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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

2ND QUARTER 2024

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Unrequited Love

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Teacher's Guide

REAL. SOLID. STORIES.

2nd Quarter 2024

Unrequited Love

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welcome

Welcome to the experience of teaching from *Cornerstone Connections: Real. Solid. Stories.*

The following are provided for your assistance:

- A Word About What's Ahead . . . (student introduction) [p. 2]
- Why the Bible Story Approach? (teacher introduction) [p. 3]
- What Tools Are Provided for Teaching the Stories? [p. 4]
- Complete Scope and Sequence [p. 5]
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A WORD ABOUT WHAT'S AHEAD . . . (student introduction)

The goal of *Cornerstone Connections* is to lead you to the Bible to see the big story of God and people. This big story continues from the first generation in Eden to your generation today. It's about the lives of people as the God of the universe interacts with them.

If you are looking for a word from God that is **real**, *Cornerstone Connections* captures the message of Scripture and challenges you to make the connections to your real life.

God's Word is not only real; it is rock-**solid**. For the first generation to hear God's voice in the garden to the last group standing before Christ at the Second Coming, the Word of God has been and continues to be reliable.

The word from God comes to us in the **stories** of people who encountered Him and made a decision either to follow Him or walk away.

Real. Solid. Stories. You will find one in *Into the Story* in each lesson. *Out of the Story* will provide you with ways to search for truth you can apply to your life. In each lesson you also will find:

- **What Do You Think?**—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.
- **Did You Know?**—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.
- **Key Text**—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.
- **Punch Lines**—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.
- **Flashlight**—a brief snapshot of Ellen White's input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—the Conflict of the Ages.*
- **Further Insight**—one or two quotes that will provide further insight into the central message of the lesson.

- **Connecting to Life**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Study the Bible lesson during the week in preparation for Sabbath School. On Sabbath you will have the opportunity to review, discuss, and elaborate on what you learned with your teacher and other students in your Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God's Word apply to you personally.

WHY THE BIBLE STORY APPROACH? (teacher introduction)

There is a tendency to neglect God's Word because the Bible seems so old and the issues of life today don't seem to automatically connect with the ancient, inspired text. But the Bible was never meant to be read. It was meant to be studied, reflected on, and integrated into life. It wasn't written to be analyzed as much as it was to be obeyed. It takes effort. If you simply want a story to entertain you, then the Bible isn't for you.

The Bible is not a novel that grips you (although many of the stories are quite compelling), but if you get a firm hold on the message of the Bible with a teachable heart and an eye that seeks God, you will find something more than entertaining. You will discover a message just for you. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13, NIV). Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24, NIV).

The Bible is the tool used by the promised Teacher—the Holy Spirit. We, the earthly teachers, will be effective as we first let the Spirit teach us. Each of these lessons is built around a specific Bible story. You will lead the students *Into the Story* and help them mine truth for their lives *Out of the Story*. The gems of truth are not already mined for you. You and your students will have an opportunity to dig for yourselves.

"In daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. One passage thus studied until its significance is clear is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained" (*Education*, p. 189).

Welcome to *Cornerstone Connections*.

—The General Conference Sabbath School Department

PS: Don't forget to check out the reading plan.

*A special adaptation has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON INCLUDED

what tools are provided for teaching the stories?

(*Bolded text helps you review the suggested steps at a glance.*)

- ❶ With each lesson in this *Teacher's Guide* you will find an *Explore* section with topics listed that relate to each week's story. We have provided a variety of resources for exploring the topic you choose—from discussion questions to illustrations, from reader's theater scripts to learning activities. **Use the resources at www.cornerstoneconnections.net to create an experience that is relevant to your group.**
- ❷ **Begin the actual “lesson” time with the *What Do You Think?* activity (and the *Did You Know?* information)** in the student lesson. The activities are designed to get your students to think, respond, and share with one another. The rich discussion that can grow out of this exercise is a great entry point. The key question to ask at the end is “Why did you respond the way you did?”
- ❸ Your *Teacher's Guide* provides an illustration, along with a short “bridge” thought that will help you **lead your students into the Bible passage itself.**
- ❹ The heart of the lesson experience is to **read the Bible passage**, *Into the Story*, together and to **discuss it** with the help of your *Out of the Story* for Teachers questions. Other passages to compare to this one for further study of the Word are sometimes provided as well.
- ❺ Then **share the information about context and background** that will make the story become more understandable for you and your students.
- ❻ You are provided with a short guide to help you **unpack the other sections of the student lesson with your class.** (Your stu-

dents are also directed to work through one section of their lesson on their own each day by following the instructions in *Connecting to Life*.) Encourage students to study the Bible lesson during the week in preparation for Sabbath School. On Sabbath you will review the lesson and will help them elaborate on it. This process will strengthen in students a sense of accountability and will facilitate a deeper spiritual understanding of the content under study in Sabbath School.

- ❷ Each week's *Teacher's Guide* includes a teaching tip in *Rabbi 101* that will be helpful for you to keep for future reference. You are also provided an activity and a summary that helps to **draw the lesson together and close.**
- ❸ In each lesson students are provided with a reference to the volume from the Conflict of the Ages Series by Ellen White that corresponds with the week's story. Students who choose to follow the reading plan included in these Sabbath School Bible study guides will be able to read the entire series in four years. The audio and e-book versions of the Conflict of the Ages Series in Today's Language are now available online at www.cornerstoneconnections.net. The prayerful study of God's Word along with the reading of these books promise to help students grow in their relationship with God!
- ❾ Teachers, in your role as a discipler of youth, the GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department wants to help you in every way possible to be equipped for this important work. You are encouraged to go to www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com. There you will find resources to help you be more intentional and fruitful in the discipling of your students.

scope & sequence

2021

1st Quarter

- 1. Jesus
- 2. It's Time
- 3. Mary
- 4. Simeon/Anna
- 5. The Wise Men
- 6. The Child Jesus
- 7. The Voice
- 8. Victory
- 9. Messiah Found
- 10. Marriage Feast
- 11. The Temple
- 12. Nicodemus
- 13. John the Baptist

2nd Quarter

- 1. Samaritan Woman
- 2. The Nobleman
- 3. The Lame Man
- 4. John the Baptist
- 5. The Anointed One
- 6. Peter
- 7. Capernaum
- 8. The Leper
- 9. Levi-Matthew
- 10. The Sabbath
- 11. The Disciples
- 12. The Centurion
- 13. The Demoniac

3rd Quarter

- 1. Woman/Jairus
- 2. The Seventy
- 3. The Disciples
- 4. Misunderstandings
- 5. Broken Barriers
- 6. Jesus' Ministry
- 7. Who Is Jesus?
- 8. Lawyer/Ruler
- 9. The Children
- 10. Lazarus's Family
- 11. Zacchaeus
- 12. Mary
- 13. James and John

4th Quarter

- 1. The King Comes
- 2. The Pharisees
- 3. The End of Time
- 4. Servanthood
- 5. The Last Supper
- 6. Gethsemane
- 7. The Trial
- 8. Calvary
- 9. Resurrection
- 10. Mary Magdalene
- 11. The Emmaus Road
- 12. By the Sea
- 13. Jesus' Ascension

2022

1st Quarter

- 1. The Mission
- 2. The Holy Spirit
- 3. The Lame Man
- 4. Ananias/Sapphira
- 5. God's People
- 6. Stephen
- 7. Paul
- 8. Peter
- 9. Paul/Barnabas
- 10. Gentiles Included
- 11. Spreading Good News
- 12. The Thessalonians
- 13. The Ephesians

2nd Quarter

- 1. The Corinthians
- 2. Workers for Christ
- 3. Romans/Galatians
- 4. Last Journey
- 5. Adventures and Trials
- 6. Philemon
- 7. Colossians/Philippians
- 8. Final Arrest
- 9. Before Nero
- 10. John the Beloved
- 11. Patmos
- 12. The Revelation
- 13. Church Triumphant

3rd Quarter

- 1. First Believers
- 2. Seekers
- 3. Wycliffe
- 4. Luther
- 5. Zwingli
- 6. French Reformation
- 7. English Reformers
- 8. French Revolution
- 9. American Reformers
- 10. William Miller
- 11. Prophecy Fulfilled
- 12. The Sanctuary
- 13. God's Law

4th Quarter

- 1. Renewal
- 2. Investigative Judgment
- 3. Origin of Evil
- 4. Snares
- 5. Great Deception
- 6. The Papacy
- 7. Spiritual Challenge
- 8. The Bible
- 9. Last Chance
- 10. Time of Trouble
- 11. Deliverance
- 12. The End
- 13. The Beginning

2023

1st Quarter

- 1. Adam and Eve
- 2. The Serpent
- 3. Cain and Abel
- 4. Seth and Enoch
- 5. Noah
- 6. Tower People
- 7. Abraham
- 8. Isaac
- 9. Lot
- 10. Rebekah
- 11. Jacob and Esau
- 12. Jacob

2nd Quarter

- 1. Joseph
- 2. The Brothers
- 3. Moses
- 4. Egyptians
- 5. Fleeing Slaves
- 6. Unhappy Campers
- 7. Chosen Nation
- 8. Aaron
- 9. The Tabernacle
- 10. Miriam and Zipporah
- 11. Twelve Spies
- 12. Korah
- 13. The Bronze Serpent

3rd Quarter

- 1. The Borders Revisited
- 2. Balaam
- 3. Questionable Neighbors
- 4. Law Review
- 5. Moses' Death
- 6. Crossing Jordan
- 7. Rahab
- 8. Blessings and Curses
- 9. Gibeonites
- 10. Canaan Divided
- 11. Last Words of Joshua
- 12. Annual Feasts
- 13. Early Judges

4th Quarter

- 1. Samson
- 2. Samuel
- 3. Eli
- 4. Philistines
- 5. First King
- 6. Saul's Death
- 7. Anointed
- 8. Fugitive
- 9. Lunatic
- 10. Crowned King
- 11. Incumbent
- 12. Sinner
- 13. The Fathers

2024

1st Quarter

- 1. God's People
- 2. Solomon
- 3. Temple Builder
- 4. Proud Potentate
- 5. Repentant Author
- 6. Rehoboam
- 7. Jeroboam
- 8. Asa, Ahab, Jezebel
- 9. Elijah
- 10. Evangelist
- 11. Coward
- 12. The Sabbath
- 13. Jehoshaphat

2nd Quarter

- 1. Ahab
- 2. Elisha
- 3. Prophet
- 4. Naaman
- 5. Jonah
- 6. Hosea
- 7. Isaiah
- 8. Jehovah
- 9. Ahaz
- 10. Hezekiah
- 11. Assyria
- 12. Manasseh
- 13. Josiah

3rd Quarter

- 1. Jeremiah
- 2. Approaching Doom
- 3. Last King
- 4. Captives
- 5. Daniel
- 6. The Dream
- 7. Three Hebrews
- 8. Nebuchadnezzar
- 9. Belshazzar
- 10. Daniel
- 11. Daniel 7
- 12. Daniel 8, 9
- 13. Daniel 10–12

4th Quarter

- 1. Haggai/Zerubbabel
- 2. Zechariah
- 3. Temple Two
- 4. Esther
- 5. Queen
- 6. Ezra
- 7. Nehemiah
- 8. Builders
- 9. Plotters
- 10. Reformers
- 11. Jesus
- 12. Deliverer
- 13. Future Glory

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2024 Scope & Sequence

2nd Quarter

- 1. Just Scratching the Service** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 16.
- 2. Focus on Prophets** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 19:15–1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 2.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 17; 18.
- 3. The Miracle Worker** **Scripture Story:** 2 Kings 4.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 19.
- 4. Test of Faith** **Scripture Story:** 2 Kings 5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 20; 21.
- 5. Pardoned** **Scripture Story:** Jonah.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 22.
- 6. Come Home!** **Scripture Story:** Hosea.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 23; 24.
- 7. Are You Available?** **Scripture Story:** Isaiah 6.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 25.
- 8. Hope for the World?** **Scripture Story:** Isaiah 11; 12; 44.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 26; 31.
- 9. A Leader's Influence** **Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 28:1–5; 2 Kings 16.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 27.
- 10. Recipe for Revival** **Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 29–31; 2 Kings 18–20; Isaiah 39.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 28; 29.
- 11. Not Like Other Gods** **Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 32; 2 Kings 19.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 30.
- 12. What Legacy?** **Scripture Story:** 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 32.
- 13. Cleaning House** **Scripture Story:** 2 Kings 23; 2 Chronicles 34.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 33.

1st Quarter

- 1. An Undelivered Gift** **Scripture Story:** Deuteronomy 32.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, Introduction.
- 2. Wise Beyond His Years** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 3; 4; 10.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 1.
- 3. A House for God** **Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 5:2–14.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 2.
- 4. The Wise and Foolish King** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 3; 4.
- 5. Confessions of a Foolish Wise Man** **Scripture Story:** Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 5.
- 6. Idol Threats** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11:14–43; 12:1–24; 2 Chronicles 9:29–12:16.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 6.
- 7. Jeroboam Sin-drome** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 12:16–14:20; 2 Chronicles 13.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 7.
- 8. Crossroads** **Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 14–16; 1 Kings 15:8–16:34.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 8.
- 9. Never Alone** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 17:1–16.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 9; 10 first part (pp. 119-132).
- 10. Faith on the Mountaintop** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:1–40.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 10 last part (pp. 133-154); 11.
- 11. Doubt in the Valley** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:41–46; 19:1–18.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 12; 13.
- 12. Who's Counting?** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:20–22; 19:14–18; Revelation 18:2, 4, 5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 14.
- 13. Life Sentence** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 15.

1st Quarter

- 1. An Undelivered Gift** **Scripture Story:** Deuteronomy 32.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, Introduction.
- 2. Wise Beyond His Years** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 3; 4; 10.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 1.
- 3. A House for God** **Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 5:2–14.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 2.
- 4. The Wise and Foolish King** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 3; 4.
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Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 10 last part (pp. 133-154); 11.
- 11. Doubt in the Valley** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:41–46; 19:1–18.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 12; 13.
- 12. Who's Counting?** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:20–22; 19:14–18; Revelation 18:2, 4, 5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 14.
- 13. Life Sentence** **Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 15.

4th Quarter

- 1. Temple Building and You** **Scripture Story:** Haggai; Ezra 4–6.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 46.
- 2. I Want You Back!** **Scripture Story:** Zechariah 1–3 (Zechariah 2–3:5).
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 47.
- 3. Build It** **Scripture Story:** Zechariah 4.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 48.
- 4. A Story of Faith** **Scripture Story:** Esther 1–4.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 49.
- 5. Esther's Victory** **Scripture Story:** Esther 5–10.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 49.
- 6. Leading Them Home** **Scripture Story:** Ezra 7–10.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 50; 51.
- 7. Nehemiah, the Kneeologian** **Scripture Story:** Nehemiah 1.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 52.
- 8. Risky Witness** **Scripture Story:** Nehemiah 2–4.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 53.
- 9. Getting It Right** **Scripture Story:** Nehemiah 5; 6.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 54; 55.
- 10. Hungry for More** **Scripture Story:** Nehemiah 7–13.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 56; 57.
- 11. A Candle in the Dark** **Scripture Story:** Isaiah 11; 29; 40.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 58.
- 12. The Servant Hero** **Scripture Story:** Isaiah 53; 61.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 59.
- 13. Eternal Liberation** **Scripture Story:** Malachi 3; 4.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 60.

3rd Quarter

- 1. Who, Me?** **Scripture Story:** Jeremiah 1.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 34.
- 2. Storm Warning** **Scripture Story:** Jeremiah 25; 36.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 35.
- 3. Israel Takes Its Medicine** **Scripture Story:** Jeremiah 28:1–15; 29:1–14.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 36.
- 4. Be Swayed and Besieged** **Scripture Story:** Jeremiah 37–39; 2 Chronicles 36.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 37.
- 5. Obedience Is Not a Bad Word** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 1.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 39.
- 6. God Even Gave the Dream** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 2.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 40.
- 7. Choose Your Kingdom** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 3.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 41.
- 8. Humility Check** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 4.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 42.
- 9. This Party's Over** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 43.
- 10. Deliverance** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 6.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 44.
- 11. Troubling Dream** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 7.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 45.
- 12. God Is in Control** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 8; 9.
- 13. A Man, Some Kings, and the End!** **Scripture Story:** Daniel 10–12.



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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

2ND QUARTER 2024

April

6—Just Scratching the Service [p. 11]

The ancient story of Ahab's compromises in the leading of Israel and the evil influence of his wife Jezebel offers numerous lessons for us today.

13—Focus on Prophets [p. 19]

Even after Elisha was called by God and granted a double portion of His Spirit, he wasn't guaranteed respect from his peers.

20—The Miracle Worker [p. 27]

Elisha boldly pursued the work God called him to do, in spite of the challenges, and God rewarded his faith—just as He does ours.

27—Test of Faith [p. 35]

Naaman, although wealthy and powerful, received healing only when he humbled himself and obeyed God's "strange" command to wash in a polluted river.

May

4—Pardoned [p. 43]

In the midst of terror on the high seas and a prophecy of doom and destruction, Jonah experiences the graciousness and compassion of a God he was trying to run from.

11—Come Home! [p. 51]

Hosea's story of rejection and pain of unrequited love from Gomer, his unfaithful wife, and his desperate attempts to deliver her from herself, is also God's story.

18—Are You Available? [p. 59]

Isaiah reminds us of three elements of receiving a call from God, who we are in order to accept the call, and how not to drop the call when we hear it.

25—Hope for the World? [p. 67]

Often some of the brightest and best are called to live in the darkest of times. Isaiah was no exception.

June

1—A Leader's Influence [p. 75]

Fear has the potential to drive us to God for protection. Unfortunately, it drove King Ahaz to find "security" in other gods and nations—but it came with a very high price.

8—Recipe for Revival [p. 83]

Hezekiah was a breath of fresh air among the kings of Judah. And his godly choices offered the ingredients for a whole new way of life for God's people.

15—Not Like Other Gods [p. 91]

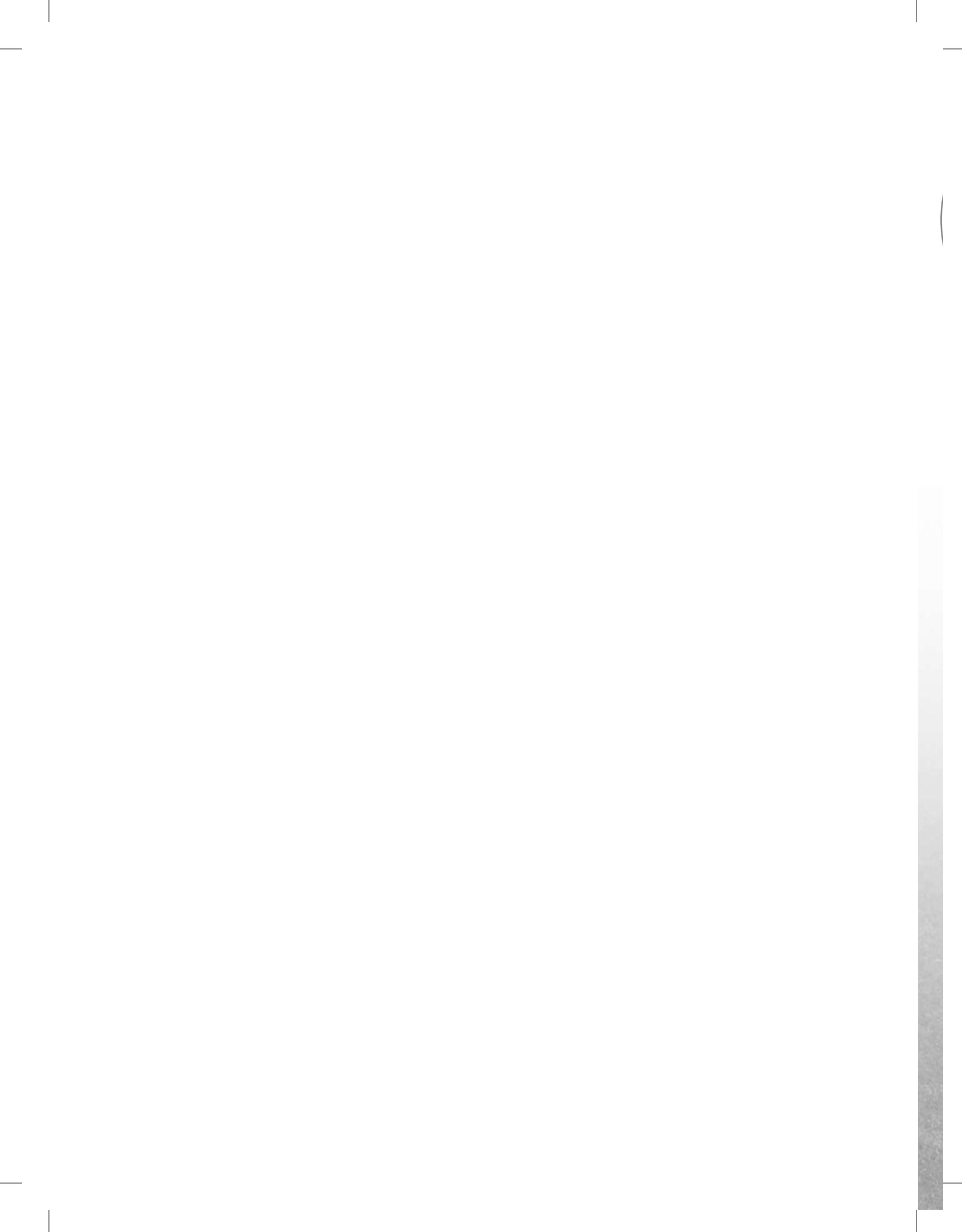
Enemy forces tried to convince the Israelites that they were too strong for Israel's God. But Hezekiah and his people's trust in the Lord revealed who was the real powerhouse in this battle.

