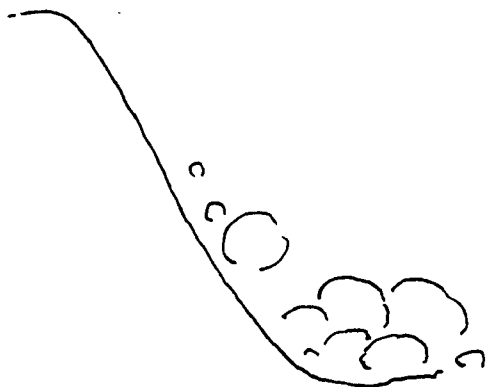


PICTURES TO HELP YOU STUDY YOUR BIBLE

Jesus

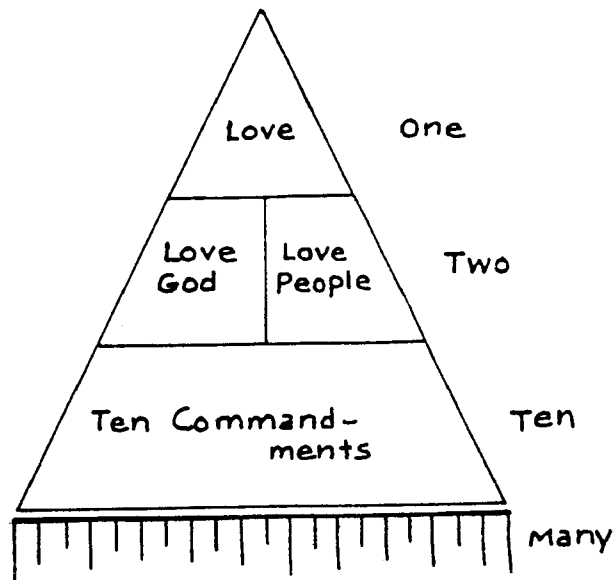
avalanche



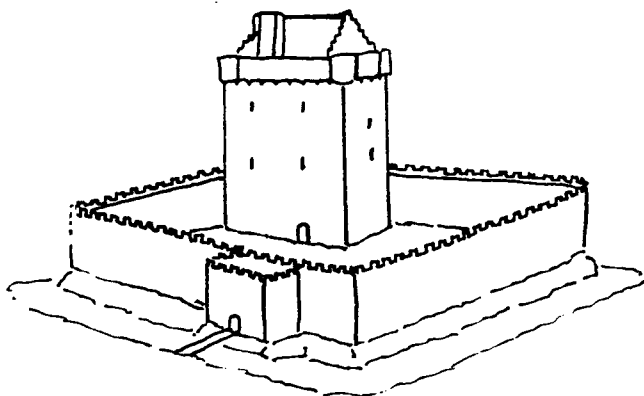
Key Passages:

Genesis 1-11
Joshua 24:2

Law pyramid



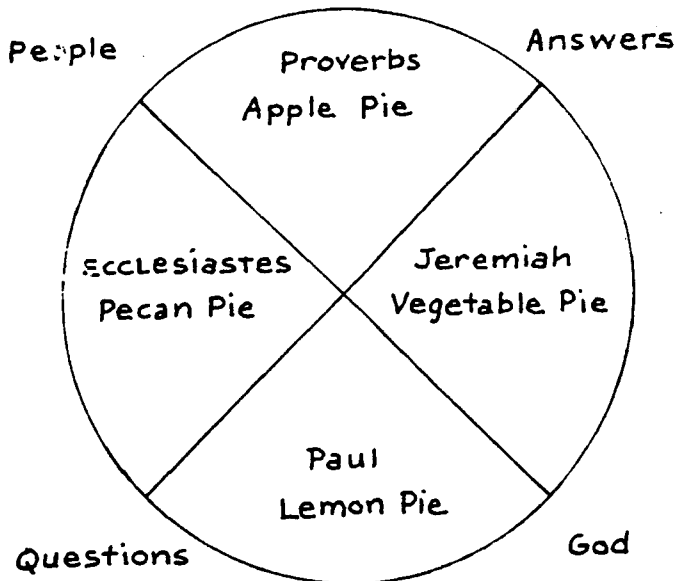
castle



Key Passages:

