******By Ekkehardt Mueller**
**M**any of us have experienced the power and richness of the Word of God. We can confess that “the word of God is alive and active” and “sharper than any double-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God has the power to lead us to Jesus our Savior, to change and transform our lives so that they resemble Christ, and to provide new and refreshing insights. And there have been individuals who, through the ages, have tapped into the reviving power of the Word of God. One such person was Daniel.

**Faithful Student**
It was the sixth century B.C. The people of God had lost their land, Jerusalem, and the Temple with its worship services. They had to live in a foreign country among a people that worshipped strange gods.

Among God’s people was Daniel. He had grown old in the service of the Babylonian kings, exerting a positive influence at the royal court and being a constant and faithful witness of the true God. Even after 70 years of captivity he had not yielded to the unbiblical elements in the prevalent culture. He still continued to care for the cause of God and the future of his people.

In Daniel 9 we encounter him under the rule of the Medes and Persians, who had conquered Babylon. In verses 1 and 2 we read: “In the first year of Darius . . . I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.”

Daniel must have had access to various Old Testament scrolls, among them the book of Jeremiah. These scrolls were the inspired Word of God (Dan. 9:2). In verses 11-13 Daniel refers to the “Law of Moses” and “the words spoken against us,” which are the words of God found in Deuteronomy 28 and 29, the blessings and the curses. Daniel studied these sacred writings diligently and thoughtfully.

Daniel understood that Jeremiah’s prophecy was about to be fulfilled and Judah to be restored to the Promised Land. Reading and studying Scripture, Daniel knew the will of God, paid attention to what God had said, and relied on the divine prophecies. He realized the signs of his times. He noticed that a reversal of the fate of God’s people would take place soon. At the same time, those who knew him recognized him as a man in whose life the Spirit of God was a present reality (Dan. 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11, 12, 14; 6:3).

**Daniel Prays**
While the study of Scripture leads to deeper insights into God’s plan with humanity, it also leads to prayer. In Daniel 9:3-19 Daniel pours out his heart to God in confession and petition, deeply regretting that God’s people had rebelled against the Lord. He recognizes God’s justice in bringing about the predicted curse. Yet he counts on God’s love and great mercy (verses 4, 18) and asks for forgiveness. The prayer ends with the request that God restore the destroyed sanctuary in Jerusalem. Daniel prayed for a new beginning and restoration.

Here we notice a remarkable sequence: Daniel studies Scripture; this leads him to deeper insights; still puzzled (see also Dan. 8:27), he turns to God in prayer. This is a model for us. The solution to our problems is the Word of God and prayer. Whether we want to have a new beginning in our spiritual life, grow in our relationship with Jesus, understand God in a deeper way, comprehend God’s plan for us and all of humanity, or learn about the future, Scripture study and prayer are of immense help.

While Daniel is still praying, God responds and sends Gabriel to him (Dan. 9:20, 21). Daniel is told that he’s “highly esteemed” (verse 23).

God reacts to the prayers of His people. He may not send us a visible angel or a dream, but He opens our eyes to Himself, His work, and His interventions, uses fellow humans to reach out to us, encircles us with His peace, and fills us with assurance.

Daniel finally receives further “insight and understanding” (verse 22). Gabriel tells him about a 70-week period of 490 years. Toward the end of this period the Messiah would come to “put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy” (verse 24). Daniel not only learned aspects of the plan of salvation that were not fully known before, but was also pointed to the Messiah, His ministry, and His death. Daniel received “new light.” But the new light grew out of—and was consistent with—the light given to prophets before him. And the light was not only about time elements and future events—it was about Jesus Christ.

**New Light**
A revival of sincere Bible study will lead to a deeper understanding of Scripture and God Himself. When we, under prayer, study Scripture, new light will be received.

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| **Questions forReflection and Sharing** **1.** Daniel studied Scripture thoroughly and prayerfully. What scriptures have you studied that have helped you personally?**2.** New light helps us understand Scripture and its teachings better. How can it help us come to grips with pain and affliction in our lives? How can it show us God's love?  |

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What is new light? Oftentimes it is associated with the discovery of biblical truth that was formerly overlooked. Early Adventists discovered, for instance, the sanctuary doctrine and the health message. New light could also refer to a better interpretation of a biblical passage. But new light benefits not only the church. It also has a personal dimension. The individual who studies Scripture is led to new personal insights. This is exciting, gratifying, and enriching.1

Why does God give us new light? By better understanding the past, present, and future we learn to appreciate more deeply the plan of salvation. We rejoice when we see how God works to bring to an end to sin, suffering, and death and receive us home. Most of all, new insights lead us to better know and love God and have a vibrant relationship with him.

**Voiced With Sincerity**
True new light must be distinguished from the so-called new light of heresy. We do this by checking Scripture. The Holy Spirit will not contradict Himself in what He teaches. We also check with the community of true believers. On a personal level, we study broadly and avoid hobby horses. We do not think too highly of ourselves. And we allow Scripture to remain “the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”2

Daniel’s experience teaches us that great things will happen if we sincerely study Scripture and seek God in prayer. There will be new insights, sometimes on a broader scale, sometimes on a personal level. While we need to remain open to new light, we must not allow culture to determine our convictions. Rather, we need to compare new insights with Scripture and, if found true, follow them.

God is willing to revive us, change us, and enrich our lives. He is willing to live with us, even in us, so that we can grow strong in our love and faith, our service and perseverance (Rev. 2:19). “When the heart is brought into harmony with the word, a new life will spring up within you, a new light will shine upon every line of the word, and it will become the voice of God to your soul.”3.

1 Adventists also talk about “present truth,” which points to theological emphases that are of special importance at a certain time.
2 See Fundamental Belief No. 1.
3 Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (International Tract Society, Battle Creek: 1894), p. 80.
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