22—What Legacy? [p. 99]

The storied lives of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah portray examples of extreme contrast in their loyalty and faithfulness to God. However, they also reveal the varied ways in which God works to save us in seemingly impossible situations.

29—Cleaning House [p. 107]

The same fire that was rekindled in the heart of young King Josiah as he heard the lost and forgotten book of God's law read to him is still waiting to burn today in the hearts of God's people—young and old.



Unrequited Love

SECOND QUARTER 2024

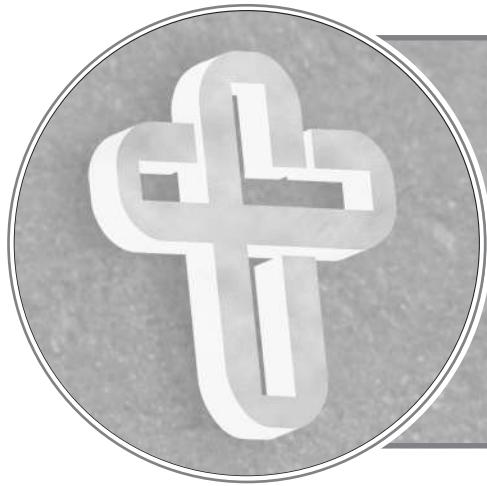


Youth Sabbath School
Teacher's Guide



EYT240401

LESSON 1



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 06 2024

just scratching the service

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 16.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Ahab and Jezebel offers a smorgasbord of topics to discuss with students. Evil, selfishness, judgment, idolatry, spiritualism, values, compromise—these are just a few of the themes you could emphasize in this lesson.

Still today the name “Jezebel” is synonymous with evil. Her name means “not exalted” or “impure.” There are certainly many women in our culture today (and men for that matter) who exert the same kind of evil influence as Jezebel did. You could draw parallels between “pop star” Jezebels today and the Bible character. This discussion would help young people to put contemporary faces on the ancient story.

A point of application that Ellen White brings out in this chapter connects it to idolatry. She writes: “The spirit of idolatry is rife in the world today. . . . Every day adds its sorrowful evidence that faith in the sure word of prophecy is decreasing, and that in its stead superstition and satanic witchery are captivating the minds of many” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 210).

Another natural theme that emerges from this story has to do with the perils of selfishness. Ellen White points out that Ahab was “fully controlled by the spirit of selfishness” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 204). In a positive twist, the antidote to selfishness is the calling to serve. It is toward this theme that the major portion of the teacher’s helps will be focused.

All in all this study gives you an opportunity to

put a dent in the prevailing attitude today that it’s “all about me.” Television shows such as *America’s Got Talent* and *The Voice* only serve to reinforce this attitude. The stories of ancient kings and queens who worshipped idols and self remind us that there is a better way to live. In reality, it’s all about God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the connection between selfishness and misery; conversely they will see the connection between service and joy. (*Know*)
- Sense the emptiness of a self-absorbed life. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to serve. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Nature of Humanity, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 7

“Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. . . . (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15; 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5, 10; 58:3; Jer. 17:9; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:4; 4:7, 8, 11, 20.)”

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it,

discuss their responses.

Bring several recent, local newspapers to class. Break the students into small groups. Give each group some of the papers and ask them to search for articles that identify needs in your community. Have each group choose one article and report it to the rest of the group, defining the need and possible solutions or resources that could help meet this need. On a white/chalkboard write the problems and solutions from each group. After the presentations, discuss with all the students the possibility of following up on some or all of the proposed solutions. Could your Sabbath School class help to meet these needs and make a difference in your community?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

An employer put the following scenario to potential employees as part of the interview process. Assuming you were applying for the job, how would you respond in this situation?

You're driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop and see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old woman who looks as if she is about to die.
2. Your best friend who once saved your life.
3. A famous person you really admire and have wished you could meet one day.

There can be only one passenger in your car, and you can't return to the bus stop once you have left it. To whom would you offer a ride?

You could make a compelling argument for any one of the three. You could pick up the old woman, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first. Or, you could take your best friend because he/she once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay him/her back. However, you may never be able to find the famous person you dreamed you could meet one day. How rare is it to find a famous person on the street, so why miss out on this opportunity of a lifetime?

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss their solution with the person next to them.]

Would you like to hear the correct answer? There were 200 applicants for this job. Only one wrote the answer that the employer was looking for. The candidate who was hired had no trouble

coming up with his answer.

He said, "I would give the car keys to my old friend and let him take the old woman to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus and talk with the famous person I always wanted to meet."

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Ask the students if anyone came up with the same answer. Then share the following in your own words:

Sometimes our solutions to dilemmas we face in life are not as creative as the applicant's answer. Too often we cater first to our own interests and show little concern to how our decisions might affect others. And yet, when we think outside the box and put others first, the result is often a win-win solution for everyone. Thinking selflessly is the key.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

1. Circle the main actors in this story.
2. Underline the parts of the story that are essential to understanding it.
3. God reacted to Ahab and Jezebel's sin in harsh judgment. Discuss what this teaches us about God.
4. What new thing about God have you learned from Ahab's story? Explain.
5. Draw a rectangle around the emotions, actions, and adjectives that enrich this story.
6. What lesson does Jezebel's life teach us?
7. What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
8. Put a star next to the words or phrases that capture the various emotions of this story.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Read John 13:1-17 and compare Jesus' heart to serve with that of Ahab's greed to get. Which represents a better way to live? Why?

Read Philippians 2:3-8. Ahab clearly did not model the verse that says to "value others above yourselves" (verse 3, NIV). How might his legacy be different had he lived out the calling of Philippians 2:3-8?

Read 1 Corinthians 13 and compare it to the story of Jezebel. In what ways did Jezebel fail to model true love?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on specific aspects of the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Naboth's refusal of Ahab's request. It is interesting to note Naboth's vehement refusal of Ahab's request to purchase his vineyard. You can sense his horror as he responds to Ahab: "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors" (1 Kings 21:3, NIV). No man could ultimately sell any part of the parental inheritance; it might be sold or mortgaged until the year of Jubilee, but at that time it would revert to its original owner, if it had not been redeemed before (see Leviticus 25:14-17, 25-28). The *Adam Clark Commentary* explains: "Ahab most evidently wished him to alienate it finally, and this is what God's law had expressly forbidden; therefore he could not, consistently with his duty to God, indulge Ahab; and it was high iniquity in Ahab to tempt him to do it; and to covet it showed the depravity of Ahab's soul."¹

Is God any less disturbed by the insatiable greed and materialism that seem so prevalent today? Why do you think God does not seem to act as resolutely today against greedy individuals as He did in the case of Ahab? How do you explain Naboth's fate?

After all, he was simply defending his God-given rights, and yet he was stoned to death.

2. The curse against Ahab. Elijah's no-nonsense curse against Ahab in 1 Kings 21:21-24 is identical to the curse uttered against Jeroboam and against Baasha (see 1 Kings 14:10, 11; 16:3, 4). We read in 1 Kings 21:27-29, however, that Ahab humbled himself before God. As a result, God explained to Elijah that "because [Ahab] has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son" (verse 29, NIV).

Even a feeble act of repentance (as it was in Ahab's case) moves God to mercy. What does this picture of grace in a most unlikely story teach us about God? Had Jezebel repented of her wrong, do you think God would have responded in the same way toward her? Why or why not?

3. God's displeasure with Ahaziah. Ellen White offers this commentary on Ahaziah's sin: "God had cause for displeasure at Ahaziah's impiety. . . . He had been a very present help to all who sought Him in sincerity. Yet now the king of Israel, turning from God to ask help of the worst enemy of his people, proclaimed to the heathen that he had more confidence in their idols than in the God of heaven. In the same manner do men and women dishonor Him when they turn from the Source of strength and wisdom to ask help or counsel from the powers of dark-

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

"Ten Tips for Teachers From Award-winning Teachers" (adapted from www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/getArticle.cfm?id=1745):

1. Know the content.
2. Study the science and art of teaching.
3. Observe great teaching and reflect on what might work for you.
4. Meet with people who value teaching.
5. Be willing to experiment.
6. You won't always be effective, but strive to daily give your best.
7. Be enthusiastic!
8. Genuinely care about students.
9. Get to know your students.
10. Always ask for feedback; be grateful for criticism.

RABBI 101

those into a master list and type it up, photocopy it, and ask them to put it in a place where they can read it often. Challenge them to put the ideas into practice and then discuss the results the following week in Sabbath School.

Summary

Share this story from Kevin Harney's book, Seismic Shifts:

A little boy sat on the floor of the church nursery with a red rubber ball in each arm and three Nerf balls clenched on the floor between his pudgy little knees. He was trying to protect all five from the other children in the nursery. The problem was, he could not hold all five at once, and the ball nearest to his feet was particularly vulnerable to being stolen. So, whenever another child showed an interest in playing with one of the balls, he snarled to make it clear these toys were not for sharing. . . .

For about five minutes, this little guy growled, postured, and kept the other children away from the balls. Like a hyena hunched over the last scraps of a carcass, this snarling little canine was not in the mood for sharing. The other kids circled like vultures around the kill, looking for a way to jump in and snatch a ball without being attacked and bitten. I honestly did not know whether to laugh or cry as I watched.

Then it struck me: This little boy was not having any fun at all. There was no cheer within 10 yards of this kid. Not only was he unhappy, but all the other kids seemed sad as well. His selfishness created a black hole that sucked all of the joy out of that nursery.²

¹As quoted at www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=1ki&chapter=021.

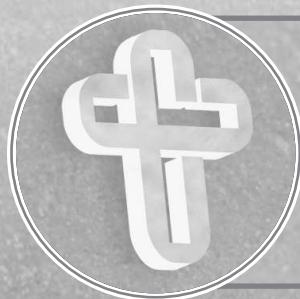
²Kevin G. Harney, *Seismic Shifts* (Zondervan, 2005), as quoted at PreachingToday.com.

III.CLOSING

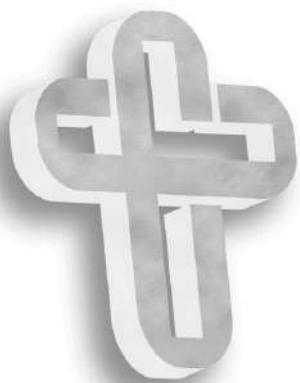
Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Invite the students to create a list titled "Top 10 Ways to Stop Selfishness." When they have finished, have each student read their list. After everyone has had the chance to share their ideas, have the students vote on their top 10 favorites. Compile



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 16.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 06 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 16.

just scratching the service



Photo by Crystal Lenz

cornerstoneconnections

5

flashlight

"Naturally of a covetous disposition, Ahab, strengthened and sustained in wrongdoing by Jezebel, had followed the dictates of his evil heart until he was fully controlled by the spirit of selfishness. He could brook no refusal of his wishes; the things he desired he felt should by right be his" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 204).

"A reformation followed. Those who took part in acclaining Joash king, had solemnly covenanted 'that they should be the Lord's people.' And now that the evil influence of the daughter of Jezebel had been removed from the kingdom of Judah, . . . 'the city was quiet.' 2 Chronicles 23:16, 21" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 216).

keytext

"There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel."

(1 Kings 21:25, 26, NIV)

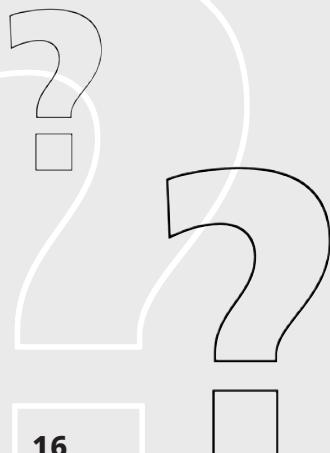
what do you think?

Take the following service quiz by filling in the blanks with the first answer that comes to mind.

1. I think the best example of a selfless servant who is alive today is _____.
2. The biggest reason some teens don't get involved in service is _____.
3. The biggest reward in serving is _____.
4. Besides Christ, the most selfless person in the Bible is _____.
5. The most selfish person in the Bible is _____.
6. Serving others makes me feel _____.

did you know?

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, and being clothed with humility, possessing that love that is pure, peaceable, and easy to be entreated, full of gentleness and good fruits, is not an easy attainment. . . . The soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in knowledge and true holiness."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 376



INTO THE STORY

"**S**ome time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, 'Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.'

"But Naboth replied, 'The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.'

"So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.' He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.

"His wife Jezebel came in and asked him,

'Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?'

"He answered her, 'Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, "Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place." But he said, "I will not give you my vineyard."

"Jezebel his wife said, 'Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.' . . .

"Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 'Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, "This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?" Then say to him, "This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!"'"

"Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she put on eye makeup, arranged her hair and looked out of a window. As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, 'Have you come in peace, you Zimri, you murderer of your master?'

"He looked up at the window and called out, 'Who is on my side? Who?' Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. 'Throw her down!' Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood spattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot.

"Jehu went in and ate and drank. Take care of that cursed woman,' he said, 'and bury her, for she was a king's daughter.' But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands."

OUT OF THE STORY

What does the story of Ahab and Naboth teach us about selfishness?

Is service the best antidote for selfishness? Why or why not?

What was it about Jezebel that was most offensive to God?

Do you think Jezebel's life exhibited the principle "whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7, ESV)? Explain.

How do you reconcile this story of God's harsh judgment against Jezebel with the loving nature of Christ? Why do you think God acts in judgment?

Based on this story, what would you identify as the highest value for Ahab? Naboth? Jezebel? Jehu? What can we learn from their story that might help to inform us about what we choose to value today?

punch lines

"**In the same way**, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (**Matthew 5:16, NIV**).

"**A fortune made by a lying tongue** is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare" (**Proverbs 21:6, NIV**).

"**Not looking to your own** interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (**Philippians 2:4, NIV**).

"**But love your enemies**, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked" (**Luke 6:35, NIV**).

"**For we must all appear** before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (**2 Corinthians 5:10, NIV**).

further insight

"Following Christ's example of unselfish service, trusting like little children in His merits, and obeying His commands, we shall receive the approval of God."—Ellen G. White, *Our Father Cares*, p. 310

"However lowly, any work done for God with a full surrender of self is as acceptable to Him as the highest service. No offering is small that is given with true-heartedness and gladness of soul."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 359

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Psalm 34:14; Matthew 25:34-40; 1 Corinthians 9:19; 1 Timothy 6:18, 19; James 2:17; 1 Peter 2:12.

In a small group of friends share the answers you gave in the *What Do You Think?* section. Then think about and discuss with someone today's Bible passages in light of their message.

Sunday

Read Proverbs 21:6.

Think about the story of Ahab and Na'both's vineyard. Reflect on the following questions:

Have I ever wanted something so badly, only to be disappointed when I got it? What does this teach me about materialism?

Jezabel was a very destructive influence in Ahab's life. Do I have anyone in my life who is leading me into destruction? How would God have me deal with these influences in my life?

Monday

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Think about how Ahab is remembered still to this day ("There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. . . . He behaved in the vilest manner" [1 Kings 21:25, 26, NIV]). If there was a text that people would read a thousand years from now about you, a verse that summarized your legacy, what would it say? Write it below.

Tuesday

Read Philippians 2:4.

In chapter 16 of *Prophets and Kings*, Ellen White mentions a number of lesser-known characters following the reign of Ahab. Review the chapter in *Prophets and Kings*. Identify the following people and note how they fit into the story:

Ahaziah _____
Jehoram (Ahaziah's brother) _____
Jeroboam _____
Jehoshaphat _____
Jehoram (Jehoshaphat's son) _____
Athaliah _____
Jehu _____

Wednesday

Apply the selected *Punch Lines* to your life. "Let your light shine before others" (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Here is one way that I can let my light shine today: _____

"Not looking to your own interests but . . . to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:4, NIV). Here is one person God has called me to take an interest in today:

"Love your enemies" (Luke 6:35, NIV). This is what that command is calling me to do today:

Thursday

Read Luke 6:35.

Speaking of Ahab's selfishness, Ellen White writes: "This dominant trait in Ahab, which influenced so disastrously the fortunes of the kingdom under his successors, is revealed in an incident which took place while Elijah was still a prophet in Israel. Hard by the palace of the king was a vineyard belonging to Naboth, a Jezreelite. Ahab set his heart on possessing this vineyard, and he proposed to buy it or else to give in exchange for it another piece of land" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 204).

So intense was Ahab's desire for this vineyard that when it was not satisfied he was taken ill. What does this teach us? How can we be so filled with Christ that He overwhelms any hint of selfishness? In what other ways can selfishness bring great harm?

Friday

Read Matthew 5:16.

Consider the words of Ellen G. White from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668, "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service."

Whom do I need to help me take the next step in my commitment to God?

What one thing do I need to do to help someone this week?

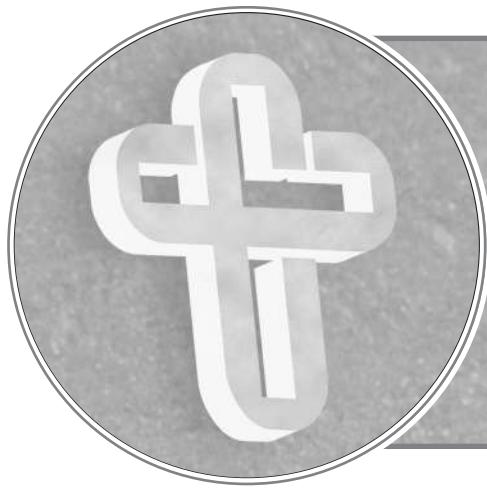
¹ William Strauss, "Today's Teens Are Less Selfish Than Some Adults Think," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 5, 2007, www.csmonitor.com/2007/0305/p09s02-coop.html.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 16.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URLhF1rB09s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 2



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 13 2024

focus on prophets

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 19:15-21; 2 Kings 2.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 17; 18.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Chapters 17 and 18 of *Prophets and Kings* are based on four stories from the life of Elisha. Each story offers worthwhile lessons to explore with your students. Consider focusing on the following themes that emerge from the stories:

1. God uses Elijah to call Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).

Just as it was in ancient days, so it is today. God needs modern-day Elijahs who will disciple and mentor young people in the ways of the Lord. Moreover, God needs Elishas who are open to God's leading and will forsake everything to follow His calling. Perhaps God is calling you to the ministry of Elijah, and this lesson will be the impetus you need to initiate a conversation with an Elisha in your youth group that you can mentor and disciple in spiritual life.

2. Elisha requests and receives a double measure of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:7-10, 15).

Elisha's request for a double measure of the Spirit demonstrates a great deal of spiritual maturity on his part. Similar to the request that Solomon made for wisdom, God was eager to reward this longing to have an extra portion of the Spirit. You might focus on this story and use it to engage your students in a conversation about the role and work of the Holy Spirit.

3. The water is healed (2 Kings 2:19-22).

Ellen White shares this commentary: "The

healing of the waters of Jericho was accomplished, not by any wisdom of man, but by the miraculous interposition of God. Those who had rebuilt the city were undeserving of the favor of Heaven" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 231). Building on this observation, you might choose to talk about God's healing grace. We are all undeserving, and yet it is freely given by a Father who recklessly, passionately loves each one of us.

4. Elisha is jeered (2 Kings 2:23-25).

This is an interesting story that raises some sobering questions about respecting spiritual leaders. Dialogue with your class about what this story has to teach us today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See that just as God called Elijah and Elisha many years ago, He still calls young people today. (*Know*)
- Catch a glimpse of God's heart to pour out His Spirit upon every person today. (*Feel*)
- Have an opportunity to answer God's call. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Spiritual Gifts and Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 17

"God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. . . . (Acts 6:1-7; Rom.

12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

To whom do your kids look for guidance? Ask your class, "Whom do you admire or respect in society—either past or present? Why?" Make a list of the people whom your kids consider to be role models. What do the people on your list have in common? How can we know who the best role model is that we ought to follow? What do good role models do that makes them worthy of admiration or respect?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Emanuel Ninger's reputation as a counterfeiter is legendary. Known as "Jim the Penman," he drew, by hand, \$50 and \$100 legal tender notes. Relying on his naked eye, he worked for weeks at a time on each note, using pen, pencil, and brush with colored inks. Thus he gained a reputation as an extraordinary artist. In fact, his counterfeit notes circulated among the wealthy as works of art.

Prior to his capture, Ninger had been cranking out cash for two decades. Then on March 28, 1896, *The New York Times* reported that the Secret Service found \$244.25 of "good and bad money" in Ninger's home. Because of his clumsy, farmer-like hands, Secret Service agents did not believe Ninger to be the culprit they were hunting. He simply didn't match the physical profile that forgers were supposed to fit. Even after Ninger confessed, they didn't believe him.

Now, Ninger's story had reached mythic proportions. During the raid, three oil paintings were discovered. Experts estimate that it took Ninger as long to create one counterfeit bill as it did to paint one painting. After his arrest Ninger's paintings sold for more than \$5,000 each. In other words, he could have earned a lot more from his artwork than he did for his forgery.

Ninger's reign as King Counterfeiter came to an

end when he entered the Cortlandt Street Saloon and bought a glass of Rhine wine with a \$50 bill. Picking up the bill from the wet counter, the bartender noticed some of the ink on his fingers. The bartender called the police and Ninger was caught while boarding the Cortlandt Street Ferry. Ninger was convicted and served his time before disappearing into anonymity.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Emanuel Ninger is a case of a man with a rare talent that, if used properly, could have benefited society in significant ways. Instead, he employed his gifts illegitimately.

