking on the roads? Who was pulling the carts, horses, and they don't care, they're going to use the bathroom where they see fit. And so these roads would be dirty. And she'd say, hey, practical wisdom, hem the dress up a little. So you do not get sick, you don't promote disease. Another favorite example is, Don't buy a penny-farthing. Let me rethink what is a penny-farthing? Penny-farthing is that bike where it has a huge wheel and a small wheel at the back and you have to basically have a ladder or tree to get on the bike right? For one, I don't know why anybody would want to ride those because that just seems like a guaranteed way to fracture your leg or some part of your body. And then No, thank you. But people were passionate about it. Guess how much a penny-farthing cost back in that time? About three months wages. And so when she says don't buy a bikes now when we look at it from context to today, okay, you could go to Walmart and buy a bike for a couple \$100. Right? You could also spend \$15,000 on a bike. I haven't bought a \$15,000 bike, there's no way my wife would allow me to do that. See, she's shaking her head. I will be judged to eternity if I

were to do that. And I don't want the wrath that would come forth if I were to make such a grievous decision. But she would. But she would counsel Hey, so look at it from the context of back then to also now there's plenty of other things we could have talked about. But what are some of the core ideas? What are some of the principles?

The beautiful thing too is from what I'm told is when Ellen White when somebody went into her library, she didn't just have books that she wrote. But she had all of the books, all the commentary and the best knowledge that a modern, what was considered modern men, she was somebody who wanted to make sure that she could be the best informed writer that she could be. And the beautiful thing too is she also use technology. Now technology at the time was what? the printing press, and they printed a lot of books, they printed a lot of papers. And that's a good tool that we could also use and today what are what technology what things could we use today that can help be able to spread the Gospel, Jesus Christ, amen.

The last thing that I would also caution you is ask yourself, did she really say that? We love cliches. In fact, we have cliches about the Bible. For instance, we've heard well, the three wise men are the three wise men in the Bible. No, they mentioned the Magi. But there's not necessarily three Magi either. We just know that he got three gifts. How about moderation in all things? Have you heard of that before? And people attributed to the Bible, but yet it's actually really more related to Aristotle. Oh, okay. The Lord or God works in mysterious ways. Have you heard of that before? Well, we can attribute that to a hymn called God moves in a mysterious way. Mysterious way by William Calper. How about this was another favorite the apple in the Garden of Eden. What's wrong with that? There was no apple. It was a piece of fruit. Right? Oh, where was that was the other one. Okay, this is the one that I railed against as a child. Cleanliness is next to godliness. How many of you heard that growing up? Right. Now God talks about cleanliness of the heart, but not necessarily literal, physical cleanliness. So moms, we know you're trying to do all right. God helps those who help themselves. probably heard that too. Ben Franklin mentioned that in an almanac. But it's easy for us to take something and think oh, it's got to be biblical or it's something that we automatically think that will Ellen why must have written it. Fact check. In today's day and age now to should we not be trying to fact check everything? Because

Can you trust everything that is on your computer? Can you trust everything that is on your phone on the news? It's such a sad state where we'd have to question everything Lord Jesus, please come soon. Can't even trust your neighbor I was, you know you would 20, 30 years ago, okay, I forgot that I heard this saying, Somebody could have said something 30 years ago, especially as a kid, and you would have believed that maybe for 20 years, until finally the internet made it not true. We used to be able to trust easily and implicitly before, if you liked your neighbor, and you thought well of them. Now, it feels like you can't trust anything. And it's a sad state that we're in, which means, brothers and sisters. May we live faithfully, that God that people will be able to see something that's different in us, and a reason to want to ask us why we're different. Because we want to live faithful lives for Jesus, to give them hope, and a future.

So well, why how can we work? What is scripture say, Joel 2:28, through 29. This is not as specifically speaking about Ellen White herself, but just the principle of an afterword I will pour out my spirit on all people, your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit. In those days, we often attribute this to Acts chapter two, when the Holy Spirit descended with Peter and all the disciples and everywhere else than they could, finally people could understand somebody even though would they knew that they did not speak the same language. But it's true that I think, too, that people God still wants to talk to God's people. We may not necessarily see them as prophets. But take, for instance, Martin Luther King, Jr. Did he not do something that was biblical? To make sure that all people are created? What? Equal. There are many people through life, that we probably don't think, Oh, well, maybe they're not necessarily totally what looks like a prophet, but they speak what God wants the people to know. Does God want us to live in inequality? Absolutely not. Because we're all children of God. And we should be able to treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ should do. Amen.

And so as we reflect, I hope that maybe some of the things that I've talked about will help to kind of help steer you. Maybe you still have an issue with that. Oh, my. And I get it. I understand. Because I think one of the things is she used other people's works, and she didn't cite that why? There were no copyright laws back then. And things that we would think, Oh, can I trust her or not? Well, first off, if

you've ever read Ellen White, try, in fact, my recommendation to you, okay, I brought this book up last week, for your challenge this week, find the book Steps to Christ, you can either borrow this book from me literally, I don't have copies for everyone, I'm sorry. Or you can go online, you can download the Ellen White app, you can go to the Ellen White estate, it's out there. And this is the one book that I recommend to everybody, if you want to if you're starting to walk with God for the very beginning, and you want to have a companion to that, try this. But the last final thing I will say is the challenge that I think many people have with Ellen White is as an authority figure, people have taken her words, her writings and put them equal to, or dare I say sometimes above scripture. Okay, I need to make this more impactful for your eyes in the Bible. People will take her words, and equal and they'll preach about Ellen White, yet, who did she always refer to the Bible? She's a companion a supplement. Wonderful supplements, but not scripture. Have you ever been to a sermon in another church where they they preached? Only Ellen White and not scripture? Those of you who are older enough or older, have probably maybe experienced that I I've experienced that a couple times. And I thought, well, what's the point of Scripture?

So, my friends, I want to encourage you always go to Scripture first, okay? Without fail because we believe in sola scriptura scripture alone. But God has informed people to be able to help better understand Scripture. And so this week, try something new. Find Steps to Christ or Desire of Ages to bear book. Do you want to if you want to bite size snacks ice, go to set the Christ? And if you have questions, please Don't be afraid to ask me. Reach out to me. Go forth, learn, be challenged, and share Jesus with others.

Let's pray. Father in Heaven Thank You, Lord for the wonderful gift of life that you've given to us and a beautiful day with the opportunity to gather together. Lord, we also thank you I just want to say thank you as well to you for how you are moving in this church. Lord, the last couple of months have been spicy at times. But do we know that you're moving forward, Lord, you have called us to be faithful and the people have been faithful they have given Lord, we thank you for the abundance that we're going to be able to fix our roof we've been able to fix our classrooms. Almost we're almost there. But Lord, we know that you will provide so leading guidance with what you have done, help us to take that and to

go forth to share you with others. Give us the words of wisdom to know what to say, above all, Lord, may You come soon. In Jesus name, everybody said, Amen.

Grace and peace everyone.