Deut. 4:13-14
Deut. 31:24-26
Matt. 22:35-40
Acts 15

pie



Key Passages:

I Cor. 1, 3, 12

THE PICTURES SUMMARIZED

(Pictures, summary [01-04])

THE IDEAL: JESUS. The incarnate revelation of God. As God in the flesh, Jesus is the embodiment, touchstone, and focus of all truth, the clearest revelation of God. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," he said (John 14:6, NRSV). All the other pictures must be seen in the light of Jesus. Thus in Scripture itself we affirm a hierarchy of values: some passages of Scripture will seem to speak more clearly about God than others. Jesus himself made that contrast in **Matthew 5**.

ADAPTATION: AVALANCHE: The devastation of sin, God's gracious adaptation. Sin has devastated our ability to grasp pure truth. The progressive, avalanche-like nature of that devastation is illustrated by the events of **Genesis 3-11**: Fall, Murder, Flood, Babel. According to **Joshua 24:2**, by the time of Abraham, God's own people "worshipped other gods." Thus, in the Bible, God condescends to give, not absolute, but practical truth, radically adapted and accommodated to fallen human needs.

STABILITY: PYRAMID. Eternal law, temporary applications. From the avalanche, we learn that God reaches people where they are. That's the good news. The bad news is that it scatters our proof texts all over the hillside. Instead of timeless nuggets of truth, Scripture often gives us practical applications of truth in specific times and places. Such an approach raises the fear of relativism. But the law pyramid is a powerful anchor against relativism, illustrating how the one great principle of love ("Love is the fulfilling of the law" [**Romans 13:10**]), Jesus' two great commands ("Love God.... Love your neighbor" [**Matthew 22:35-40**]), and the 10 commandments (**Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5**), form a stable ethical and moral structure within which all of Scripture finds its proper place. Some things never change; some things do change and must. That is the point of the Pyramid. The goal is the new covenant experience with an invisible law, written on the heart (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**); but in the meantime, God adapts his law, making necessary adjustments for the "hardness" of our heart (**Matthew 19:8**).

CHANGE: CASTLE. Changing times, changing laws. In **Acts 15** we discover that even some 15 years after the resurrection, it was not clear to the followers of Jesus which Old Testament laws still applied to them. A castle complex illustrates the key aspects of the debate: 1) Those teachings and practices which are valid for the whole community are in the **KEEP**, the central fortress; 2) Optional matters and debates over the meaning of the items in the keep are handled in the **COURTYARD**, still a safe place within the castle, but not as secure as the keep; 3) The **OUTER WALL** marks the boundary beyond which a believer cannot go and still belong to the community of faith. Changing times and culture can result in new items finding their way into the KEEP (e.g. abstaining from food offered to idols) and old items moving from the KEEP into the COURTYARD (circumcision). **Acts 15** illustrates the process.

DIVERSITY: PIE: Conservatives and liberals working together in the church. The diversity in the church today is matched by the diversity of the biblical books themselves. That nature of that diversity can be illumined by analyzing the different ways we use the words "conservative" and "liberal" in the church: 1) The **INTELLECTUAL** spectrum, the span between those who need high structure and those who need room to explore; 2) The **SOCIAL** or **LIFE-STYLE** spectrum, the span between those who are immerse themselves in human culture to be with people and those who separate themselves from human culture in order to be with God. 3) **PRESENCE OF GOD** spectrum, the span between those who sense a close personal presence and those who sense him only from afar. When these liberals and conservatives are matched with each other, four ideal types emerge which can be illustrated by four biblical books or characters and four kinds of pie: Apple Pie/Proverbs; Vegetable Pie/Jeremiah; Lemon Pie/Paul; Pecan Pie/Ecclesiastes. All are needed to make the body of Christ complete. That kind of diversity is reflected in the church described in **1 Corinthians**.