Similarly, you have unique talents. God has gifted you in ways unlike any other person on the planet. Perhaps you can sing. Maybe you can rebuild a carburetor. Or you might be the best babysitter in the state. I don't know what your gifts are, but I know you have special talent on loan from God. Just as God called Elijah and Elisha to a special work, so He is calling you.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following discussion starters to elaborate on each of the four stories.

1. Elisha's Calling

How do you reconcile Elisha's request to return home before following Elijah with the following story in Matthew 8?

"When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'

"Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.'

"Another disciple said to him, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'

"But Jesus told him, 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead' " (Matthew 8:18-22, NIV).

2. Elisha's Request

Calvin Seereld once said, "You can have certain creaturely talents which are amazing, often. But if they are misdirected, not in praise to the Lord but in

praise to oneself, or in praise of reason, or in praise of the almighty dollar, then the sin has ruined the good creaturely gift God has given us." Contrast this quote with Elisha's plea for a double measure of the Holy Spirit. What gifts has God entrusted to you that must not be misdirected?

3. The Healing of the Waters

What stories in the Bible best illustrate for you the healing grace of God?

4. The Jeering of Elisha

Read Psalm 8 and discuss God's love for all people. How does understanding God's love for us inform the way we are called to love one another? Is showing love for someone the same as showing them respect? Explain. How should a Christian respond to someone who's bullying them, especially if that other person is not a Christian? (For resources on the topic of bullying, go to <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/bullying-and-cyberbullying/>.)

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following insights to help bring the text alive.

1. 1 Kings 19:19

When Elijah cast his mantle over Elisha, this was a symbolic act to signify that the power and authority of Elijah, the retiring prophet, were being transferred to the younger prophet. This call of Elisha had made Elijah's mantle a symbol of the prophetic office; the 50 men who were sons of the prophets viewing from afar in 2 Kings 2:7, 8 shows



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Earning Respect

One lesson that emerges from the Bible story of the bears attacking the young people highlights the importance of showing respect to elders. It's one thing to teach students about the importance of showing respect. The truly successful teachers, however, understand that respect is earned. It is the natural and inevitable fruit for teachers who live exemplary lives of integrity. By investing yourself in the lives of students in significant ways outside of the Sabbath School class, you will be earning, not just demanding, their respect. Kathy Mellor, a teacher in North Kingstown, R.I., who was honored by President George W. Bush as teacher of the year, understands the importance of earning the respect of students. *The Washington Times* reports, "Mrs. Mellor urges teachers to reach beyond the classroom and understand their students' lives. She is known for setting high but realistic standards and for earning so much respect that students want her at their first Communions and backyard dances."¹

us a symbol of God's power (see Exodus 17:9) upon His prophet.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

2. 2 Kings 2:9

The KJV Life Application Study Bible, Third Edition offers this commentary on Elisha's desire to receive a double portion of God's Spirit: "God granted Elisha's request because Elisha's motives were pure. His main goal was not to be better or more powerful than Elijah, but to accomplish more for God. If our motives are pure, we don't have to be afraid to ask great things from God. When we ask God for great power or ability, we need to examine our desires and get rid of any selfishness we find."

3. 2 Kings 2:19

The waters of Jericho used to be plentiful and pure but had become tainted and unhealthy. Consequently the plush valley was becoming unfruitful. It appeared as if the curse on the man who was to rebuild Jericho (see Joshua 6:26 and 1 Kings 16:34) extended to blight the land as well.

4. 2 Kings 2:23, 24

The youths from Bethel, the center for idolatry in the northern kingdom, were probably threatening Elisha not to preach against their immorality as Elijah had done. They weren't just teasing Elisha about his baldness, but demonstrating blatant disrespect for Elisha's message and God's authority. They may also have been showing their disbelief in the chariot of fire that had taken Elijah. Notice that when Elisha cursed the young people, he didn't call out the bears himself. This was an act of judgment by God for their calloused hearts.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Gather the names of older men and women in your congregation who have led rich, meaningful lives for God. Then have your students write to some of these people, asking them to share the ways God has given their lives meaning and purpose. You may want to include a cover letter explaining the reason for the request. Then in the weeks that follow share their responses with the Sabbath School class.

Summary

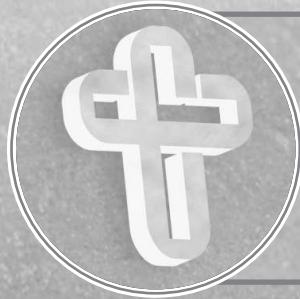
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

In closing, remind your young people that God longs to pour out an extra measure of His Spirit upon every one of them. Just as God called Elijah and Elisha so He is calling each of them. Challenge them to use their spiritual gifts to honor God and craft a life of purpose and significance. God can be trusted to equip every one of us to do His pleasure.

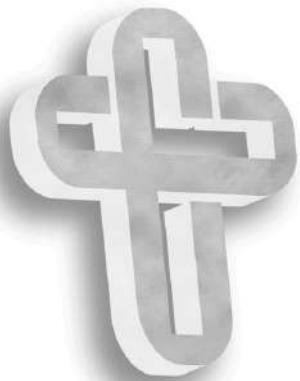
Close with this benediction from Hebrews 13:20, 21 (NIV):

"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

'Life Application Bible, New International Version (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 606.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 17; 18.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 13 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 19:15-21; 2 Kings 2.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*),
 chapters 17; 18.

focus on prophets



cornerstoneconnections.org

flashlight

"To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot, saying, 'Here am I; send me.' . . .

"Ministry comprehends far more than preaching the word. It means training young men as Elijah trained Elisha, taking them from their ordinary duties, and giving them responsibilities to bear in God's work—small responsibilities at first, and larger ones as they gain strength and experience" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 222).

keytext

"When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?'

"'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied."

(2 Kings 2:9, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following people in terms of how much they guide you. (Circle 5 if they offer you a great deal of guidance in life, 1 if they offer no guidance, or some number in between that indicates the amount of guidance they give you.)

(No guidance) (Much guidance)

My friends	1	2	3	4	5
My mom	1	2	3	4	5
My dad	1	2	3	4	5
A teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Television stars	1	2	3	4	5
Myself	1	2	3	4	5
My pastor	1	2	3	4	5
Another relative	1	2	3	4	5
God	1	2	3	4	5

Are there any other sources of guidance in your life? If so, who?

did you know?

The name Elijah means "Jehovah is my God." The Hebrew version of the name Elisha means "God is my salvation." In Latin, Elisha is a girl's name and it means "sweetly blissful."

According to Jewish tradition, Elijah lived in a cave on Mount Carmel in the 9th century BCE, during the reign of King Ahab and his wicked wife, Queen Jezebel. The Hebrew form of the name Jezebel means "not exalted."



tance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

"When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?'

"'Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,' Elisha replied.

"'You have asked a difficult thing,' Elijah said, 'yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.' . . .

"The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, 'The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.' And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. . . .

"The people of the city said to Elisha, 'Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive.'

"'Bring me a new bowl,' he said, 'and put salt in it.' So they brought it to him.

"Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, 'This is what the LORD says: "I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive." ' And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.

"From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Get out of here, baldy!' they said. 'Get out of here, baldy!' He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD.

INTO THE STORY

"So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. 'Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,' he said, 'and then I will come with you.'

"'Go back,' Elijah replied. 'What have I done to you?'

"So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant."

"Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a dis-

Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria."

(1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:7-25, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

The Bible passage contains four primary stories about Elisha. Next to each story below write the lesson that you think God wants you to learn from it.

1. God uses Elijah to call Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).

God's lesson for me: _____

2. Elisha requests and receives a double measure of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:7-10, 15).

God's lesson for me: _____

3. The water is healed (2 Kings 2:19-22).

God's lesson for me: _____

4. Elisha is jeered (2 Kings 2:23-25).

God's lesson for me: _____

punch lines

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully" (**Romans 12:6-8, NIV**).

"It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.

"How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation" (**Daniel 4:2, 3, NIV**).

"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (**1 Timothy 4:8, NIV**).

"The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks proud mockers but shows favor to the humble and oppressed" (**Proverbs 3:33, 34, NIV**).

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (**1 Peter 2:21, NIV**).

further insight

"The Lord desires us to use every gift we have; and if we do this, we shall have greater gifts to use. He does not supernaturally endow us with the qualifications we lack; but while we use that which we have, He will work with us to increase and strengthen every faculty."—Ellen G.

White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 353

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

1. When you were younger, did you ever get lost or separated from your parent? Describe how that made you feel.
-
-

2. If you were to go anywhere in the world to explore, where would you go? Why? Who would you want as a guide with you?
-
-

3. Do you believe we need a guide to get us through life? Why or why not? Who has been a guide for you?
-
-

4. In what way did Elijah serve as a guide to Elisha?
-
-

Sunday

Read 2 Kings 2.

(Use the Notes pages at the back of your Bible study guide to write your answers to the rest of this week's questions.)

1. *God uses Elijah to call Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).*

What is your calling? Is there someone God has put into your life as a mentor? If so, who?

2. *Elisha requests and receives a double measure of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:7-10, 15).*

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear someone talk about the Holy Spirit? How would you describe the Holy Spirit to a friend? What can the Holy Spirit do for you? In Acts 2 we read of how the Holy Spirit came to the disciples at Pentecost in a dramatic way. How do you think the Holy Spirit comes to people today? Do you think God will grant you a double portion of His Spirit if you ask?

3. *The water is healed (2 Kings 2:19-22).*

Ellen White offers this commentary on the story of the healing of the waters:

"The healing of the waters of Jericho was accomplished, not by any wisdom of man, but by the miraculous interposition of God. Those who had rebuilt the city were undeserving of the favor of Heaven; yet He who 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,' saw fit in this instance to reveal, through this token of compassion, His willingness to heal Israel of their spiritual maladies. Matthew 5:45.

"The restoration was permanent; 'the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.' 2 Kings 2:22. From age to age the waters have flowed on, making that portion of the valley an oasis of beauty.

"Many are the spiritual lessons to be gathered from the story of the healing of the waters" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 231).

What do you see as the "spiritual lessons to be gathered" from this story? What symbols do you find in the story (the cruse, salt, spring, etc.)?

4. *Elisha is jeered (2 Kings 2:23-25).*

What does this story teach us about respecting God's chosen representatives? Do you think God acted too harshly against the young people? Why or why not?

Monday

Read 1 Timothy 4:8.

Can you think of anyone today who has been blessed by God with a double portion of the Holy Spirit? Share who you think that person is and why you believe he or she is doubly blessed by God.

Tuesday

Read Romans 12:6-8.

Ellen White tells us: "To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 222). What is this "work for others" that God has for you to do? Discuss possible service projects your youth group could get involved in.

Wednesday

After reading the *Punch Lines*, write one parable that illustrates the lessons that the combination of these texts teach us.

Thursday

Read Luke 6:38; Song of Solomon 4:15.

Chapter 18 of *Prophets and Kings* ends with these texts: "Give, and it shall be given unto you;" for the word of God is 'a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.'

What does this promise mean to you?

Friday

Read 1 Peter 2:21.

Consider this question: God has given me a unique mix of spiritual gifts. What are these gifts and how is He calling me to use them to build up His kingdom—this week?

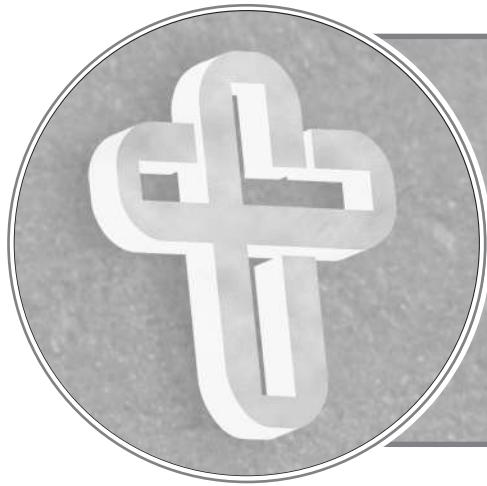
Who has God called you to mentor? What's keeping you from doing it?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 17; 18.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rB09s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 3



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 2024

the miracle worker

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 4.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 19.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Summarizing the heart of this lesson, Ellen White said: "The lesson is for God's children in every age. When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 243). This challenge to boldly pursue the work God calls us to do—in spite of how unreasonable or impossible it seems—is an exciting invitation to put one's faith fully in Him. When we do this, miracles are often the result.

Second Kings 4 tells of the following miracles: the widow's oil multiplied, the dead boy raised to life, the poison in stew purified, and the prophets' food multiplied. To teach about these miracles, it is helpful to understand the context of the ancient world and the popularity of Baal worship. Baal was a false god worshipped by many Israelites. He was the god of rain, fire, and crops; moreover he required child sacrifice. Elisha's miracles demonstrate the power of the true God over the domain of Baal. The story of the dead boy being raised to life stands in contrast to Baal's requirement of child sacrifice and illustrates the priority God puts on the life of a child.

While this lesson is primarily about miracles, there are other topics you may wish to explore with your group. The key text emphasizes that Elisha was a holy man. You could unpack what that means and challenge your students to live similar lives of holiness. The corresponding chapter in *Prophets and Kings* is titled "A Prophet of Peace." You could look at this virtue and discuss what peace and contentment look like

today. Another theme that emerges from this study is the topic of kindness. Ellen White comments: "The kindly spirit that enabled Elisha to exert a powerful influence over the lives of many in Israel, is revealed in the story of his friendly relations with a family dwelling at Shunem" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 237). Whatever direction you take this lesson, clearly God is calling us to do His biddings in the spirit of Elisha.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Consider the miraculous works of God. (*Know*)
- Sense the possibilities when fully trusting God. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to live a life of faith. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Gift of Prophecy, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 18

"The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. . . . (Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Divide the class into two groups and separate

them so they cannot hear the other group. Give each group two minutes to write down all the miracles they can think of that are in the Bible. They are not allowed to use their Bibles. After the two minutes have each team read their list. Cancel out all of the same miracles that are on both lists. Have each team tally up the miracles listed that were not included on the other team's list. The team with the most miracles wins!

Next, share a personal experience of a miracle. This might be a story of surviving an accident, receiving a miraculous healing, observing an event that can't logically be explained, etc. Another option would be to invite a guest who would share either a personal story of a miracle or tell of a story they have heard. A third option would be to simply read a story of a miracle.

Illustration

Share this illustration from Mark Finley's devotional, Solid Ground:

In January of 1999 our It Is Written evangelistic team and production crew flew to the Philippines to conduct an evangelistic series. Our meetings were scheduled to take place at the Philippine International Convention Center and be transmitted via satellite throughout the Pacific Rim.

We were concerned that the satellite transmission equipment might not arrive on time. We praised God when we learned our equipment had arrived the Tuesday before our meetings were to begin. It was then that a serious problem surfaced.

All of our equipment was held up in customs subject to a \$335,000 bond. The customs officials were adamant. Unless we paid \$335,000, the goods would not be released.

All of our efforts to negotiate the equipment's release failed. Time was running out. Our production coordinator talked with numerous customs officials. The story was always the same. Without the payment, no goods.

We didn't have the money. Meanwhile, hundreds of churches, with tens of thousands of people, eagerly anticipated hearing God's Word Friday evening. What options did we have? Our staff prayed earnestly. We met in little prayer groups, claiming God's promises to find a way where there is no way.

Providentially we discovered that the Philippine ambassador to New Guinea was a Seventh-day Adventist. If he were in the country, he could possibly help us.

As God would have it, Ambassador Ben Tejano was in Manila and eager to help. He appealed directly to the then president of the Philippines, Joseph Estrada. President Estrada signed an executive order stating, "Immediately release all goods and transmission equipment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at no charge."

Within a few hours our equipment was released. Our evangelistic meetings began on time. Tens of thousands heard God's end-time message of love and truth.

God still works miracles. He still answers prayer.

When we are at our wits' end, He isn't. When human solutions to our problems have run out, divine solutions have not. When we don't know what to do, He knows just what is necessary. Without a doubt, we can still depend upon Him to respond when we ask.¹

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Mark Finley and his crew were put in a difficult situation where their trust in God would be tested. Although the team was under pressure, they still trusted, and God provided. When in doubt, trust in Him, for our worldly problems are never too big for Him.

Do the miracles in the Bible ever seem as if they are from another time and another place, and God doesn't perform the same kind of miracles today?

How does one retain a sense of wonder for the miracles that occur today?

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Divide the students into four groups and have them act out the four miracles in 2 Kings 4 (the widow's oil, the Shunammite's son restored to life, death in the pot, and the feeding of a hundred). After you have enjoyed the dramatic sketches of the stories, engage the students in a conversation by using the following questions:

When you see God at work caring for the widow, raising the Shunammite's son from the dead, and so on, what does this tell you about God? Is the God of the New Testament any different than the God of the Old Testament? Explain. How might these miracles

help us keep God's harsh judgment toward the unrepentant in proper perspective?

Elisha is remembered as a man who performed many miracles to help those in need. Can you think of a better legacy that you could leave? Explain. How do you want to be remembered? How should you live today so that you can be remembered as you want to be?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

There are different words in the Bible that can be translated as "miracle." However, each word carries with it a unique nuance. Among the most common words we call "miracles" are the following:

1. Terata—Wonders

Terata is usually translated "wonders" (see Matthew 24:24; John 4:48; Acts 2:43; 5:12; 6:8; 15:12; Romans 15:19). This word indicates the state of mind of those eyewitnesses who experienced miracles. To the witnesses, such a display of power was contrary to their expectations—opposite to anything with which they were accustomed.

Such miracles, however, were not merely "wonders," producing momentary amazement. The focus was on their purpose and their inner spiritual appeal. A good example of this is the healing of the crippled man in Lystra (see Acts 14:8-15).

2. Semeia—Signs

Semeia is usually translated "signs." In 2 Corinthians 12:12 the apostle Paul wrote: "I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true

apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles" (NIV). The purpose in these "signs" was to be an indication of the near presence and working of God and proof of the authentic nature of revelation. For example, the "signs" or "miracles" of Christ authenticated His divine calling and His nature as the Son of God. These signs were evident in the work of the disciples (see Mark 6:30). Similarly, the signs and miracles performed by Paul and Barnabas testified of God's Spirit at work in them (Acts 14:3). Hebrews 2:3, 4 (NIV) puts it like this: "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."

3. Dunamis—Power

Dunamis is usually translated "power." Miracles can be considered "powers" in that they show the mighty power of God that was evident in Jesus, "the Great Power of God" (Acts 8:10, NASB). This word suggests that there are higher forces at work in this lower world of ours (see Hebrews 6:5). The plural form, "powers," is the same word translated "mighty works" (Matthew 11:20; Mark 6:14; Luke 10:13) and "miracles" (Acts 19:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Galatians 3:5).

These three words are combined in one verse—"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles [*dunamesi*], wonders [*terasi*] and signs [*semeiois*], which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22, NIV).

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

The Power of Personal Testimony

It is important not to allow this lesson to slip into the ethereal realm—totally removed from any reality in the life of the teenager sitting in your Sabbath School class. Students might be tempted to blow off the topic of miracles as something that “possibly happened in Bible times but they certainly don’t happen today.”

Included in the teacher’s helps this week are a couple of contemporary miracle stories. While you can share these stories—and hopefully they will make a strong impact—there is no substitute for the power of a personal testimony. Therefore, to really make this lesson sing, share from your own story. While you may not have a personal story of some dramatic miracle (“I died and then four days later I was raised from the dead—just like Lazarus”), chances are you have experienced signs, wonders, and the power of God in your life. Share these stories and help the young people see the miracles in everyday life.

RABBI 101

Keep one another posted on any answers to prayer.

Summary

Share the following as a conclusion to this lesson:

Dr. Ben Carson tells of facing the seemingly inevitable death of a patient, the father of three children.

Lord, I need a booster here, I remember praying. You could do wonders for my faith right now.

Within two days, Rob was off the respirator. A few days after Rob went home there was an interesting development. Since I first entered the field of medicine, I have met doctors who have difficulty dealing with unanswerable situations. Often they’ll finally admit, “Well, there’s some explanation, we just don’t understand it.”

One of the neurosurgeons, an especially brilliant man and one who doesn’t acknowledge a belief in God, pondered this matter of Rob for several days. He asked question after question, determined to figure out an answer. None of us could offer an explanation for Rob’s recovery.

“I know, but I think I’ve finally figured it out,” he said. “It’s the mitochondria at the subcellular level, and they can go into shock.”

I listened to his explanation before I asked him a question. “Tell me, did you ever see such a thing before?”

“No, not really, but. . . .”

“This is a miracle,” I said. “Why not accept it for what it is? They don’t come any more blatantly than this. Rob was gone and now he’s back. This is the only time I’ve ever seen an adult sink to such a low neurological level and then recover.”

As my final statement I said, “We don’t have to explain miracles; all we have to do is accept them.”²

¹Mark Finley, *Solid Ground* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2003), p. 338.

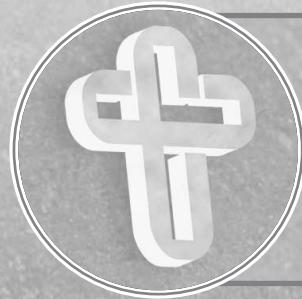
²Adapted from Ben Carson, *Think Big* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 131-140.

III.CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask the students to form small groups and discuss the following question: If you had a guarantee that God would perform any miracle in your life right now, what miracle would you pray for? Covenant with one another in your small group to make each individual request a matter of prayer.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 19.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 4.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 19.

the miracle worker



cornerstoneconnections

13

flashlight

"The lesson is for God's children in every age. When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey. . . .

"A fuller sense of God's relationship to those whom He has purchased with the gift of His Son, a greater faith in the onward progress of His cause in the earth—this is the great need of the church today" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 243).

keytext

"She said to her husband, 'I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God.'"

(**2 Kings 4:9, NIV**)

what do you think?

What do you think of the following statements—do you A (agree) or D (disagree)?

- God works as many miracles today as He did in Bible times.
- Many times we experience miracles and don't realize it.
- If we had more faith we'd see more miracles.
- If we saw more miracles we'd have more faith.
- The greatest miracle is our salvation.
- Faith will take away all your doubts forever.
- Faith will make everything in your life easier.
- If we truly believed in miracles there would be no world hunger.

did you know?

14

The word "miracle" is derived from the Latin word *miraculum* meaning "something wonderful." Simply defined, a miracle is an event or action that contradicts known scientific laws and that can be explained only as an act of God. Miracles recorded in the Bible can be classified in the following way: power over nature, power over disease, power over death, and power over demons.



32

INTO THE STORY

The Widow's Olive Oil: "The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, 'Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.'

"Elisha replied to her, 'How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?'

"Your servant has nothing there at all,' she said, 'except a small jar of olive oil.'

"Elisha said, 'Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.'

The Shunammite's Son Restored

to Life: "One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. She said to her husband, 'I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God.' . . .

"Then Elisha said, 'Call her.' So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. 'About this time next year,' Elisha said, 'you will hold a son in your arms.' . . .

"When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch. . . . Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out on him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

"Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, 'Call the Shunammite.' And he did. When she came, he said, 'Take your son.' "

Death in the Pot: "Elisha returned to Gilgal and there was a famine in that region. While the company of the prophets was meeting with him, he said to his servant, 'Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these prophets.' . . .

". . . The stew was poured out for the men, but as they began to eat it, they cried out, 'Man of God, there is death in the pot!' And they could not eat it.

"Elisha said, 'Get some flour.' He put it into the pot and said, 'Serve it to the people to eat.' And there was nothing harmful in the pot."

Feeding of a Hundred: "A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. 'Give it to the people to eat,' Elisha said.

"How can I set this before a hundred men?" his servant asked.

"But Elisha answered, 'Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the LORD says: "They will eat and have some left over." ' Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD."

(2 Kings 4:1-4, 8-16, 32-44, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

In 2 Kings 4 we find four miracle stories. Read the four stories then reflect on these questions:

Which of the four miracles do you think was the greatest? Why?

What impresses you most in each story? Explain.

What do the stories have in common? What are the unique aspects of each story?

Have you heard of any modern-day miracles that are similar to these stories in 2 Kings 4?

What do these stories tell us about Elisha?

What do these stories tell us about God?

punch lines

"This is what the LORD says:

"'Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,' declares the LORD. 'They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your descendants,' declares the LORD. 'Your children will return to their own land' " (*Jeremiah 31:16, 17, NIV*).

"This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (*Romans 3:22, NIV*).

"**LORD, I have heard of your fame;** I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy" (*Habakkuk 3:2, NIV*).

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (*Matthew 7:7, NIV*).

"**I am the Living One;** I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (*Revelation 1:18, NIV*).

further insight

"You need not go to the ends of the earth for wisdom, for God is near. It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. . . . Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*,

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 12:38-42.

Based on today's Bible passage, reflect on how Jesus' answer to the Pharisees might inform your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section. What was Jesus saying in His answer?

Sunday

Read 2 Kings 4.

Review the four miracles in 2 Kings 4. Next to each miracle see if you can find a similar miracle recorded in the Bible.

The miracle of the widow's oil is similar to _____

The miracle of the healing of the Shunammite's son is similar to _____

The miracle of the poisoned pot is similar to _____

The miracle of the feeding of a hundred is similar to _____
_____.

Monday

Read Hebrews 12:14.

The Shunammite woman recognized Elisha as "a holy man of God" (2 Kings 4:9, NIV). What attributes do you think she saw in Elisha that led her to this conclusion? Who comes to mind for you when you think about a "holy person"? How can you be known as a holy person?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 7:7.

Ellen White points out that this lesson is for God's children in every age: "When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 243).

Where is the line between absolute faith in God ("I believe God will take care of me if I donate my entire paycheck to an orphanage") and reckless foolishness ("I believe God will protect me in jumping off the Empire State Building")? What do you think Ellen White means when she counsels us not to "inquire into the reasonableness of the command"? Was God's command of Abraham to kill his son Isaac a "reasonable command"? Explain.

What is one thing that you believe God is asking you to do that you know is WAY out of your abilities? Do you think it's out of God's?

Wednesday

Compare the *Punch Lines* to the following verses about faith:

John 20:24-29
Hebrews 11:1
Hebrews 11:6
Romans 10:17

Thursday

Read Romans 3:22.

Is it possible to emulate the kind of faith that we read about in people like Abraham, David, and Peter? How can I exercise more faith? Does faith produce miracles?

Or is it in seeing miracles that my faith is strengthened?

Friday

Read Habakkuk 3:2.

Read the following passage from Ellen White then write down what this means in your life today.

"What condescension it was on the part of Christ, through His messenger, to work this miracle to satisfy hunger! Again and again since that time, though not always in so marked and perceptible a manner, has the Lord Jesus worked to supply human need. If we had clearer spiritual discernment we would recognize more readily than we do God's compassionate dealing with the children of men" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 241).

What this means for my life today: _____

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 19.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 4

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 27 2024

test of faith

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 5.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 20; 21.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

We live in a world that tends to be very casual about the problem of pride. We're swamped with books on how to achieve wealth, beauty, happiness, and success, but there aren't many bestsellers with titles like *Seven Steps to a Less Glamorous Life* or *How to Land the Lowest Job*. Don King, the boxing promoter, captured our culture's attitude toward humility when he said, "Sometimes I amaze even my own self . . . and I say that humbly." Let's face it—our culture is quite ambivalent about this humility deal.

This casual attitude toward pride, however, is not biblical. Listen to Scripture: "The LORD preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full" (Psalm 31:23, NIV). "Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate" (Psalm 101:5, NIV). "The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished" (Proverbs 16:5, NIV). "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble" (James 4:6, NIV). "And those who walk in pride he is able to humble" (Daniel 4:37, NIV).

Given the clarity with which the Bible speaks against pride, the story of Naaman offers an ideal opportunity to engage your students in a conversation about the importance of humility. While there are other directions you could take this lesson (obedience, self-image, witnessing, etc.), the issue of

pride seems to be a worthwhile focus. In the end, William Barclay was right in his summation: "Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come."

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the serious, self-destructive nature of pride. (*Know*)
- Sense the benefits of humility. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to confess pride and walk humbly with God. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Christian Behavior, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 22

"We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life. . . . (Gen. 7:2; Exod. 20:15; Lev. 11:1-47; Ps. 106:3; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 10:5; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 2:4; 4:8; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; Titus 2:11, 12; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 John 2:6; 3 John 2.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Discussion questions: How would you define pride? When does pride become a bad thing? Where is the line between feeling self-confident and being proud? Why is pride harmful to friendships?

Illustration

Share this illustration:

A student applying for admission to New York University gave a creative answer to the question "Are there any personal accomplishments or significant experiences you have had that helped to define you as a person?" He answered,

"I am a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. I have been known to remodel train stations on my lunch breaks, making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. I write award-winning operas. Occasionally, I tread water for three days in a row. I can cook 30-minute brownies in 20 minutes.

"Using only a hoe and a large glass of water, I once single-handedly defended a small village in the Amazon basin from a horde of ferocious army ants. I play bluegrass cello. I was scouted by the Mets. I am the subject of numerous documentaries. When I'm bored, I build large suspension bridges in my yard. I enjoy urban hang gliding. On Wednesdays after school I repair electrical appliances free of charge.

"I am an abstract artist, a concrete analyst, and a ruthless bookie. . . . I am a private citizen, yet I receive fan mail. I have been caller number nine and have won the weekend passes. Last summer I toured New Jersey with a traveling centrifugal force demonstration. My deft floral arrangements have earned me fame in international botany circles. Children trust me.

"I balance, I weave, I dodge, I frolic, and my bills are all paid. Years ago I discovered the meaning of life, but forgot to write it down. I have made extraordinary four-course meals using only a blender and a toaster oven. . . .

"I have won . . . cliff-diving competitions in Sri Lanka, and spelling bees in the Kremlin, . . . performed open-heart surgery. . . .

"But I have not yet gone to college."¹

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Like this student (who, by the way, did get accepted at NYU!), Naaman had lots and lots of skills. He was larger than life with hordes of talents, money, power, and fame. But Naaman had one other thing that all the power and fame in the world couldn't fix—a patch of discolored skin. This little spot of leprosy would kill him. Naaman's only hope for healing came through humbly accepting his limitations and obeying the command to go dunk in a polluted river. Only when he humbled himself before God did he receive healing.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Use the following phrases and discussion questions from the Into the Story section with your students to process the story with them.

Verse one tells us that Naaman was "a great man in the sight of his master" (NIV). What makes a person "great" today? Might someone be great in the eyes of the world but pitiful in the eyes of God? Explain.

Another detail in verse one is that Naaman "was a valiant soldier" (NIV). In other words, he was not just a keen military strategist; he excelled in the battle. He loved a good challenge. "But he had leprosy," the verse goes on to say (NIV). Do you know of any examples today of people who love any challenge but are brought to their knees by some seemingly small patch of discolored skin? Does God ever allow these challenges to teach us humility? Explain.

Review the reasoning of Naaman's servants in verse 13. In what other ways might Naaman have responded to them? How open are you to confrontation? In what ways can we grow when we receive criticism with a spirit of humility?

Read verses 22, 23 and describe what kind of person you think Gehazi was when he was a teenager.

What does God's punishment in verse 27 reveal about God? Does this punishment seem too harsh? Why or why not?

There are many examples of prideful people in the Bible. Take some time to check out each of these verses with your students:

Deuteronomy 8:11-14

2 Kings 20:12-18

2 Chronicles 26:16-21

Esther 3:1-6

Daniel 5:18-21
 John 11:45-53
 Luke 18:11-14
 Acts 12:21-23

How did each person show his or her pride? What was the result of their pride? What do these verses say about pride in our lives?

Here are some additional passages that relate to this lesson:

Psalm 138; Proverbs 16; Proverbs 27; Proverbs 29; Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:3.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Naaman's Disease

Leprosy was much like AIDS today. It was one of the most feared diseases in the ancient world. According to Wikipedia.com, leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease. It is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*. If left untreated, there can be progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs, and eyes. Leprosy has affected humanity since at least 600 B.C., and was well-recognized in the civilizations of ancient China, Egypt, and India. In 1995 the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that between two and three million individuals were permanently disabled because of leprosy. Although the forced quarantine or segregation of patients is unnecessary, and can be considered unethical, a few leper

colonies still remain around the world in countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In Bible times many lepers were quarantined to death camps. Because Naaman still held his post, his form must have been mild, or he caught it in an early stage. In any case, he would have interpreted the disease as a death sentence.

2. The Maidservant

The name of Naaman's maid is unknown. While we don't know much about her, it was her suggestion that brought healing and faith in God to a powerful Aramean captain. We do know that she was an Israelite. For an Israelite to come into contact with a leper was strictly forbidden. If they did there were certain ceremonial washings that Jews had to perform in order to be considered clean again. Yet Naaman's maid was in contact with a feared leper.

3. Naaman's Pride

The *NIV Life Application Bible* connects Naaman's story with this practical teaching on the topic of pride:

Naaman, a great hero, was used to getting respect, and he was outraged when Elisha treated him like an ordinary person. A proud man, he expected royal treatment. To wash in a great river would be one thing, but the Jordan was small and dirty. To wash in the Jordan, Naaman thought, was beneath a man of his position. But Naaman had to humble himself and obey Elisha's commands in order to be healed.

Obedience to God begins with humility. We must believe that His way is better than our own.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Teaching Through Humility

Brett Justus, an ATP and FAA Gold Seal flight instructor, links the importance of humility to teaching. Although his counsel is specifically for flight instructors, the principle applies equally to Sabbath School teachers and issues of faith. He writes:

"How does a good pilot become a good teacher? Books have been written on the subject. Learning to fly is a challenging and dynamic endeavor. Many subtle, personal skills are required to excel in fully and effectively molding safe, skilled pilots.

"I think humility should be the first skill added to an instructor's tool belt. When this attribute is embraced, the door will be open for all the other skills necessary to be a true teacher.

"Revealing humility in your approach will help defensiveness end, so learning can begin. More of your students will complete their training if you assure them that you and others have struggled with certain areas, just as they are currently struggling. You don't have to show your students what a great pilot you are. They already know you're a skilled pilot. Show them what a good teacher you are by sharing specific instances of when you had problems with the current maneuver that they can't seem to perfect. Then they will be encouraged and tell themselves, 'If my instructor could get through this and get to where he or she is now, then I guess I can do it too!'"³

We may not always understand His ways of working, but by humbly obeying, we will receive His blessings. We must remember that (1) God's ways

RABBI 101

are best; (2) God wants our obedience more than anything else; (3) God can use anything to accomplish His purposes.²

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Tell the students that they have been selected to present a seminar to the world church on the topic of humility. Their challenge is to make it as practical as possible so that everyone in attendance will leave the seminar with a clear picture of what they must do in order to grow in the area of humility. Turn the class loose to develop the curriculum and then have them share their practical suggestions on how to be humble.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) says: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Pride is sin. But God will forgive us when we confess our sins. The Bible warns us that pride leads to destruction. Conceit is a cancer to Christians. It ruins friendships, damages relationships, and compromises intimacy with God.

Close with a time of prayer for your students to reflect on any pockets of pride that might hinder their walk with God. After a brief season of solitude, invite the students to ask God for forgiveness—and for strength to take the focus off of themselves and fully on God.

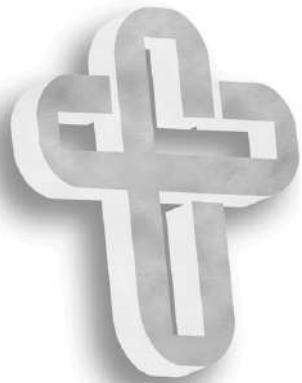
¹Adapted from "But I Have Not Yet Gone to College," *Still More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), pp. 116, 117.

²*Life Application Bible*, New International Version (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 613.

³As quoted at <https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2003/august/flight-training-magazine/cfi-to-cfi>.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 20; 21.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 27 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 5.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 20; 21.

test of faith



Photo © Getty Images

flashlight

"The proud spirit of Naaman rebelled against following the course outlined by Elisha. The rivers mentioned by the Syrian captain were beautified by surrounding groves, and many flocked to the banks of these pleasant streams to worship their idol gods. It would have cost Naaman no great humiliation of soul to descend into one of those streams. But it was only through following the specific directions of the prophet that he could find healing. Willing obedience alone would bring the desired result" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 249).

keytext

"Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?' . . . So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy."

(2 Kings 5:13, 14, NIV)

did you know?

The pride of sin is listed in Proverbs 6:16-19 and in Mark 7:21-23. Like all sins, pride begins in the heart. Ellen G. White in *Steps to Christ*, says that "pride, selfishness, and covetousness . . . are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe" (p. 30).



what do you think?

Which of the following individuals do you think are prideful? Explain your answers.

- ___ José ignores his friends whenever a cute girl walks by.
- ___ Katelyn is constantly showing off her latest high-tech gadget.
- ___ Your band teacher doesn't listen to feedback from his students.
- ___ Reagan ignores advice from his parents and friends about not smoking.
- ___ Sarah shares her straight-A report card on her social media page.
- ___ Lindsey complains whenever she falls short of her goal of perfection.

Questions to consider:

1. How would you describe someone suffering from the disease of pride?
2. What are the symptoms of this disease?
3. How can the disease of pride be cured?

INTO THE STORY

"Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

"Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy. . . .

"So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, 'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.'

"But Naaman went away angry and said, 'I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. . . .' So he turned and went off in a rage.

"Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, "Wash and be cleansed"! So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.'

"Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.'

"The prophet answered, ' . . . I will not accept a thing.' . . .

"So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. 'Is everything all right?' he asked.

" 'Everything is all right,' Gehazi answered. 'My master sent me to say, "Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing." ' . . .

"When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, 'Where have you been, Gehazi?'

" 'Your servant didn't go anywhere,' Gehazi answered.

"But Elisha said to him, ' . . . Naaman's leprosy

will cling to you and to your descendants forever.' Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow."

(2 Kings 5:1-3, 9-16, 21-27, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story to note details that are new to you.

Circle the different people in the story.

What character qualities do you see in:

Naaman's servant girl? _____

Naaman? _____

Elisha? _____

Naaman's servants? _____

Gehazi? _____

If this story were to be made into a motion picture, what title would you give it? _____

What similarities do you see between the following Bible characters and contemporary public figures?

Naaman's servant girl—Hillary Clinton, former secretary of state to U.S. president Barack Obama _____

Naaman—Rush Limbaugh _____

Elisha—Billy Graham _____

Naaman's servants—Cabinet members for the president of a country _____

Gehazi—Martha Stewart _____

What other contemporary counterparts might compare today to the Bible characters?

punch lines

"**If anyone thinks they are something** when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load" (**Galatians 6:3-5, NIV**).

"**Though the Lord is exalted**, he looks kindly on the lowly; though lofty, he sees them from afar" (**Psalm 138:6, NIV**).

"**For by the grace given me** I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" (**Romans 12:3, NIV**).

"**Pride goes before** destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (**Proverbs 16:18, NIV**).

further insight

"Men may think to hide their evil deeds from human eyes, but they cannot deceive God...."

"Truth is of God; deception in all its myriad forms is of Satan, and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one."—

Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 252

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Psalm 138:6.

Discuss the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. Rank them from the most prideful to the most humble. Explain your reasoning behind your ranking.

Sunday

Read 2 Kings 5:4-7.

Tell the story of Naaman from the following perspectives:

- The perspective of the captive girl.

- The perspective of Naaman's guardian angel.

- The perspective of the king of Israel:

Monday

Read Colossians 2:13, 14.

In what area of your life do you long to be "washed and cleansed"? Write a letter to God confessing this struggle in your life. Burn or shred the letter to remind yourself of God's perfect and complete forgiveness. (If you would like some resources about issues with which you are struggling, go to <http://livingiths.org/resources/at-risk-help/risk-behaviors>).

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 16:18.

Read the *Flashlight* section. Compare it to the following quotation from Ellen White in *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 416:

"Few realize the full meaning of the words that Christ spoke when, in the synagogue at Naz-

areth, He announced Himself as the Anointed One. He declared His mission to comfort, bless, and save the sorrowing and the sinful; and then, seeing that pride and unbelief controlled the hearts of His hearers, He reminded them that in time past God had turned away from His chosen people because of their unbelief and rebellion, and had manifested Himself to those in heathen lands who had not rejected the light of heaven. The widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian had lived up to all the light they had; hence they were accounted more righteous than God's chosen people who had backslidden from Him and had sacrificed principle to convenience and worldly honor."

Wednesday

Read Romans 12:3.

What is your impression of conceited people? Check the answers that apply.

I think they're usually . . .

- jealous of their friends.
- deceiving themselves.
- admired by others.
- in need of being humbled.
- very popular with the opposite sex.
- glued to the mirror.
- extremely confident in themselves.
- secretly admired.
- hard to get to know.
- good listeners.
- insecure.

What do arrogance and self-debasement have in common?

Thursday

Read Galatians 6:3-5.

What are the steps God is asking me to take in my life to grow in humility?

What do I need to do to make this a reality in my life?

Friday

Read Galatians 4:4, 5.

Reject on this quote from *The Youth's Instructor*: "The more we think about Christ's becoming a babe here on earth, the more wonderful it appears. How can it be that the helpless babe in Bethlehem's manger is still the divine Son of God? Though we cannot understand it, we can believe that he who made the worlds, for our sakes became a helpless babe. Though higher than any of the angels, though as great as the Father on the throne of heaven, he became one with us. In him God and man became one, and it is in this fact that we find the hope of our fallen race. Looking upon Christ in the flesh, we look upon God in humanity, and see in him the brightness of divine glory, the express image of God the Father" (Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, November 21, 1895, para. 3).

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or Royalty in Ruins), chapters 20; 21.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 5

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 04 2024

pardoned

Scripture Story: Jonah.

Commentary: Prophets and Kings (or Royalty in Ruins), chapter 22.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Jonah's story has everything—terror on the high seas, attempted suicide, supernatural rescue, prophecies of doom and destruction, a shocking display of true love—everything, that is, but a tidy ending. There's Jonah, farther from home than he ever expected, having traveled by ship, fish, and foot, sitting outside Nineveh feeling sorry for himself, letting out the world's most selfish wail.

And like no other Bible book perhaps save Job (another tale of someone who learns that if you debate God, don't expect to win), we're left with countless unanswered questions. How did Jonah's half-hearted, hellfire-and-damnation street preaching manage to touch the hearts of so many people? Whatever happened to those Ninevites anyway—especially considering that the Babylonians reduced their city to rubble only a few generations later? Why would God send someone so prejudiced to preach to people he so despised? Just how much (and for how long) did the Ninevites change their ways and how much did they ever understand God? Did Jonah ever eat fish again?

We're left with one answer: It's a God thing. A God Jonah knew all too well, "a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:2, NIV). God saves whom He chooses, and if He had His way, that'd be everybody. No sin is too

wretched to be forgiven, no sinner so far gone that they can't be saved. Jonah had to learn the same lesson as the prophet Samuel, Peter, and most of the rest of us: "People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

Jonah may be a shrimpy book compared to some in the Bible, but it's packed with some jumbo themes. As you explore Jonah's themes with your students, think about such issues as:

God's love and care for the most sinful people—and the most stubborn.

Just what it takes for God to save us.