5. Sympathy, needed because we differ so widely

Every association of life calls for the exercise of self-control, forbearance, and sympathy. We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same. There are no two whose experience is alike in every particular. The trials of one are not the trials of another. The duties that one finds light are to another most difficult and perplexing.

So frail, so ignorant, so liable to misconception is human nature, that each should be careful in the estimate he places upon another. We little know the bearing of our acts upon the experience of others. What we do or say may seem to us of little moment, when, could our eyes be opened, we should see that upon it depended the most important results for good or for evil. (MH 483)

6. Truth, manner of presenting must be adapted to circumstances

The minister must not feel that the whole truth is to be spoken to unbelievers on any and every occasion. He should study carefully when to speak, what to say, and what to leave unsaid. This is not practicing deception; it is working as Paul worked.... [1 Cor. 9:19-22 "all things to all people"]

Thus the apostle varied his manner of labor, shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed. After patient labor he was successful to a large degree; yet there were many who would not be convinced. Some there are to-day who will not be convinced by any method of presenting the truth; and the laborer for God is to study carefully the best methods, that he may not arouse prejudice or combativeness. This is where some have failed. By following their natural inclinations, they have closed doors through which they might, by a different method of labor, have found access to hearts, and through them to other hearts.

God's workmen must be many sided men; that is, they must have breadth of character. They are not to be one-idea men, stereotyped in their manner of working, unable to see that their advocacy of truth must vary with the class of people among whom they work and the circumstances they have to meet.

There is a delicate work for the minister to do as he meets with alienation, bitterness, and opposition. More than others, he needs that wisdom which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." [James 3:17] As the dew and the still showers fall gently upon withering plants, so his words are to fall gently when he proclaims the truth. He is to win souls, not to repulse them. He is to study to be skilful when there are no rules to meet the case.

Many souls have been turned in the wrong direction, and thus lost to the cause of God, by a lack of skill and wisdom on the part of the worker. Tact and good judgment increase the usefulness of the laborer a hundred-fold. If he will speak the right words at the right time, and show the right spirit, this will exert a melting power on the heart of the one he is trying to help. (GW 117-119)

7. Unity not dependent on seeing all Scripture alike

Christ prayed that His disciples might be one even as He and His Father are one. In what does this unity consist? This oneness does not exist because everyone has the same disposition, the same temperament, and thinks in the very same channel. All do not possess the same degree of intelligence. All have not the same experience. In a church there are different gifts and varied experiences. In temporal matters there are a great variety of ways of management, and yet these variations in manner of labor, in the exercise of gifts, do not create dissension, discord, and disunion.

One man may be conversant with the Scriptures, and some particular portion of the Scripture may be especially appreciated by him; another sees another portion as very important, and thus one may present one point, and another, another point, and both may be of highest value. This is all in the order of God. But if a man makes a mistake in his interpretation of some portion of the Scripture, shall this cause diversity and disunion? God forbid. We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance. Satan can sow discord; Christ alone can harmonize the disagreeing elements. Then let every soul sit down in Christ's school and learn of Christ, who declares Himself to be meek and lowly of heart. Christ says that if we learn of Him, worries will cease and we shall find rest to our souls.

The great truths of the word of God are so clearly stated that none need make a mistake in understanding them. When as individual members of the church, you love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself, there will be no need of labored efforts to be in unity, for there will be oneness in Christ as a natural result. (MS 24, 1892; *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* 3:1092-93)

Diversity in People and in Scripture: Selected Ellen White Quotes (RQEGW, Diversity)

1. Bible teachers, diversity needed

In our schools the work of teaching the Scriptures to the youth is not to be left wholly with one teacher for a long series of years. The Bible teacher may be well able to present the truth, and yet it is not the best experience for the students that their study of the word of God should be directed by one man only, term after term and year after year. Different teachers should have a part in the work, even though they may not all have so full an understanding of the Scriptures. If several in our larger schools unite in the work of teaching the Scriptures, the students may thus have the benefit of the talents of several.