The importance of seeing others as God sees them.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the core elements of trusting God to do the seemingly impossible. (*Know*)
- Sense God's willingness to save the most wicked people—and the most ungrateful. (*Feel*)
- Choose to seize faith moments as opportunities to grow instead of calamities to avoid. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Father, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 3

"God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just

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and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. . . . (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 4:35; Ps. 110:1, 4; John 3:16; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 4:11.)

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Adventists have traditionally reached people by sharing “the truth”—about the Sabbath, about what happens when we die, about the mark of the beast. While all those truths are found in the Bible, Jonah is one of the Bible stories (such as the thief on the cross or the angels rescuing Lot) about God saving people who had barely heard of many of the beliefs we take for granted.

As you reflect on this with your students, turn to Matthew 24:4-13, where Jesus warns His followers to beware of false prophets and deception. What balance is there between the importance of simply introducing people to Jesus and ensuring that they know enough to avoid being deceived?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Anna got straight A's, sang in the school choir, and prided herself on being involved in church. Anna's sister Heather loved playing sports and hanging out with friends, but did the least she could get away with in school. Her parents sometimes talked with Heather about her goals for the future, but Heather assured them she'd figure that out later.

Anna knew her parents didn't have a favorite, but she was pretty sure that they were just a little more proud of her. She was the one who stayed home to help paint the porch while Heather went to the amusement park. She was the one who cooked and delivered lunch and dinner when Aunt Margaret broke her leg.

The Saturday night before the annual family road trip, Anna stayed up working on a college application—while Heather stayed out far past her pretrip curfew. When Anna headed to bed she

found her mom still waiting up.

When her mom woke her up at 5:00 to start packing the car, Anna blurted out, “Are you going to ground Heather?” Somehow being grounded in the middle of family vacation sounded like a particularly fitting punishment. But her mom just said, “Heather and I have talked and have made some decisions—and frankly, Anna, it’s none of your business.”

Anna grumbled to herself as she put on her slippers. Why did their parents have to let Heather get away with *everything*?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Self-righteousness. Why are others' faults so easy to see when our own are invisible to us? It's hard seeing the world through someone else's eyes when we're blind to our own faults.

“How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye” (Matthew 7:3-5, NIV).

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

1. Underline parts of the story that are new to you. What's the most surprising part of this story?
2. Highlight the parts of the story where people speak with God or try to send God a message.
3. What themes come out of the book of Jonah?
4. How is Jonah different from other Bible stories?
5. How do you think the Israelites reacted when they first heard about Jonah's visit to Nineveh?
6. What verse(s) do you think sum up the theme of Jonah?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Matthew 5:43-48; Proverbs 25:21, 22 (compare to Romans 12:19-21); Matthew 12:41; Luke 10:25-37; Luke 23:39-43; compare Jonah 4:11 with Mark 6:34; 1 John 2:29.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

I say “Jonah,” you say “whale.” And while any good Bible student can tell you that the text says only “big fish,” few realize that Jonah pops up one other place in the Old Testament. Second Kings 14:25 reveals that he prophesied during the wretched 41-year reign of Jereboam II of Israel, around 800-760 B.C.

Nineveh, located near present-day Mosul, Iraq, was a city of great temples and palaces that sat along the river trade routes between east and west. It served as the capital of the ancient Assyrian empire, and much architectural expansion had occurred in the decades before its most famous visitor showed up to prophesy its destruction. Jonah describes it as a “great city of three days’ journey” (Jonah 3:3, KJV), which scholars believe refers to how long it would take to walk around it.

Archaeological records indicate a revival of worship of the god Marduk in Nineveh around the time of Jonah, but neither the Bible nor archaeology suggests the Ninevites all became “Seventh-day Assyrians.” In the story Jonah doesn’t ask the



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Write It Out

Have your students write a short newspaper story or the introduction to the *Ninevite Nightly News* reporting on the sudden appearance of a mysterious Israelite prophet. Have them include quotes from Ninevites about how they feel about Jonah and the impact he’s making, and why they may or may not believe that he’s brought a divine message.

This exercise, though a bit of anachronistic fun, will help your students see the story of Jonah from a more personal perspective. Remind them that, as Jesus pointed out, the Ninevites believed despite the lack of any miraculous signs. What does it take to reach people with the gospel today? Is the message itself enough, or do we need “gimmicks”?

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Ninevites to give up their own gods, and the text doesn’t say they accepted Yahweh as their only god. He just asks them to repent of their sins, and however little they may have understood of the Israelite religion, God accepted their repentance and faith in Him as genuine.

The king of Nineveh was convicted that chief among his people’s sins was “violence,” and his

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.

understanding of salvation is as keen as anyone's in the Bible: "Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish" (Jonah 3:8, 9, NIV).

Jesus referenced Jonah in His pleadings to the Israelites to repent of their self-righteousness. When they demanded a sign, He told them that the only one they'd get would be "the sign of Jonah": "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40, NIV). Jesus reminded them that the Ninevites had seen far less evidence to believe than they had, yet "the men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here" (Luke 11:32, NIV).

But as much as we may like to kick self-pitying Jonah around, his belly-bound prayer is one of the most beautiful in the Bible, and reminds us that though our faith falters, God is always listening.

III. CLOSING

Activity

[Use Tips for Top-Notch Teaching.]

Summary

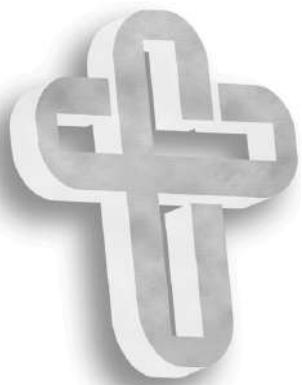
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jonah challenges our preconceptions of God's judgment, our prejudices about non-Christians, and what's in our own hearts. It reminds us that there's no room in heaven for self-righteousness, for only by God's grace can any of us—"saint" or sinner, preacher or plumber, Christian or Muslim—be saved. We'll make it to heaven because God loved us and when God came knocking, we opened the door and let Him in.

Jonah also reminds us that it's often those "closest" to God—those who've grown up learning their memory verses and attending good Christian schools—who have the most to learn about God. While the Ninevites saw their need for God, God's own prophet kept running the other direction. Jonah thought he had an edge because he kept God's law while the Ninevites knew only evil, but he'd forgotten the foundation: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27, NIV).



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 22.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Jonah.

Commentary: Prophets and Kings (or Royalty in Ruins), chapter 22.

pardoned



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flashlight

"Yet Nineveh, wicked though it had become, was not wholly given over to evil. He who 'beholdeth all the sons of men' (Psalm 33:13) and 'seeth every precious thing' (Job 28:10) perceived in that city many who were reaching out after something better and higher, and who, if granted opportunity to learn of the living God, would put away their evil deeds and worship Him. And so in His wisdom God revealed Himself to them in an unmistakable manner, to lead them, if possible, to repentance" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 265).

keytext

"I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity."

(Jonah 4:2, NIV)

what do you think?

What words, thoughts, or impressions come to your mind when you hear the following words?

- Immigrants _____
Goths _____
Skaters _____
Emo kids _____
Jocks _____
Snobs _____
Goodie-goodies _____
Posers _____
Teacher's pets _____

did you know?

If you've seen Mosul, Iraq, in the news, you've seen the modern-day site of ancient Nineveh—what's left of it, anyway. Old Testament prophecies foretelling its complete and utter destruction came true in 611 B.C. But for centuries Israelites trembled in their sandals at the very mention of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire—including one self-righteous, deep-sea diver who may be the most successful evangelist in history.

Established where the Khosr and Tigris rivers meet, Nineveh sat in the middle of

East and West, with the Mediterranean Sea in one direction and the Indian Ocean in the other. Trade traveled freely in both directions, bringing goods, knowledge, and prosperity to Nineveh. Yet

Nineveh is an example of an ancient city that was completely demolished. Attacked by the Medes, Babylonians, and Elamites, its buildings and walls were smashed to pieces and its people slaughtered or sent into exile. The Medes and Babylonians divided up the land of the once-powerful empire.



INTO THE STORY

"The word of the LORD came to Jonah . . . : 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it. . . .'

"But Jonah ran away . . . and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

"Then the LORD sent a great wind. . . .

"Then the sailors said to each other, 'Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.' . . . The lot fell on Jonah. So they asked him, 'Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us?' . . .

"He answered, 'I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD.' . . .

". . . So they asked him,

'What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?'

"'Pick me up and throw me into the sea,' he replied, 'and it will become calm.'

". . . Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the LORD. . . .

". . . From inside the fish Jonah prayed. . . .

"In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. . . . What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'"

"And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. . . .

"Jonah . . . went to Nineveh . . . , proclaiming, 'Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.' The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. . . .

". . . [God] relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. . . .

"Jonah . . . waited to see what would happen to the city. . . . God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort. . . . But . . . a worm . . . chewed the plant so that it withered. . . . [Jonah] grew faint. He wanted to die. . . .

"But the LORD said, 'You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow.'

It sprang up overnight and died overnight.

And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

(Jonah 1:4, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What did the attitudes of Jonah's crew mates say about how God can work even in the lives of those who don't acknowledge Him?

When Jonah asked to be thrown overboard, he was asking to die. His fear of God had led him to think he had nowhere to turn but a watery grave. What does God's dramatic rescue of Jonah tell you about His love for people even when they feel like no good solutions exist?

In contrast to most of the prophets who urged Israelites to repent, Jonah was incredibly successful! Why was he so bitter about his success?

What do you think Jonah had heard or read about God to know that He was so compassionate and forgiving? What experiences have you had or seen of God giving people another chance?

How did God turn Jonah's unfaithfulness in fleeing to Tarshish into a witnessing opportunity?

punch lines

"**How can I give you up,** Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities" (**Hosea 11:8, 9, NIV**).

"**The men of Nineveh** will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here" (**Matthew 12:41, NIV**).

further insight

"You should not encourage a feeling of sympathy and pity for yourself."

—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 367

"Men may think to hide their evil deeds from human eyes, but they cannot deceive God...."

"Truth is of God; deception in all its myriad forms is of Satan, and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one." —Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 252

"When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin." —Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 40

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Jonah 4:11.

This week's *What Do You Think?* looks at some of the lines we draw between people in today's world. How might God's words shape how you look at people you might avoid or even look down on as sinful, violent, or evil?

Look at your own attitudes toward people who are different from you. What does the book of Jonah have to say about prejudice? How should we relate to those we don't have much in common with?

Sunday

Read Colossians 3:12-14; Romans 12:15, 16.

Empathy. The ability to see the world through someone else's perspective—even to view someone else through God's perspective. To understand the challenges and frustrations others face—and how they mirror one's own.

Read this week's inductive questions. Why was Jonah so afraid of going to Nineveh? Why was he so angry when his mission "failed"? What made him such a "Grinch"? After calling for the Ninevites to repent, what do you think he needed to repent of?

Monday

Read Jonah 4:2.

Insurance companies call destructive natural events "acts of God." Yet Jonah recognized how much more God would rather forgive than destroy—and resented how much that fact impacted his reputation. Jonah would have rather watched more than a hundred thousand people die than have preached a prophecy that didn't come true—

especially when it involved people he felt no love for whatsoever.

Read this week's *Key Text*. How do you find it comforting? Do you sometimes wish God would just smash your enemies once and for all?

Tuesday

Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

When we look at people it's all too easy to see their mistakes, their selfishness, their hypocrisies, their sinful lifestyles. But God looks deeper, and knows when they're really just stumbling in the dark for something better—something only He can provide. He asks us as Christians to be willing to be Jesus for them—patient, accepting, understanding, uncritical.

Read this week's *Flashlight*. What do you think it would take for the average unbeliever to "see the light," repent, and follow Jesus? What's missing from the Christian witness that causes more people not to do so?

Wednesday

Read Hosea 11:8, 9; Matthew 12:41.

How does God feel about bringing judgment on His children? Is the old line "This hurts me more than it hurts you" really true in God's case? How should we view such Bible texts in light of Jesus' death on a cross?

Jesus condemned the people in His day for not repenting and accepting His message when Someone much greater than Jonah had come to them (and for far longer than just a few days). Why did so many reject Jesus when they already worshipped God? What blinded them to the message of

love and compassion Jesus brought? What should those people have learned from the story of Jonah?

Thursday

Read Jonah 3:8, 9; 4:2.

Jonah's message of "Repent or face the consequences" was a simple one for a simple people. Is it the message we should share today? Why was it so effective to his audience? In what ways was Jesus' message different?

Compare Jonah 3:8, 9 to Jonah 4:2. Who understood God better—Jonah, or the Ninevites, who had barely heard of Him?

Friday

Read Matthew 5:43, 44; Galatians 5:14.

How was God able to bless Jonah's ministry when he was so unwilling to do it? Can the Holy Spirit use us even when our hearts aren't in it?

Twice in this story Jonah faced thoughts of suicide. Jesus taught people to "love your neighbor as yourself"—even your enemies. Jonah didn't love his enemies—or himself. How are the two loves related? How can we keep these loves in harmony and avoid loving ourselves too much or too little?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 22.

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LESSON 6

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

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come home!

Scripture Story: Hosea.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 23; 24.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

God loves us to death. His love for us is unending, undying, and unwavering. The story of Hosea demonstrates this kind of sacrificial love. It shows us the kind of love God has for His people. This story and lesson is not just about Hosea's broken home and heart, but also about God's. Students should become well acquainted with God's passionate love for them, God's pain over sin, and God's plan to redeem them.

God's passionate love caused Him to pull out all the stops to show Israel how much He cared for her. He was desperate to save and deliver her. Israel, though, had to make the decision to come back. In the same way, God is desperate to redeem and restore His people of today. He anxiously waits for us to give ourselves completely to Him.

As in the time of Hosea, God is often rejected, forgotten, or ignored, and this causes God great pain. He who fixes hearts reveals that He Himself is suffering from a broken heart. God, however, refuses to give up. God vows to fight for His bride.

God's plan is to redeem His people, as Gomer was redeemed. God leaves us with the promise that He will restore and heal His children. God is willing to do all He can to make our relationship with Him work. God wants to restore and remake us. Relationships, however, are two-way. We must do our part to stay faithful to God and maintain a loving relationship with Him.

Having said that, this is also a story of a mother and wife who left her family. The teacher needs to be prepared to address any personal issues (such as abandonment) that might arise in the midst of this lesson. These feelings can be manifested in outright personal sharing and/or anger or aloofness. It would be a good idea to remind the students of the various ways that they can get in touch with you, if they need to do so. Having a name of a pastor or Christian counselor on hand might also be helpful.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the deep love God has for us. (*Know*)
- Sense the emotions God feels when we ignore Him. (*Feel*)
- Choose a friendship with God and choose His way for their lives. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Marriage and the Family, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 23

"Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between a man and a woman who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. . . .

(Gen. 2:18-25; Exod. 20:12; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9, 12; Mark 10:11, 12; John 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 7:7, 10, 11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

What emotions do you think God feels? Give an example from the Bible when God felt joy. When did God feel sorrow? When did God get angry?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The phone rang and a young child answered the phone in a hushed whisper, "Hello."

It was his father's boss who needed his urgent help. "Is your father there, son?"

"Yes," the boy answered, speaking in soft tones.

"May I speak with him," he kindly requested.

To his surprise, the boy whispered, "No."

"Well, is your mommy there?" he replied.

"Yes," he quietly answered back.

"May I speak with her?"

"No," the child said in whispered tones.

The boss figured maybe he was home with someone else, so he asked to speak with the adult watching him in order to leave a message. "Is there anyone there besides you?"

"Yes, a policeman," the boy quietly revealed.

Wondering why a policeman would be there, he asked to speak with him.

"No, he is busy," whispered the child.

"Busy? Well, what is he doing?" the boss impatiently inquired.

"Talking to Daddy and Mommy and the fireman," came the whispered answer.

The boss was both frustrated and concerned. As he was trying to figure out what to say next, it sounded as if he heard a helicopter in the background. "What is that noise?" he asked.

"A hello-copper," answered the whispering voice.

His concern turned to worry, "What is going on over there?" he demanded.

Excited, the boy answered in his loudest whisper, "The search team just landed the hello-copper!"

"Well, why are they there?" the boss frantically questioned.

Still whispering, but now giggling, the child confessed, "They are looking for me!"*

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When you were little, did you ever run away? Share a time when you tried or wanted to run away as a little child. How do you think your parents would have felt if their little child stayed lost? Losing something is not very fun; especially if it is something you love. When that something is someone you love, it can be heartbreaking. Our lesson is about heartbreak—Hosea's heartbreak and God's heartbreak.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- What did God tell Hosea to do?
- What do we know about Hosea's wife?
- How had Israel behaved toward God?
- How did God deal with Israel when she forgot God and did her own thing?
- What emotions do you think God felt when He saw Israel?
- Circle all the words that showed emotions or feelings.
- How would you feel if you were married to someone like Gomer?
- How do you think God feels about His relationship with you?
- What do you think God was trying to tell us through the marriage of Hosea and Gomer?
- How should you be like Hosea to someone who has turned their back on you? As a Christian, is it ever OK to forgive someone while still choosing not to have a relationship with them? Why or why not?
- Is there a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

- What promise did you find in this story?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Ezekiel 33:11; Jeremiah 3:12; Hosea 6:1-3; 14:1, 2; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Israel was on the brink of destruction. Israel had disobeyed God time and time again. As a result, they were soon to be led into captivity. Hosea was the last prophet to Israel before it was destroyed. All the prophets before spoke of the ensuing judgment and the flaming wrath that was to come on all who had turned away from God. In Hosea, God shows His softer side, the deepness of His heart and the depth of His love.

The name Hosea means "salvation" or "savior." It has the same meaning as Joshua and Jesus. Actually, Jesus is the Greek version of Hosea. Hosea was also the name of Israel's last king, before it was destroyed as a nation. This name was a promise of salvation.

God instructed the young prophet Hosea to get married. The woman he was engaged to was unfaithful and was a prostitute. Nevertheless, Hosea married Gomer and started a family, but Gomer never let go of her old lovers. She cheated on Hosea



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Random Draw

Allowing the students to participate in reading and answering questions is a great way to keep them involved. Students do not always volunteer for these opportunities; so try calling on students randomly. They are more likely to be alert and more engaged if they do not know when they will be called on. To make this fun, write each student's name on a small object, such as a card or craft stick, and place them all in a container. After asking a question, draw a name to determine who will answer it. Return the object to the container and mix them up for the next question or duty.

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more than once, and found herself a slave.

Hosea was heartbroken. He had fallen in love with Gomer, and it seemed as if Gomer wanted everyone but him. God shared with Hosea that this was exactly how He felt about His wife, Israel. God had loved her and provided for her, but she continued to forget all about God. Israel wanted the gods of the world. This broke God's heart.

God told Hosea to go get his wife back. By the time he found her, even though she was his wife,

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.

he had to pay another man for her freedom. The Bible says that he bought her for 15 shekels of silver and 1½ homers of barley. In Hosea's time, 1½ homers of barley was equal to about 15 shekels of silver. The prophet paid the equivalent of 30 pieces of silver for his wife. This was the price of a slave. This was also what the priests paid Judas for Jesus.

Hosea probably made only 10 shekels a year, so 30 shekels was a large price to pay. Hosea had to pay a great cost to forgive and restore his wife. Hosea's story points to Christ who purchased us from the slavery of sin with His own blood. God loved us too much to leave us as slaves. Though we hurt Him, He still extends the invitation for us to be in loving relationship with Him.

III.CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

God went through great pains to show His love for us. Now give the students a chance to express their love for Him. Have students get in groups of three or four and instruct them to write a six-line love song to God. Each group will work on one song

together. When each group has finished, give them time to share their love songs. The songs should be sung for the whole group.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Hosea is a story of love. Hosea fell in love with a woman who did not love him back. In the midst of this pain, God helped him to love again. Though his wife was unfaithful and unloving, God was able to heal their relationship and restore their family.

In the same way, Hosea's story shows how God feels about us. God loves us to death. God desperately wants us in a loving relationship with Him. This story gives us a glimpse of God's passionate love for His children. "How can I give you up?" God exclaims. God wants to fight for us. This story also displays the pain we cause God when we walk away from Him, neglect Him, or ignore Him. God has a plan for our lives. Hosea points to Jesus who died to set us free from the bonds of slavery. And because of Jesus Christ, we can be restored into a right relationship with God.

*Adapted from illustration "Looking for the Lost" found on SermonCentral.com.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 23; 24.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Hosea.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 23; 24.

come home!

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keytext

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them."

(Hosea 14:4, NIV)

flashlight

"Despite the efforts of Satan to thwart God's purpose for Israel, nevertheless even in some of the darkest hours of their history, when it seemed as if the forces of evil were about to gain the victory, the Lord graciously revealed Himself. He spread before Israel the things that were for the welfare of the nation. . . . Tenderly had the Lord dealt with them, instructing them by His prophets line upon line, precept upon precept" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 296).

What do you think?

Write down what emotions you would feel if the following happened to you:

- You find a \$100 bill on the street. _____
- You drop and break your cell phone. _____
- You get a C on your exam. _____
- Everyone laughs at your new outfit. _____
- You find a mouse in your backpack. _____
- Your best friend moves away. _____
- Your family forgets your birthday. _____
- It is the last day of school. _____
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend breaks up with you. _____

did you know?

Hosea had to buy his wife back with 15 shekels of silver, and 1½ homers of barley. In Hosea's time, 1½ homers of barley was equal to about 430 pounds of barley and was worth 15 shekels of silver. That means he had to buy his wife for 30 pieces of silver—the price of a slave. That was also the price Judas received for Jesus. Hosea probably made only 10 shekels a year, so 30 shekels was a large price to pay. Imagine the prophet walking up to the slave master with 430 pounds of grain!

INTO THE STORY

"When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, 'Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the Lord.' So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son."

"She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.' "

"The Lord said to me, 'Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.'

"So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, 'You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.'

"For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or household gods. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days."

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them. . . .

"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboym? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I devastate Ephraim again. For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you. I will not come against their cities."

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them."

OUT OF THE STORY

What did God tell Hosea to do?

What do we know about Hosea's wife?

How had Israel behaved toward God?

How did God deal with Israel when they forgot God and did their own thing?

What emotions do you think God felt when He saw Israel?

Circle all the words that show emotions or feelings.

How would you feel if you were married to someone like Gomer?

How do you think God feels about His relationship with you?

What do you think God was trying to tell us through the marriage of Hosea and Gomer?

What promise did you find in this story?

punch lines

"The **LORD** appeared to us in the past, saying:

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness' " (**Jeremiah 31:3, NIV**).

"**I have swept away** your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you" (**Isaiah 44:22, NIV**).

"**Come back to me**, you unfaithful children, and I will forgive you for being unfaithful."

"Yes, we will come to you, because you are the **LORD** our God. It was foolish to worship idols on the hills and on the mountains. Surely the salvation of Israel comes from the **LORD** our God" (**Jeremiah 3:22, 23, NCV**).

"**In a surge of anger** I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,' says the **LORD** your Redeemer" (**Isaiah 54:8, NIV**).

"**Now it's time to** change your ways! Turn to face God so he can wipe away your sins, pour out showers of blessing to refresh you" (**Acts 3:19, The Message**).

further insight

"By giving Christ to our world, God manifested His love for mankind."—Ellen G. White,

Lift Him Up, p. 134

"Christ was the medium through which He [God the Father] could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 13

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Genesis 6:6; Psalm 2:4; Exodus 32:9, 10; Zephaniah 3:17.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson. You were asked to list some emotions you feel in everyday situations. Emotions come to us naturally, without even thinking about them. What kind of positive emotions do you feel? What kind of negative emotions do you feel? What kind of emotions does God feel?

Emotions are not bad. They give us a clue to what is going on in our hearts. This week's lesson is an emotional one. It takes a peek into the heart of God. Write down God's feelings and manifestations in each of the Bible passages listed at the top of this column for today's reading.

Sunday

Read Isaiah 44:22.

Read the story of Hosea and Gomer in this week's *Into the Story* section and respond to the study questions. This is a story of scandal and pain, and everybody had their share. Which of the characters in the story did you most identify with? Why?

What emotions do you think God and Hosea had in common?

Hosea and God both knew what it was like to lose someone they loved. When Gomer strayed from her husband she went so far that she ended up being sold into slavery. God sent Hosea to buy her back. What emotions do you think Gomer felt as she stood on the auction block and saw Hosea in the crowd bidding for her?

How are you like Gomer?

Monday

Read Acts 3:19.

God loved Israel to death. God was very hurt about how Israel had broken His heart and left Him. He was angry too. God came up with a solution for this problem. Read this week's *Key Text* and write down God's solution below:

God saw that Israel was sick—sin-sick and in need of healing. He promised to heal them and to love them freely. What do you think that means? Did God loving Israel freely mean they could continue to do what they wanted? What should Israel do in response to God's love? What should we do in light of the love God freely gives us?

Tuesday

Read Jeremiah 31:3.

In the *Flashlight* section, Ellen White reveals that God was not the only one after Israel's love and affection. Satan was very active trying to ruin the relationship God had with His people. Read the *Flashlight* section and jot down the kinds of things you think Satan did to keep Israel away from God.

What things does Satan do to try to ruin your relationship with God? Does it work?

Wednesday

Read all the verses in the *Punch Lines* section. What do these verses reveal about God? If you had to summarize all the verses in five words or less, what would you write? Which verse stood out to you the most? Why?

God loves us. He works hard at keeping a relationship with us. Even when Satan tries to distract us, God reveals Himself and speaks to us through His Word.

Jeremiah 3:22, 23, one of the verses you read, is God's invitation for Israel to come back to Him and His promise to forgive them. It also includes a response from Israel. Write out how you would respond to God's invitation.

Thursday

Read Psalm 62:1; 119:105; 1 Chronicles 16:11; Philippians 4:8, 9.

One of the things good relationships are built on is time. Quantity time is quality time. God is pleading for you to give Him top priority in your life. One way to help with this is to make sure God has time with you every day. Commit to a time in the next 24 hours that you will spend alone with God. Make it a date and do not let anybody pull you away from it. You might even want to ask a trusted friend to help you keep that commitment.

Time: _____ Place: _____

Things to remember in prayer: _____

Friday

Read Acts 3:19.

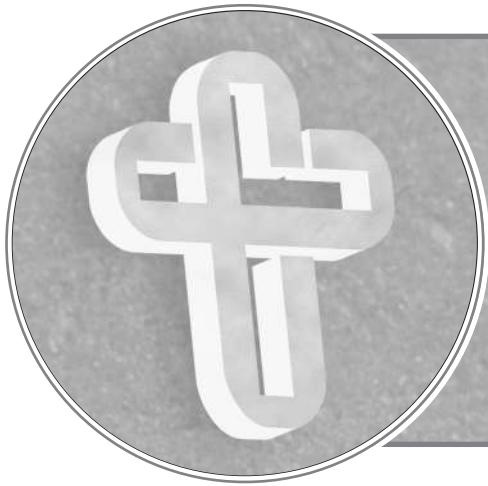
Take some time to reflect on how God may be feeling about His relationship with you. What are the things in your life that bring God pain? What are the things in your life that make God angry? What are the things in your life that bring God joy? What are you willing to do in the next week to bring God even more joy? Who can help you keep that commitment? Imagine that God wrote you a letter about your relationship with Him. On a separate sheet of paper, write down what you think it would say.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 23; 24.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 7



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are you available?

Scripture Story: Isaiah 6.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 25.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson is particularly exciting in that we see how Isaiah was called to be a prophet of God. The story is vivid in its telling. We can teach so many great truths from this one chapter. If the chapter were to be summed up in one word, the word would be "calling." The process of Isaiah's calling is clear in the text. The vision of heaven, Isaiah's acknowledgment of his sin, the forgiveness given by the seraph by bringing the coal to Isaiah's lips, and the call and response of God and Isaiah is a wonderful view into how God calls His people to work for Him.

As you teach the lesson this week, it is important to note these three things: calling, forgiveness, response. These three elements are the backbone of any call from God. For us to be useful to God we have to understand who we are. Moses is a great example of this procedure that God uses when He calls His leaders to a task or a purpose.

Students at this age are always looking for identity, and this story gives a great example of how one becomes defined by what they do for God when He calls them. It is a great source of comfort for students to understand that God is in need of their hands and feet to do the work He has for them. Of course, God hasn't called all of us to be prophets! So it would be helpful for you to consider how you can help your students not only understand that God has a work for them to do,

but help them in practical ways to discover what that work might be. Everyone's life work is different, so one suggestion is to offer some material on how to choose a career. Below are a few websites:

- What Color is Your Parachute? For Teens: www.parachute4teens.org
- Live Your Calling: www.amazon.com
- ChristianCareerCenter: www.christiancareercenter.com

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God is calling them. (*Know*)
- Understand that God is willing to forgive them of every sin. (*Feel*)
- Listen more closely to God and seek to do His will. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 14

"The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope,

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and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Have the students list all the different ways they are connected to one another—all the ways they are available to one another. Once this is done, ask them how they are connected to Christ. Give them all a piece of paper and have them write a phone conversation that they would have with God. Share these with each other and talk of how we are connected and available to God.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The author was working in the yard one day. His 4-month-old daughter was in her chair next to him. He decided he needed to run down the street in his car to do something, so he called his wife and told her he was taking their daughter with him. They got into the car and drove to the downtown area, which was real close. On a busy street, the car died. It was a hot day, and with no air-conditioning the baby was getting uncomfortable very quickly.

The author jumped out and tried to find someone with a cell phone. He had forgotten his at home. He asked a few people, who looked at him strangely. Then he grabbed his daughter and ran into a store to use the phone. They wouldn't let him use it. He was worried about his car and his daughter, but very little could be done. He finally found someone who would let him use the phone! He called his house, but his wife didn't pick up the phone. Trouble!

After a while, he was finally able to reach her and get things going again, but he learned something that day: it is good to be connected. It is good to know that you can get hold of someone who will

be available to you when you need them, and you can be available to them as well.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes it seems as if we are all alone and there is nothing we can do for God. However, the story of Isaiah shows us that all we need is the desire to be available to God so that He can forgive us and use us as He sees fit. However, if we don't connect we don't know that He is calling us.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- What are the most important verses in this story?
- What is the process God uses to call His people to work for Him?
- What does this story tell us about God?
- What does this story tell us about us?
- What does this story tell us about our relationship with God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Isaiah 61:6; Exodus 3.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. When God calls us to partner with Him to make the world understand Him more, it is often through God's preemption that it is initiated. In other words, God comes to us first. We call this "provenient" grace. It means that He moved first. Acts 9 has a great example of this in the calling of the apostle Paul. While he was still persecuting Christians he was called into a relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. After the light from heaven shone on him Saul/Paul immediately realized who he was in the eyes of God. It seems like a theme that when a person encounters God they also encounter themselves as they really are. We



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Making Things Practical

It's easy to speak of spiritual concepts and never let the rubber hit the road when it comes to our understanding of God. It is important to relate things as simply as possible. However, simple and simplistic are not the same thing. Plain, everyday language with illustrations from the students' lives makes the lessons more appealing and more understandable. Young people are very intuitive and willing to go where you lead them, as long as you know where you are headed first. A good rule is this: if it is hard to explain, you probably haven't spent enough time interpreting the concepts.

have lots of ways to justify and rationalize the things we do and the people we are. However, God sees through all of that into the depths of our souls. The Bible tells us He knows the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30); therefore, it is safe to say that God knows us. When we see ourselves as God sees us it is often a powerful reminder of how unworthy we are to be so loved by God.

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3. In every person that God calls there is a time for response. That is when we decide whether or not we are going to receive the call of God and do as He asks, or if we are going to ignore the call of God and go about our business. In the Bible we see examples of those who have decided to ignore the call of God on their lives for various reasons ("the rich young ruler" comes to mind). In fact, Moses did all that he could in order to ignore the call of God; he even tried to give the call to his brother, Aaron, whom he believed to be much more eloquent than himself. But when God calls, either we say no or we say yes and accept the blessings God has for us in our lives.

4. Once you have responded to the call of God in your life in a positive manner, be prepared for your life to change rapidly. There are literally hundreds of examples of this in the Bible. Here are a few: Moses, Abraham, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Paul, the disciples, and the list goes on and on and on. Are you ready for your life to change in a way that you never imagined? Say yes to God and you can find out what He has for you.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

III.CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Bring the class together for some time in prayer. During the prayer, make sure that you allow for some silent interaction with God. The students rarely get to be in complete silence with no distractions, so this will be a nice time for them to listen to what God is wanting from them. After the students have had a few moments of silent prayer, have them reread Isaiah 6:1-8. Give them a few minutes to read, then ask: "If you were called by God as Isaiah was, how would you have reacted? What were some of the sights and sounds you experienced in the throne room? How would experiencing that make a difference in how you live your life?" Close with a word that directs

them to stay connected with God through the week.

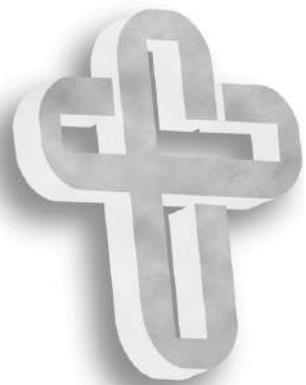
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Calling, forgiveness, response. These are the strong themes to hit in today's lesson. There are many examples of how we are called and forgiven and put to work by God in the Bible. The list in this lesson is by no means exhaustive. Do your own biblical search and find those whose story you most resonate with when it comes to calling. Know that every student is looking for validation and identity, and when they do what is being asked for them by God they can truly find the contentment that their heart so desires. You can add to that process by making them aware of the fact that God is calling them for a specific purpose in the world and in salvation history.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 25.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 18 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Isaiah 6.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 25.

are you available?



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keytext

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'

And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

(Isaiah 6:8, NIV)

flashlight

"Suddenly the gate and the inner veil of the temple seemed to be uplifted or withdrawn, and he was permitted to gaze within, upon the holy of holies, where even the prophet's feet might not enter. There rose up before him a vision of Jehovah sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, while the train of His glory filled the temple" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 307).

what do you think?

Are you connected? What I mean is, do you have a cell phone? Are you on Facebook? Twitter? Instagram?

Write down all the different ways that you are connected to people—be it through school, church, or your electronic devices. You can even write down how many people you are connected to by going through your address books and seeing how many people you are available to be connected with. After all that, ask yourself this question: "With all these people vying for my time, can I hear the call of God on my life?"

did you know?

Looking at the Internet usage statistics from www.internetworldstats.com, it is estimated (as of June 2022) that of almost 372 and a half million people in North America, 93 percent are connected to the Internet. When you look at the statistics for Asia, there are almost 3 billion people connected. All together, there are more than 5 billion people connected to the Internet worldwide. What a powerful communication tool. Just think of the people we can be available to by just plugging in!*

eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.'

"Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'

"And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'

"He said, 'Go and tell this people:

"Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving." Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'

"Then I said, 'For how long, Lord?'

"And he answered:

"'Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.'"

(Isaiah 6, NIV)

INTO THE STORY

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

"'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'

"At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

"'Woe to me!' I cried. 'I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my

OUT OF THE STORY

What are some key things that happened in the story to show how God gives us grace?

What did Isaiah realize that made it possible for God to use him?

Underline the verse that you think is the most important in the whole chapter.

Have you ever read this chapter before? What are a couple of interesting points you learned about Isaiah's calling?

Why do you think it is important to understand who you are and what you are called to do?

For purely personal reflection, what do you think God is calling you to do in this life?

punch lines

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (**Romans 8:28, NIV**).

"I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being" (**Galatians 1:14-16, NIV**).

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (**2 Peter 1:3, NIV**).

"No one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was" (**Hebrews 5:4, NIV**).

"And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast" (**Isaiah 61:6, NIV**).

further insight

"Every follower of Jesus has a work to do as a missionary for Christ, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the town or city where he lives."—Ellen G. White,

Christian Service, p. 18

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read John 15:5.

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you are asked the question, "Are you connected?" This question is obviously about whether or not you are connected to Christ.

Maybe a better question is, "When are you NOT connected, or available?" It seems that in this day and age someone can get hold of us at anytime—and it's probably a good thing that they can! However, perhaps it should make us think about whether or not we are available to God in that same way. This has always been a question for us humans. In Isaiah 6 God asks a question: "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah answers, "Here am I, send me." Is this the answer that we have for God today?

What are three different ways you know how to connect with God?

For some additional resources, check out www.adventistbookcenter.com/steps-to-christ-youth-edition.html.

Sunday

Read Romans 8:28.

After having read the text and the story of the call of Isaiah, what do you think is the most important lesson?

Two words are pretty important in conjunction with this story: repentance and forgiveness. Repentance is the act of acknowledging our sin and recognizing that we are in need of a Savior from that same sin. Forgiveness is God's act of justification and making us right with Him again. As well, we see that God Himself is willing to forgive us of our sins so that we might be able to go out and do the work He has for us. The text is clear that forgiveness and justification come directly from God, just like the angel taking the coal and

placing it on Isaiah's lips.

Monday

Read Isaiah 6:8.

Be sure to read the *Key Text* for this week. This week's memory text is Isaiah's response to God when God asks the question of who will go and be His representative to the world. Isaiah was ready for a couple reasons: (1) he could hear the voice of the Lord, and (2) he had been cleansed by God of his sins.

How do you hear the voice of God in your life? Is it through parents or pastors? Friends or family? Quiet time or study? Delving into the Word of God or into prayer?

All of these things help us hear the Word of God. If we seek His voice, He is more than willing to let us hear what He has for us.

Tuesday

Read John 3:16, 17; Revelation 21:4.

This week's *Flashlight* section gives us a glimpse into the vision that Isaiah had into the Holy of Holies in heaven. What do you think the throne of God looks like? What do you think you might do if you saw that vision? Would you fall on your knees and sing the same song as the seraphs who sing constantly of God's praises? Would that vision do to you what it did to Isaiah, and show you just how unworthy you are of the grace given to us by God? Would you be afraid, or would you desire that God come closer to you and your life?

It's difficult to tell what such a clear vision of God would do to us. But it's awesome to think that we seek a God who is this majestic and powerful! A God who is powerful enough to wipe our sins away.

Wednesday

The *Punch Lines* this week had to do with calling, and how that is different from a job or a profession. Calling has to do with what God is calling you to do and what He will give you a passion for in this life. When we decide to do what God is calling us to do, it is amazing how excited and energetic we become in the completion of the tasks He has for us. Can a job become a calling? Do you have any idea what God is calling you to do?

The one thing we can be sure is that God has a plan and that plan involves some sort of responsibility. Are you ready to hear the call of God in your life?

Thursday

Read 2 Peter 1:3.

How can you be right with God? How can you know what He is asking you to do? Sometimes it is those things that we find hardest to do that lead us to a better understanding of God's will.

Friday

Read Hebrews 5:4.

Are you available to God? Is He in your address book? Would you be surprised if you received an e-mail from Him about what He would love to have you do?

* www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 25.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 8

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY252024

hope for the world?

Scripture Story: Isaiah 11; 12; 44.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 26; 31.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

It is a cruel act of fate that some of the best and brightest are called to live in the darkest of times. Yet, it is darkness that makes one appreciate light. As dark times go, the period in which Isaiah prophesied was one of the darkest in the history of Judah.

Isaiah's ministry was preceded by the sad events of the demise of Uzziah, a faithful follower of God for most of his 52-year reign, whom God afflicted with leprosy because he presumed to minister in the holy sanctuary, an honor reserved for priests. Uzziah was followed by his son Jotham who did what was right in the sight of God. But in spite of these two largely positive reigns, Judah continued to decline—as did Israel in the North. Neither Uzziah nor Jotham destroyed the evil shrines worshipped by the people in the high places, for instance.

As you teach the lesson, keep in mind that Isaiah's message is twofold. His first concern is that the people be reconciled to God, that they put away all known idolatry and sin. Second, Isaiah wants the people to catch the vision that so energized his life in Isaiah 6. He wanted to give the people hope during the difficult days of Assyrian threat by painting for them the picture of the coming Messiah, a picture so compelling that they would yearn for His appearing and live out their belief in Him from day to day.

The students must know that Isaiah's call to

repentance and obedience, and promise of redemption through Jesus Christ is the same for us today. God's message of salvation can transform our lives and make us a spectacle of godliness such as the world has never seen. Through Isaiah God desired to remind His people of their special status as light-bearers to the world. We too are called to shine for Jesus so that others might be saved.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that as spiritual descendants of Abraham, they are called to give the world an example of godliness. (*Know*)
- Experience the joy that flows from accepting their place in God's divine plan. (*Feel*)
- Look for opportunities to share the blessings with which God has entrusted them. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Remnant and Its Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 13

"The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. . . . (Dan. 7:9-14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the *What Do You Think?* section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

As a follow-up to the *What Do You Think?* activity, consider asking the students to come up with two people who inspire them.

Once the students have had a few moments to think, ask them to share the names of the people they chose and why. Then ask a few of the teens to share one specific thing that they have received or learned from one of the people they admire. It must be something that they plan to incorporate into their lives.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"Franklin Roosevelt's closest adviser during much of his presidency was a man named Harry Hopkins. During World War II, when his influence with Roosevelt was at its peak, Hopkins held no official Cabinet position. Moreover, Hopkins' closeness to Roosevelt caused many to regard him as a shadowy, sinister figure. As a result he was a major political liability to the president. A political foe once asked Roosevelt, 'Why do you keep Hopkins so close to you? You surely realize that people distrust him and resent his influence.' Roosevelt replied, 'Someday you may well be sitting here where I am now as president of the United States. And when you are, you'll be looking at that door over there and knowing that practically everybody who walks through it wants something out of you. You'll learn what a lonely job this is, and you'll discover the need for somebody like Harry Hopkins, who asks for nothing except to serve you.' Winston Churchill rated Hopkins as one of the half-dozen most powerful men in the world in the early 1940s. And the sole source of Hopkins' power was his willingness to serve"—*Discipleship Journal*, Issue 39 (1987), p. 5.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

People who simply have our best interest at heart are difficult to find. We have just such a person in Jesus. God knew that the world would need an example of godliness, someone truly dedicated to bringing about humanity's best good. Isaiah goes to great pains to describe Jesus in Isaiah 11: "He will delight in the fear of the LORD.

"He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth" (verses 3, 4, NIV). In a very real sense, these traits should have been on display in the lives of God's people in Judah and Israel—to please God and to give the world a picture of who He is. They were not, but there was reason to hope—Jesus.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Underline the parts of the two Scripture passages that catch your attention.
- Is there anything in Isaiah's description of Jesus that strikes you as odd? Why does he specifically choose to highlight certain elements of Jesus' character? What message was God communicating through the prophet's description?
- Isaiah is first and foremost a prophet of redemption. Circle portions of the second passage (Isaiah 44:1-5) that show God's redemptive power.
- God promises to "pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground." Then He says, "They will spring up like grass in a meadow" (Isaiah 44:3, 4, NIV). Who is the "they" spoken of here by God?
- Who was the audience for these messages from Isaiah? What relevance might these messages have for us today?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Exodus 19:5; John 15:1-17; Genesis 22:13-19.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. God's Eye on the Heathen. Though Israel did not understand how much God cared for the heathen, a careful survey of God's promise to Abraham would have brought it to their attention. Genesis 12:2, 3 states: "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (NIV).