Why do we need a Matthew, a Mark, a Luke, a John, a Paul, and all the writers who have borne testimony in regard to the life and ministry of the Saviour? Why could not one of the disciples have written a complete record, and thus have given us a connected account of Christ's earthly life? Why does one writer bring in points that another does not mention? Why, if these points are essential, did not all these writers mention them? It is because the minds of men differ. Not all comprehend things in exactly the same way. Certain truths appeal much more strongly to the minds of some than of others.

The same principle applies to speakers. One dwells at considerable length on points that others would pass by quickly or not mention at all. The whole truth is presented more clearly by several than by one. The Gospels differ, but the records of all blend in one harmonious whole.

So today the Lord does not impress all minds in the same way. Often through unusual experiences, under special circumstances, He gives to some Bible students views of truth that others do not grasp. It is possible for the most learned teacher to fall far short of teaching all that should be taught.

It would greatly benefit our schools if regular meetings were held frequently in which all the teachers could unite in the study of the word of God. They should search the Scriptures as did the noble Bereans. They should subordinate all preconceived opinions, and taking the Bible as their lesson Book, comparing Scripture with Scripture, they should learn what to teach their students, and how to train them for acceptable service.

The teacher's success will depend largely upon the spirit which is brought into the work.... Let not the spirit of controversy come in, but let each seek earnestly for the light... (CPT 432-433).

2. Bible, unity and diversity in

There is variety in a tree, there are scarcely two leaves just alike. Yet this variety adds to the perfection of the tree as a whole.

In our Bible, we might ask, Why need Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Gospels, why need the Acts of the Apostles, and the variety of writers in the Epistles, go over the same thing?

The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. Their testimonies are brought together in one Book, and are like the testimonies in a social meeting. They do not represent things in just the same style. Each has an experience of his own, and his diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very hearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and distinctive beauty....

The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction. The fact that this difference exists should not perplex or confuse us. It is seldom that two persons will view and express truth in the very same way. Each dwells on particular points which his constitution and education have fitted him to appreciate. The sunlight falling upon the different objects gives those objects a different hue.

Through the inspiration of His Spirit the Lord gave His apostles truth, to be expressed according to the development of their minds by the Holy Spirit. But the mind is not cramped as if forced into a certain mold. (SM 1:21-22; Letter 53, 1900)