Instead of focusing on the fact that they were blessed in order to be a blessing, Israel basked in their divine favor instead of sharing it.

2. Turbulent Times. It can be argued that Isaiah prophesied during some of the most tumultuous times in Judah's history. God was angry at His people's apostasy: "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies" (Isaiah 1:13, NIV). More than that, however, Judah was under mortal threat from Sennacherib and the powerful Assyrians, who in 722 B.C. had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. This conquest scared

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Creatively Creative

In any learning environment, whether it be kindergarten or adult, there will be a wide variety of learning styles represented. This is also true of your Sabbath School class. In this lesson Isaiah paints a word picture of Jesus (Isaiah 11). He does so again in Isaiah 53 and in other places.

How Isaiah views Jesus is certainly not how your students might picture Him. Ask the students to create their own picture of Jesus. They may do so by selecting a characteristic of Jesus that they admire, or doing something on His entire life. They may create their picture by drawing, writing, role-playing, singing—whatever best expresses how they think of Jesus. Provide paper, pens, markers, and other items they might need. Ask a few volunteers to share their creativity with the class.

RABBI 101

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King Hezekiah so much that he stripped the Temple of all its treasures and sent them to the Assyrian king in hope of appeasing him (2 Kings 18:13-16). It did not work. When all hope failed, Hezekiah sought out Isaiah for a word from the Lord (2 Kings 19:1-7). It was against

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

this backdrop that Isaiah called Jerusalem to repentance and encouraged Hezekiah to resist Assyria by exercising faith and trust in God.

3. Anointed Aristocrat. Unlike most biblical prophets, Isaiah was not born into poverty. He did no menial labor. He was the son of Amoz, a nobleman, who many scholars believe had distant royal lineage. Isaiah, of all the Bible's prophets, had unparalleled access to the halls of power. He prophesied under Kings Uzziah and Jotham, advised King Ahaz (though Ahaz failed to heed his counsel), and warned Hezekiah of foreign entanglements with Egypt against Assyria. For this reason he is considered the most political prophet in all of Scripture. Isaiah's ministry shows us that God is willing to use those with influence and status, as well as those with none. All God requires is a willing heart.

4. Prophet of Redemption. Isaiah's prophecies helped to guide Judah during turbulent times, but this was by no means the focus of his prophetic ministry. Fueled by his vision of God in Isaiah 6, and the transformation that he experienced by being forgiven and redeemed, Isaiah's prophetic message is the most spiritually complete of all Old Testament prophets. He spoke of God's judgment of sin, but pointed to a day when the Messiah would come—a fair king, an honest king, a compassionate king, a sacrificing king, a loving king (Isaiah 11)—who would not only deliver them from their physical enemies but from sin itself. This promise of redemption is echoed throughout Isaiah's book.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Read the following to your students: "The inhabitants of Judah were all undeserving, yet God would not give them up. By them His name was to be exalted among the heathen. Many who were wholly unacquainted with His attributes were yet to behold the glory of the divine character. It was for the purpose of making plain His merciful designs that He kept sending His servants the prophets with the message: 'Turn ye again now everyone from his evil way.' Jeremiah 25:5" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 319).

Ask the students to make a list of friends they want to see know God. Say a special prayer asking God to share His love through each student.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

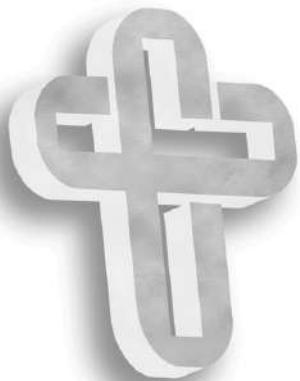
God in His love and mercy never abandons His children to suffer hopelessly. Long after Israel's apostasy and idol worship had worn out God's patience, He still kept on extending offers of forgiveness and redemption.

God loved His people dearly, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham. If He was to bless the nations of the earth through Abraham's seed, He would have to redeem Israel, and this God did through the blood of His Son Jesus, to whom Isaiah pointed. Through Jesus, God offered redemption to not only His people but peoples everywhere.

What Israel had failed to do—set an example of godliness for the world—God did through Jesus; all who believe in Him take their place as Abraham's heirs and find their purpose in God's divine plan to bless fallen humanity. This high calling should be the joy of every Christian heart.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 26; 31.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MAY 25 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Isaiah 11; 12; 44.

Commentary: Prophets and Kings (or Royalty in Ruins), chapters 26; 31.

hope for the world?



Photo by Luis Guerra,Jr.

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flashlight

"Had Israel been true to her trust, all the nations of earth would have shared in her blessings. But the hearts of those to whom had been entrusted a knowledge of saving truth, were untouched by the needs of those around them. As God's purpose was lost sight of, the heathen came to be looked upon as beyond the pale of His mercy. The light of truth was withheld, and darkness prevailed. The nations were overspread with a veil of ignorance; the love of God was little known; error and superstition flourished" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 371).

keytext

"They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. Some will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, 'The LORD's,' and will take the name Israel."

(Isaiah 44:4, 5, NIV)

what do you think?

Rate which of the following items people are most likely or least likely to pass on to others. (Note: 1 would be the item people would have no problem giving away; 7 would be the item least shared with others.)

- Clothing
- Car
- Beliefs
- Money
- Jesus
- Books
- Cell Phone
- Tablet
- Laptop

did you know?

Did you know that the prophet Isaiah lived through the reigns of three different kings of Judah? Scholars believe that his ministry started sometime around 740 B.C. and ended in 681 B.C. His ministry began under the evil King Ahaz, ran through the spiritual reawakening brought about by Hezekiah, and ended under the evil Manasseh. While Isaiah was one of the most "political" of prophets, he never failed to speak God's truth to the weak or the mighty.



INTO THE STORY

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

"He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

"The wolf will live with the

lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. . . .

"He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth."

"But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the LORD says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. Some will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, 'The LORD's,' and will take the name Israel."

(Isaiah 11:1-12; 44:1-5, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Read and reflect on the Scripture story for this week.

What would you say is the main point of the first passage, Isaiah 11:1-9, 12, and the second passage found in Isaiah 44:1-5?

Circle a verse in each section that comes closest to the main point of each.

Isaiah 11:1-9 describes a very special person. Who do you think is the person being spoken of? To whom is Isaiah writing?

What is significant about the part of the Scripture story that paints a picture of animals dwelling together? What message is God trying to convey to us through these images?

punch lines

"**You will conceive** and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (**Luke 1:31-33, NIV**).

"**This mystery is that through the gospel** the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (**Ephesians 3:6, NIV**).

"**After much discussion**, Peter got up and addressed them: 'Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe' " (**Acts 15:7, NIV**).

"**All the ends of the earth** will remember and turn to the **Lord**, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him" (**Psalm 22:27, NIV**).

further insight

"The members of God's church are to be zealous of good works, separating from worldly ambition and walking in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good. With hearts filled with sympathy and compassion, they are to minister to those in need of help, bringing to sinners a knowledge of the Saviour's love."—Ellen G.

White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Isaiah 11:12.

God promised Israel that a special Deliverer would come from the line of King David's father, Jesse. Among the many things He would do is "raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel" (NIV). What message was God hoping to send to surrounding nations by rescuing exiled Israelites from groups that had taken them captive? How might those nations view God after such an act?

If God thought enough of the Israelites then as well as those of us today who are spiritual descendants of Abraham that He would send Jesus to save us, shouldn't we tell others the good news?

Sunday

Read Isaiah 11:1-9, 12; 44:1-5.

Read the *Into the Story* section to get at the heart of this week's lesson. Now complete the *Out of the Story* questions. The two passages in Isaiah that form the basis of this week's lesson are both hopeful in tone. God is making some very big and bold promises. The theme of hope runs through the writings of Isaiah. What do you think was happening in Judah at the time that made these messages so essential? How might Isaiah's messages apply to your life today?

How might the Spirit of wisdom and understanding express itself in your life?

The Spirit of counsel and power?

Monday

Read Luke 1:31-33.

In many Western societies, a woman adopts the last name of her husband-to-be once they are married. Marie James may become Marie Smith, or Marie James-Smith. This taking on of the fiancé's last name used to be considered quite a high honor bestowed by a wife on her husband.

Read this week's *Key Text*. What did God say future descendants of Jacob would do? What do you think this promise meant to the current crop of Israelites who were scattered and downtrodden?

Tuesday

Read Ephesians 3:6.

After reading this week's *Flashlight*, write a short paragraph to finish the following statement:

Ancient Israel could have been a great spiritual example to the then-known world by

Wednesday

Refer to this week's *Punch Lines*. Did any of the highlighted verses catch your attention? After reading Isaiah 11:1-5 (*Into the Story*, passage 1), how does Luke 1:31-33 fulfill Isaiah's prophecy? Notice also that Jesus was not simply coming to bless Christian

believers; He came to bless everyone who would dare believe in Him.

Thursday

Read Acts 15:7.

Watch your local evening news tonight. More than likely you'll see a story of someone touched by violence, perhaps someone experiencing a weather-related incident, or maybe just a call for folks to help out a local soup kitchen. After you've seen the telecast, ask yourself: What small thing can I do to make my community better? What next step do I need to take to make this happen? Ask a friend to join you in carrying out your good deed.

Friday

Read Psalm 22:27.

Why are you here? Why do you think God made you and placed you where you are at this special time in history? How might sharing the gospel with others help you find yourself and your purpose?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 26; 31.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 9

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 01 2024

a leader's influence

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 28:1-5; 2 Kings 16.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 27.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

When Ahaz assumed the throne of Judah following the death of Jotham, the inhabitants of Judah had no idea what they were in for. Under Ahaz's reign, Judah fell into an apostasy so great that the Temple worship was halted and shrines to foreign gods were established under every spreading tree. The people were encouraged by their king to worship whomever they wanted to, whenever they wanted to. In the Valley of Hinnom, Ahaz even sacrificed his own son in the flames of Molech.

Why did Ahaz fail in such a spectacular way? It is clear from his record that fear played a significant role in Ahaz's inability to choose the right path. Beset by King Pekah of Israel and King Resin of Syria, Ahaz made a crucial mistake: He went to the king of Assyria for help instead of to God. Isaiah warned him that he had nothing to fear as long as God was with him, but Ahaz would not listen.

The Assyrians did save him, but it came at a high price, for the Assyrians, not content with the treasures from the Temple given them by Ahaz, now eyed the whole kingdom of Judah. Furthermore, Ahaz believed that the gods of the Assyrians had protected Judah, so he promulgated the worship of these gods throughout the realm. Entreaties were made, but Ahaz did not listen. In so doing he hastened God's judgments.

Today, many of God's people are trading the seeming insecurity of a "faceless" God for the security of money, fame, friends, spouses, houses, etc.

They are also buying into the worldview of postmodernism—that is, believing that there is no absolute moral standard, and that all beliefs hold equal validity. God's people today may not be setting up idols and worshipping them, but actually they are doing so with their ideas/beliefs/values. They fear taking a godly moral position on anything, lest they be considered "small-minded" or "bigoted." The issue of understanding worldviews is key in order to witness for Christ more effectively.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that obedience to God is an act of worship and it is best to do so even when we are apprehensive. (*Know*)
- Embrace God's call to place no other gods before Him. (*Feel*)
- Ask God to show them what in their lives must go to make room for Him. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Growing in Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 11

"Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us. . . . (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. Once completed, discuss their responses.

The answers to the *What Do You Think?* activity are as follows: 1c, 2e, 3d, 4a, 5b.

Ask the following discussion questions:

1. When a leader is doing wrong, why don't more people oppose him or her?
2. When the leader claims to be acting in the name of God, how do we determine whether he or she is indeed doing so or not?
3. Can one leader's evil acts cause an entire nation to likewise do evil? In the case of a murderous regime, do the people have a choice of whether or not to go along with what is happening?

Illustration

Share this illustration from Mark Finley's devotional, Solid Ground:

Al Kasha told his friends that he had to be alone in order to be creative. What they didn't know was that he had to be alone in order to survive. Crowds terrified him. Out in a restaurant or at a supermarket he'd start to hyperventilate, his heart would palpitate, and his hands would perspire. The panic attacks would send him rushing home.

Al had become agoraphobic, afraid to go out anywhere, a prisoner in his own home.

It all started after he made it big as a songwriter, with 13 gold albums and two Academy Awards. Wrote Al, "I had created a life based on doing and having and achieving to the point that I had a nervous breakdown."

Al began systematically constricting his life. One morning when he was at a particularly low point, Al flipped on the TV. A minister quoted the Bible verse "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:8). Those words went straight to Al's heart. He listened intently as the minister talked about God's kind of acceptance.

Al Kasha began weeping and crying out to God. As he prayed he heard a voice say, "I love you, and you are My son."

Strengthened by God's love, he was finally able to respond positively to his overwhelming fears. Al's compressed life expanded within the security of God's presence.

Fear often results from feeling out of control. We are afraid of the unknown, about what might happen. But when we open our hearts to God's love, He gradually dissolves our fears.

There is security in God's love. We are not in control, but He is. There is a sense that He loves us and desires only our best. Ellen White wrote, "His love is as far above all other love as the heavens are above the earth. He watches over His children with a love that is measureless and everlasting" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 481). His "measureless and everlasting" love gives us complete confidence that our lives are in His hands.

You can trust in His love today. You can rest in His love right now. Be assured that His love will indeed cast out all fear.¹

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Fear makes cowards of us all at one time or another, so we shouldn't be too hard on Ahaz, or should we? If to whom much is given, much is required, then those in leadership roles bear a greater responsibility for their choices than do those who follow them. What makes the difference? In a word—*influence*.

A leader's influence has the potential to make or break an organization. And when that leader operates out of fear rather than assurance, he or she is dangerous. In the case of Ahaz, his fear of destruction coupled with a broken connection to God led to open apostasy.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Ahaz comes to the throne at an early age—20—the son of a good, though not great, king. What role might age have played in Ahaz's decision-making?
- 2 Kings 16:3 tells us who Ahaz's role models were. What was it about the kings of Israel that so enticed this king of Judah?
- Circle places in the story where godly counsel would have served Ahaz well. Ask the students to make a list of possible options opened to Ahaz.
- Consider sharing with your students a time in your life when fear got the better of you. What lesson did you learn from that experience?
- Ahaz took the gold and silver from the Temple

and gave them to the king of Assyria. Was this act a type of worship of a foreign god?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Matthew 23; Revelation 22:8, 9; Romans 1:18-24.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

There are several players who enter and exit the life of Ahaz. Here are a few more details about them.

1. Tiglath-Pileser. Biblical scholars have traced the reign of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, to the time period between 747 B.C. and 727 B.C. During those 20 years, Tiglath-Pileser was a busy king. Before his kingship, the vast territory of Assyria was held together largely by force, a fix that didn't work very well. Instead of attempting to subdue the realm by force, Tiglath-Pileser created a regional power structure that helped to destabilize powerful underlings in outlying regions of the Assyrian Kingdom. He also made several changes to the military structure, forcing conquered peoples to serve as the infantrymen in his army, while native Assyrians held higher positions, such as cavalrymen and charioteers. This simple change enlarged his forces and allowed them to fight year round, as opposed to once per year. He used this power to ruthlessly oppress all surrounding nations that dared stand up to him.²

2. The Prophets. We know that Isaiah prophesied

during the reign of King Ahaz, but he was not alone. Ellen White notes: "The prophet Micah, who bore his testimony during those troublous times, declared that sinners in Zion, while claiming to 'lean upon the Lord,' and blasphemously boasting, 'Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us,' continued to 'build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.' Micah 3:11, 10" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 322). Hosea was also prophesying during the period in Judah. God through Hosea spoke this pronouncement against Israel: "Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the LORD because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law" (Hosea 8:1, NIV). Ironically, Ahaz rarely looked for guidance from these anointed men of God, probably because he did not like what they had to say. Are we sometimes like him?

3. Practical Godliness Needed. Micah beautifully captures one of the excuses used by the people of the time to avoid seeking God: "With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?" (Micah 6:6, NIV). Notice the subtle indictment of God: "We are not sure how to please God. He is too hard to serve. Nothing appeases Him," they seem to say. If you recognize this idea it is because you've heard it before. It is the charge leveled at God by Satan. But Micah has a very practical answer for the people's recalcitrance. "He has shown you, O mortal,

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Worth a Thousand Words

The old saying goes: "A picture is worth a thousand words." Consider doing a Google image search for pictures of the god Molech. Several exist. Download a high quality picture to show to your class. Molech is the god to whom human babies were sacrificed.

Try to give the students some idea of the distance that God's people had fallen since He had given them the Ten Commandments, the first of which states that we should have no other gods before Him.

what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, NIV). God was not asking for some spectacular sacrifice then, and He isn't asking for it now.

4. State Religion. Ahaz was able to do something that no other king of Judah had been able to pull off: He made the worship of Assyrian gods the official state religion of Judah. Heretofore, the worship of pagan deities occurred in the "high places" first constructed by Solomon to make his many foreign wives feel at home. These shrines were still around, but Ahaz took pagan worship to epic heights. Whenever humans attempt to institute a single form of worship, whether it be Christian or not, what inevitably happens is that true worship is prohibited and false worship is promoted. This is what happened in Jerusalem, and state-sanctioned worship will be the rule of the day before Jesus comes again.

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III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask students to generate on a blackboard a list of "gods" that people worship today. Money, pleasure, homes, etc., are a few everyday gods many worship. For each of the gods mentioned, ask the students to share what benefits they think these gods bring to the lives of those who worship them. Finally, ask: How might something we like or enjoy become a god in our lives?

Pray, asking God to help us keep Him first in our lives at all times.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The kingdom of Judah descended into open sin under the leadership of Ahaz. Almost immediately after coming to the throne, he was faced with a vexing problem. Two kings had amassed their armies to fight against him, and he simply did not know what to do. Faced with similar odds, many of us might be tempted to lean on arms of flesh instead of on God. And that's what Ahaz did. In so doing Ahaz introduced for the first time in Jerusalem the worship of Assyrian (Babylonian) gods and deities. This false worship was no sideshow. It became the official religion of the land.

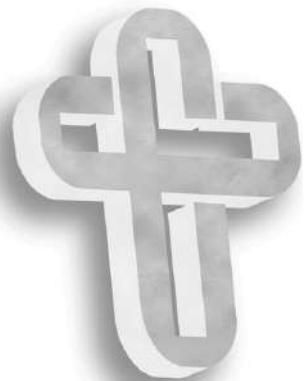
The fearful actions of fearful King Ahaz can teach us much. One lesson we can learn is that when burdened by cares, we should take those cares to God to seek His guidance. Another lesson we can take away from this episode is that influence is a gift from God that has powerful effects for good or evil on those who follow us. We owe the world around us a godly example, but we owe God, and God alone, our worship.

¹Mark Finley, *Solid Ground* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2003), p. 252.

²www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=212&letter=T&search=Tiglath-Pileser.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 27.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 01 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 28:1-5; 2 Kings 16.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 27.

a leader's influence

Photo by Alden Ho



cornerstoneconnections

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keytext

"Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD."

(**2 Chronicles 28:1, NIV**)

flashlight

"This was indeed a time of great peril for the chosen nation. Only a few short years, and the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel were to be scattered among the nations of heathendom. And in the kingdom of Judah also the outlook was dark. The forces for good were rapidly diminishing, the forces for evil multiplying. The prophet Micah, viewing the situation, was constrained to exclaim: 'The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men.' 'The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.' Micah 7:2, 4. 'Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant,' declared Isaiah, 'we should have been as Sodom, and . . . Gomorrah.' Isaiah 1:9" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 324).

what do you think?

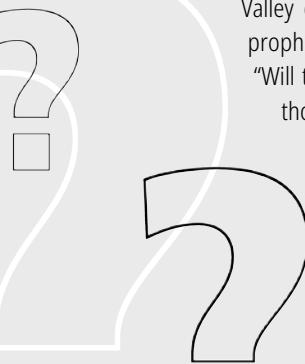
The Bible mentions great and awful leaders, but none of them are truly perfect. Only our faith in God can clean us of our sins. The following are some of the most faithful leaders in the Bible. Try to match each of them with their deeds.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1. Noah | <input type="checkbox"/> a. Traveled by foot over 10,000 miles and suffered greatly in efforts of sharing God's message. |
| 2. Daniel | <input type="checkbox"/> b. Often remembered for his humility and his loyalty to God. His growing leadership skills helped unite Israel. |
| 3. Abraham | <input type="checkbox"/> c. The world mocked him for following God's orders, but his efforts gave the human race another chance at life. |
| 4. Paul | <input type="checkbox"/> d. Pleaded with God on behalf of others and was willing to sacrifice his own son to do God's will. |
| 5. David | <input type="checkbox"/> e. He lived his life in full obedience to God, and risked his life more than once while doing faithful service for the Lord. |

did you know?

Did you know that some of God's people offered their children as human sacrifices to the Ammonite god Molech? The practice was done in a place called Topheth or altar, in the

Valley of Ben Hinnom. The prophet Micah hints why: "Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7, NIV). They thought this practice would appease God.



INTO THE STORY

Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram by driving out the people of Judah. Edomites then moved into Elath and have lived there to this day.

"Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, 'I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.' And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.

"Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned. When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it."

(2 Kings 16:1-12, NIV)



"Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, but they could not overpower him. At that time,

OUT OF THE STORY

Have you ever read this passage of Scripture before? What is new to you?

Place an X at each point in the story where Ahaz should have talked to God.

What spiritual lessons will you take away from this passage?

Where do you see God in this narrative?

Do you see God's hand anywhere in Ahaz's life or the circumstances in which he found himself? Explain.

punch lines

"But the people refused to listen to Samuel. 'No!' they said. 'We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles' " (**1 Samuel 8:19, 20, NIV**).