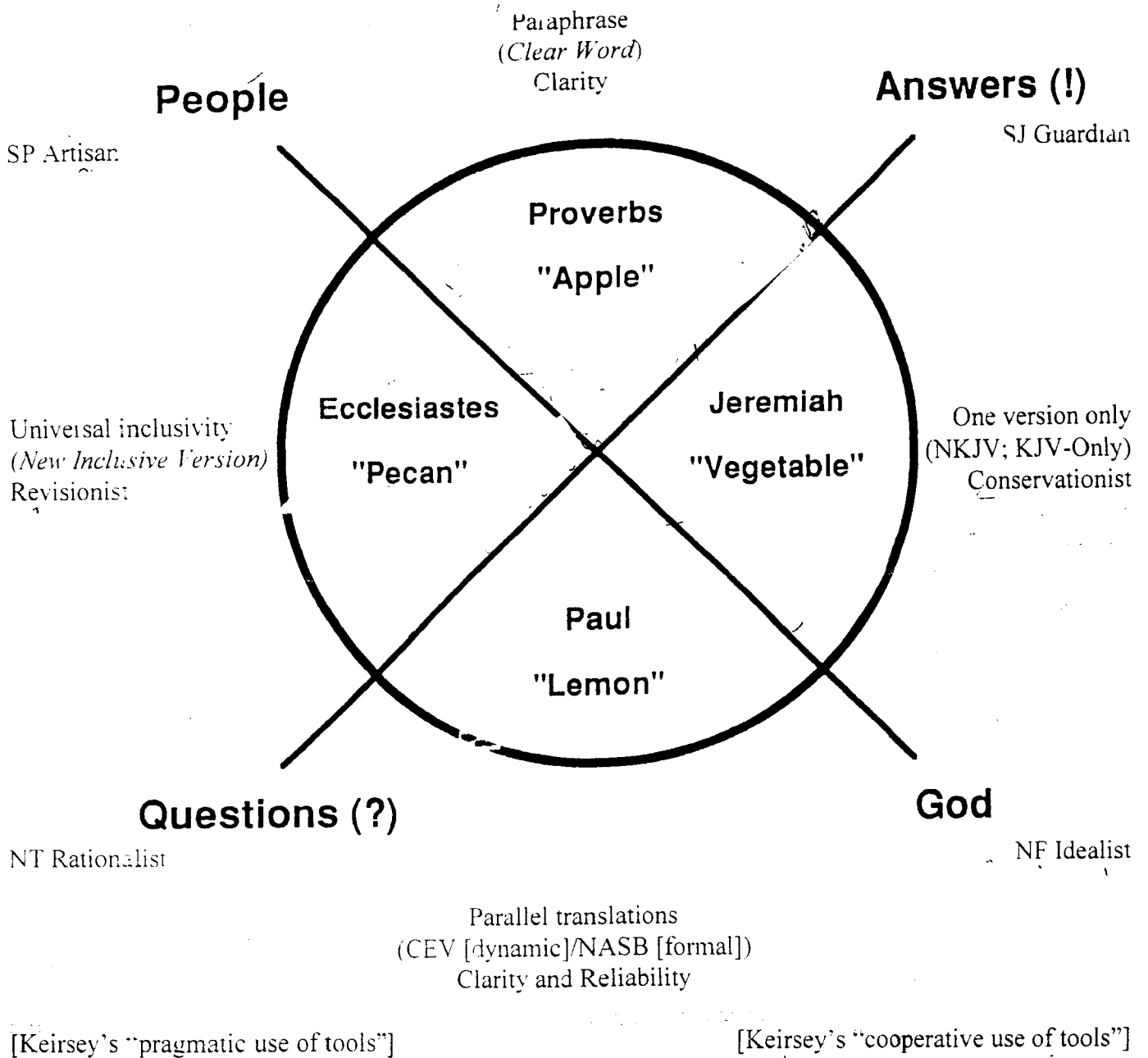
3. Dealing with minds, educating yourself for

You need to educate yourself, that you may have wisdom to deal with minds. You should with some have compassion, making a difference, while others you may save with fear, pulling them out of the fire [Jude 22-23]. Our heavenly Father frequently leaves us in uncertainty in regard to our efforts. We are to sow beside all waters [Isa. 32:20] not knowing which shall prosper, this or that [Eccl. 11:6]. We may stimulate our faith and energy from the Source of our strength, and lean with full and entire dependence upon Him. (3T 420)

4. Temperaments, varied, should be associated together

God designed that we should be tolerant of one another, that those of varied temperaments should be associated together, so that by mutual forbearance and consideration of one another's peculiarities, prejudices should be softened, and rough points of character smoothed. Diversities of temperament and character are frequently marked in families; where this is the case there should be a mutual recognition of one another's rights. Thus all the members may be in harmony, and the blending of varied temperaments may be a benefit to all. Christian courtesy is the golden clasp which unites the members of the family in bonds of love, becoming closer and stronger every day. (ST 11/29/1877)

The Pie, Myers-Briggs, and Bible Translations



For elaboration of the Myers-Briggs schema, see David Keirse, *Please Understand Me, II: Temperament, Character, Intelligence* (Prometheus Nemesis, 1998).