"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd" (**Exodus 23:2, NIV**).

"Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God" (**Leviticus 26:1, NIV**).

"Jesus said to him, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written: "Worship the LORD your God, and serve him only" ' " (**Matthew 4:10, NIV**).

"But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go" (**Deuteronomy 12:5, NIV**).

further insight

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. . . . Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. . . . Thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ." —Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 70

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Kings 14:3; 16:2, 3; 2 Chronicles 28:1.

Did you successfully match the names of men of faith with their godly actions?

From today's reading, how were bad political leaders described in the Bible?

Thankfully the Bible gives us numerous examples of individuals who followed God and turned to Him for counsel and leading. To whom do you turn for godly counsel, and why?

Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 12:5.

After reading the *Into the Story* section and completing the *Out of the Story* questions, consider this question: Was there anyone to whom Ahaz could have turned for godly counsel? Do some research to find out which prophets were in the land of Judah during his kingship. (Hint: One of them is considered the greatest Old Testament prophet.)

Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 28:1; 34:1-3.

This week's *Key Text* tells us that Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign. Do you think his relative youth had anything to do with his poor spiritual decisions? Explain.

Why was King Josiah faithful to God even as a young king, and Ahaz was not? Was Ahaz born bad and Josiah born good?

Find a godly, older individual and ask him/her to tell you of an experience in which they made a bad decision because of their age. What lesson(s) did they learn?

ing your carefree moments?

Try this: Add up the time you spend
Texting _____ minutes/day
E-mailing _____ minutes/day
Surfing _____ minutes/day
Social Media _____ minutes/day
Total _____ minutes/day

Then, dedicate half of this time to getting to know God better through prayer, Bible study, serving others, or sharing your faith.

Friday

Read Matthew 4:10.

Set aside a quiet moment this evening. Turn off your cell phone, computer, tablet—everything. Get your space really quiet. Then, get a piece of paper and something to write with. Finish the following statements: My relationship with God would be much tighter if I would let go of _____

It's not easy to do it, but I plan to _____

The day I plan to start this is _____. The person I will get to help me stay accountable is _____

Close with a prayer, asking God for strength to overcome whatever is preventing you from getting closer to Him.

Tuesday

Read Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 5:14.

This week's *Flashlight* could have been taken straight out of some sci-fi movie. According to God's servant, Ellen G. White, dark satanic forces seemed to be winning the battle for Israel and Judah. Think right now about the world in which we are living. If you did not know God, how would you find hope amid the chaos in our world? What is the role of Christians in a world such as this?

Wednesday

Read Revelation 14:6, 7.

Read and think carefully about *Punch Lines* for this week. There are a couple of themes running through them. One is the call of God to avoid the peer pressure of the crowd when it is doing wrong. The other is found in today's passage. _____ It is the foundation on which earth's final battle will be built.

Thursday

Read Leviticus 26:1.

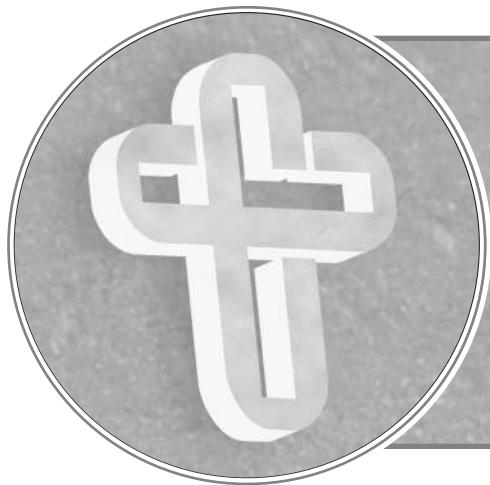
Are there any idols in your life? Here are some questions that might help you find out. What do you spend the majority of your leisure time doing? What specific pleasure do you derive from the person or activity occupying

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or Royalty in Ruins), chapter 27.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 10



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 08 2024

recipe for revival

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 29–31; 2 Kings 18–20; Isaiah 39.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 28; 29.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Hezekiah was a breath of fresh air among the kings of Judah—a king determined to serve God the way King David had done. He instituted a program of national reform that led to a great spiritual revival. This lesson focuses on two of Hezekiah's initiatives: restoring the Temple and its services, and renewing the observance of the annual Passover festival.

Before Judah could experience revival, there had to be preparation. Hezekiah called on the priests and Levites to help with the restoration of the Temple and its services. In order to do so, everything that "defiled" the Temple—everything that related to the worship of false gods—had to be disposed of. The people of Judah did the same in preparation for the Passover celebration, throwing down false altars and "high places" to get ready to worship the true God.

When the Passover feast came, it was such a joyous celebration that it ran an extra week—by popular demand. That's the sign of a real revival—when people just can't stop worshipping God!

As you discuss this week's lesson with your class, get a sense of whether they think your church community and/or your youth group is in need of revival. What might revival look like in your context? Remember to keep the focus on the fact that revival within a community begins with individuals making a radical commitment to Jesus. Revival isn't about

going around telling others what they're doing wrong; it's about being so committed to Jesus that others will want to share the excitement.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand what steps are necessary to prepare for revival. (*Know*)
- Sense the need for revival in their lives and communities. (*Feel*)
- Commit to doing what they can to make revival a reality. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 10

"In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. . . . (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-10; 8:1-4, 14-17; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Ask: Have you ever been in a church or youth group that you felt was really “on fire” for God? How could you tell? Do you see those same qualities in our church community here? If not, what’s missing?

If you have a large class, break into small groups of four or five for this discussion, and have groups report back to the class as a whole. Generate a list of “Signs of a Church on Fire” and write them on a white/chalkboard at the front of the room. Use it as a checklist to evaluate your church and/or youth group.

Illustration

Share this illustration from Mark Finley's devotional, Solid Ground:

Let me tell you about a friend named Milton Schustek. He pastored in Czechoslovakia during the years of Soviet domination and religious oppression.

When the Communists took over his country, Schustek wanted to be free to minister to his Sabbath keeping congregation in Prague. But the Communists had other ideas. They were determined to send all ministers to labor camps.

Milton knew they wanted to send him as far away from his congregation as possible, to the coal mines in the north. But he figured out a way that he might be able to stay close to his pastoral work in the city. There was one job nobody wanted—to clean out the sewers. Nobody wanted to climb into those narrow filthy culverts, hundreds of feet under the city streets.

Milton decided to go see the Communist officials about that job. But first he got down on his knees and prayed. “Jesus,” he said, “I want to worship You every Sabbath. Please help me keep Your law and be faithful to You.”

Milton was ushered in to see the local official. He said, “I understand you want to ship me to the mines to work. Let me tell you something. My grandfather worked in the mines, and my father worked

in mines, and I am willing to work in whatever mine you send me to. But I have a suggestion. You need someone to do the worst job you have. I know about it. It is climbing down into those sewers, and I am willing to do the job. Why don’t you assign me to clean the pipes of Prague? I’d be happy to do it.” The Communist official agreed to give him the job.

I will never forget the look on Milton’s face when he told me this story. He admitted it was a very tough job, very dark and lonely. “But every day was worth it,” he said, “because I could worship God with my congregation each Sabbath.”

God has His faithful people in every age. They are lights shining in a dark place.

Milton Schustek was willing to serve God at any cost. God took care of him, and He will take care of you too. God works miracles for those who trust Him. When in faith we take hold of His strength, miraculous doors open. He opened them for Milton Schustek, and He will open them for you.

We will never see God work miracles in our lives if we live lives of careless compromise. Compromising denies God the privilege of working a miracle to deliver us from our dilemma. Stand firm, don’t lose heart, and watch God open doors.¹

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

For many years the kings of Israel and Judah hadn’t led their people to follow God’s law closely. The laws God outlined for Israel in the first five books of the Bible had mostly fallen into disuse. Many people worshipped pagan gods; those who still followed the true God often did so without a clear understanding of who He was and how to worship Him.

Hezekiah came to the throne as a man with a mission. Just 25 years old, he knew that he wanted to follow God all the way—and take the nation with him. God uses his dedicated followers who are willing to make a total commitment to Him, just as Milton Schustek. Hezekiah used his position of power to lead his people back to God.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Brainstorming

When you divide students into small groups (or discuss as a whole group) as in the *Getting Started* and *Out of the Story* sections of this lesson, be sure to review the rules of brainstorming with them. Remind them that the goal is to generate lots of ideas, and not to “shoot down” their own or other people’s ideas. Comments such as “that’s a stupid idea” or “that’s wrong” should be banned; people should feel safe saying whatever pops into their heads. In discussion time afterwards, you as the teacher may gently and tactfully suggest which answers are more helpful and which are closer to the meaning of the Bible text. But students should always feel that during a brainstorming discussion they are safe to say what they think without fear of being criticized or told to be quiet.

RABBI 101

process it with them.

- *Underline* the specific things Hezekiah did (or instructed the people to do) as part of his plan for reform and revival.
- How do you think people felt about Hezekiah’s reforms? What evidence do you see in the text to tell you how the people responded?
- What might be some modern-day equiva-

lents to the things Hezekiah did? What would have to change in our churches and communities to prepare for a Hezekiah-style revival?

Write three headings on a white/chalkboard:

1. Seeking God’s Will; 2. Sacrifice; 3. Celebration. The student lesson suggests these as three steps in Hezekiah’s revival that we could apply to revival in our church today. Divide the class into three groups and assign one heading to each group. Ask each group to answer the question: Under this category, what are some things we can do to prepare our church, youth group, or community at large to get closer to God?

If the groups need more guidance, suggest that Group 1 discuss how we can better understand God’s will, as revealed in His Word. Group 2 can generate a list of things we might need to be willing to give up or change in order for revival to come. Group 3 can think of ways we can celebrate God’s presence—joyful ways of worship that will keep people coming back for more, as the people of Judah did during Hezekiah’s revival Passover.

Give groups a few minutes to discuss, then have them report back and write a summary of their ideas under the headings at the front of the room.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Acts 2 (compare the Pentecost revival with that of Hezekiah).

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The history of Israel and Judah was a roller coaster of falling away from God, then coming back to Him. The “revivals” during which the Jews returned to God were usually led by a powerful, charismatic leader who was completely committed to following God and challenging others to do so too. One such revival, led by John the Baptist, paved the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

The history of the Christian church has seen the same kind of pattern. As Christians grew lukewarm and unconcerned about religion, God always raised up leaders who were willing to dig deeper into the Scriptures, challenge people to change, and lead a revival. Revival can happen in any church or any community. But it always starts with someone who is willing to place themselves completely in God’s hands.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

III.CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Hand out an index card or small slip of paper to each student. Say: “We’ve talked today about revival—about what it would be like if our church, our youth group, and our community were totally committed to God as Judah was in Hezekiah’s time. That’s a very big idea, but now I’d like you to make it small and practical. On this slip of paper, write ONE change you’d like to see in your church, this youth group, or this community, that would bring it closer to God. Then write one thing you could do to help

make that happen.”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

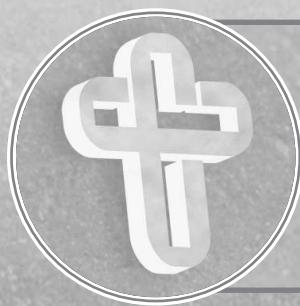
God calls each of us to a renewed and closer relationship with Him. He wants us to be, like King Hezekiah, willing to follow Him all the way, whatever it takes. That kind of commitment will lead to change—not just in us, but in the world around us. Whether or not you think of yourself as a leader, you do have influence on those around you. Your example of total commitment can help bring about change in your family, your school, your church, your community. If you determine to follow God completely, like Hezekiah did, you can be a positive force for change.

As you go through this week, I’d like to encourage you to think about this challenging statement by Ellen White:

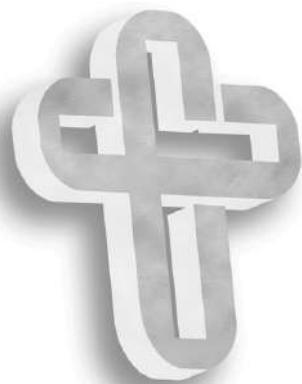
“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work. There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing. A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer” (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121).

(Note to Teacher: If possible, you might consider creating a bookmark or laminating the quote for the students to take with them.)

¹Mark Finley, *Solid Ground* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2003), p. 342.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 28; 29.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 08 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 29–31; 2 Kings 18–20;
Isaiah 39.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*),
chapters 28; 29.

recipe for revival

Photo by Alden Ho



cornerstoneconnections

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keytext

"Hezekiah trusted in the LORD,
the God of Israel. . . . He held fast
to the LORD and did not stop fol-
lowing him."

(2 Kings 18:5, 6, NIV)

flashlight

"These and other like messages revealing the willingness of God to forgive and accept those who turned to Him with full purpose of heart, had brought hope to many a fainting soul in the dark years when the temple doors remained closed; and now, as the leaders began to institute a reform, a multitude of the people, weary of the thrall of sin, were ready to respond" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 334).

what do you think?

Which sentence best describes your church, Sabbath School class, or youth group?

- Everyone is on fire for the Lord.
- A few people are excited about God, but most aren't.
- Everyone seems to be going through the motions of religion.
- People want to know God better but don't seem to know how.
- Nobody takes God seriously.

Do you think you need a revival among young people in your church? What would it take to get everyone really excited about serving the Lord? Would you want to be part of a group that was "on fire" for God?

did you know?

The word "revival" is often used to call people to true heart religion and a return to God. In fact, one of the dictionary definitions of the word is "a time of reawakened interest in religion."

The Bible never uses the word "revival." It comes from a Latin word that means "to live again." It wasn't used in a religious sense until 1702, when it was used by the American preacher Cotton Mather. But the Bible does describe several periods in Israel's history that we would probably call "revivals." These were times when Israel had turned away from God, but a strong leader—usually a king or a prophet—led the people back to God and, once again, they became excited about serving and worshipping Him.

to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense....

INTO THE STORY

"Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. . . . He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.

"In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side and said: 'Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary. . . . I intend to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you

"So the service of the temple of the LORD was reestablished. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly."

"Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. . . . They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written. . . .

"A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month. They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley. . . .

"The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully. . . . There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place."

(2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 35, 36; 30:1-5, 13-27, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What was the first step in Hezekiah's reform program?

What kind of "defilement" needed to be removed from the Temple?

Why did Hezekiah want to make a covenant with God?

How do you think the priests and Levites reacted to the changes Hezekiah asked them to make?

What had to be done before the Passover feast could be celebrated?

Why was this celebration of the Passover such a big deal?

Why do you think the people wanted to celebrate the Passover for seven days longer than usual?

punch lines

"**If my people**, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (**2 Chronicles 7:14**, NIV).

"**LORD, I have heard of your fame;** I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known" (**Habakkuk 3:2**, NIV).

"**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" (**Joel 2:28, 29**, NIV).

"**Instead of your shame** you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours" (**Isaiah 61:7**, NIV).

further insight

"In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 59

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Chronicles 30:32.

Look back at your answers to *What Do You Think?* Do you think your church or youth group needs a revival? What would “revival” look like for you and your friends?

The people of Israel joyfully chose to celebrate Passover for an extra seven days after King Hezekiah brought back the festival that had been forgotten for so many years.

Have you ever wanted a church service or program to last longer? What kind of worship service would you enjoy so much that you’d want to stay twice as long as you were supposed to?

Sunday

Read 2 Chronicles 29:2, 5; 30:14.

King Hezekiah’s revival included three steps that can give us an idea of how God brings about revival for His people today.

Seeking God’s will. Hezekiah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 29:2, NIV). True revival begins by seeking God’s will for us as it’s revealed in the Bible.

Sacrifice. There were things the people of Israel had to give up in order to truly follow God. All evidence of idol worship had to go (2 Chronicles 29:5; 30:14, NIV). What are the “idols” in your life that you would need to remove before God could completely rule your world?

Celebration. During that Passover—the first in many years—people were having such a good time, they decided to stay, worship, and celebrate for an extra week! When God truly takes over our lives, our churches, our communities, we’ll enjoy spending time in His presence.

Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Hezekiah “held fast” to the Lord. He held on and kept following God even when temptations and distractions threatened to tear Him away. Without a firm grip on God, we can never experience revival ourselves, or help bring revival to God’s church.

What temptations and distractions in your life might lead you to let go of God?

What helps you “hold fast” to the Lord when times get tough?

Tuesday

Read Habakkuk 3:2.

Read the *Flashlight* section of the lesson. According to Ellen White, how did the people of Israel feel about God during the years when the Temple’s doors were closed? What made them “ready to respond” to Hezekiah’s plans for revival?

Many people who might not seem to be active in church are quietly longing for a relationship with God. If a revival were to start in your church or youth group, you might be surprised by some of the people who were “ready to respond.” Don’t ever write off anyone as a lost cause!

Wednesday

Read Joel 2:28, 29.

Hezekiah’s revival reawakened the spiritual life of Judah at a time when the nation had been spiritually asleep for years. God calls men and women, youth and adults, in every era to reconnect with Him and get others excited about following Him again.

Today’s Bible reading was probably written during the same period of Jewish history. This passage is quoted in Acts 2 to show that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of

Pentecost fulfilled Joel’s prophecy.

As we get closer to the end of earth’s history, God again promises to pour His Spirit out on young and old, men and women—anyone who will commit their lives to Him and get serious about bringing revival to His church and the world.

Thursday

Read Psalm 51:10; Matthew 4:19.

Revival begins inside—with a person who is, as Hezekiah was, completely committed to following God. It then moves outside—to change a church, a community, the world.

What’s one thing you’d want to do in your own spiritual life to make it happen?

What’s one thing you’d like to see happen in your church or youth group? (And share it with your youth group leader, Sabbath School teacher, and/or pastor!)

Friday

Read Isaiah 61:7.

A true spiritual revival is exciting and inspiring—but also scary.

As you think about revival coming to your church or youth group, to your life, is there anything about it that scares you? Are there things you’d be afraid to give up? Are you afraid of what God might ask you to do?

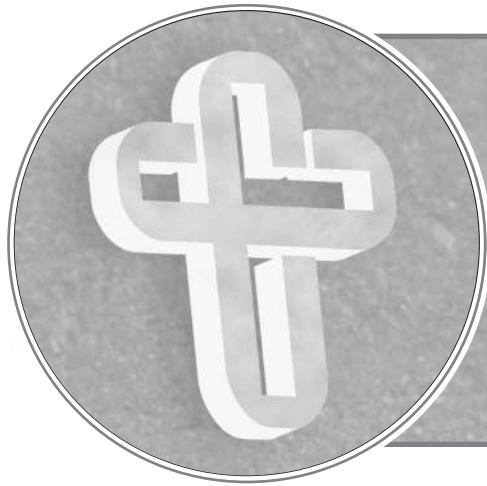
Ask God to help make you, your family, friends, and church ready for revival.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 28; 29.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 11



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 15 2024

not like other gods

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 32; 2 Kings 19.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 30.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Jerusalem is attacked by the forces of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. King Hezekiah prepares the city's defenses for a long siege and cuts off the supply of fresh water outside the city, where the Assyrians will be camped. He encourages his people to place their trust in the Lord. The Assyrians launch a propaganda campaign, reminding the citizens of Jerusalem that Sennacherib's army has already steamrolled a number of other countries, and none of *their* gods lifted a finger to save them. Why should Israel's God be any different?

But Israel's God is not like other gods—He fights for His people. The story as told in 1 Kings 19 and 2 Chronicles 32 records that 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died mysteriously in a single night—slain by the angel of the Lord. Sennacherib retreated to his own country in disgrace.

Focus this week's lesson discussion on the fact that we can trust God to care for us. That doesn't mean that we will never have troubles. God did allow Israel and Judah to be threatened and attacked by foreign armies when it was part of His larger purpose. But He promises to always protect and care for His people, even in the most difficult situations. God is not just an idea or a concept like the gods of the pagans. He is a powerful, personal Being who cares about each of us. Students should leave this study assured that God is trustworthy even when times are tough.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God has the power to save in desperate situations. (*Know*)
- Trust God to protect and care for them. (*Feel*)
- Surrender their current fears and worries to God, trusting Him to provide. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 1

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Have students suggest several different situa-

tions in which a person might pray for God's deliverance. Some ideas to get them started might be:

- Writing an exam
- Moving to a new community
- Speaking out when friends are doing something you believe is wrong
- Facing serious illness

Discuss each scenario they come up with. Is there a "God's role" and "our role" here? Does relying completely on God mean we don't do anything, or do we have a part to play in the answering of our prayers?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A well-known story tells of a man who prayed to God to save him when a flood threatened his home. A radio report warned residents to evacuate, but the man stayed in his house, insisting that God would save him.

He climbed to the roof of his house as the floodwaters rose and was clinging there when a neighbor passed in a rowboat. "Do you want to get in the boat?" the neighbor asked.

"No, God is going to save me!" the man replied.

The waters rose; the man climbed higher. A rescue helicopter hovered overhead. From the helicopter, a voice called down, "We're here to rescue you! We'll drop a ladder and you can climb up into the helicopter."

But the man waved the helicopter away, saying,

"I prayed! God will save me!"

Before drowning, the man asked God, "Why didn't You save me?"

"I sent a radio report, a rowboat, and a helicopter," God pointed out. "What more did you want?"

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We often face situations in which we can't see a way out. As Christians, it's natural for us to cry out to God for help. Sometimes we do our best to meet the crisis, and God helps us in our efforts. Other times, God intervenes miraculously. In today's story, God miraculously delivered Jerusalem from an invading army—but only after King Hezekiah took a lot of practical steps to prepare the city for an attack.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Discuss the *Out of the Story* questions with the class, then direct the class's attention to the Bible texts in the *Punch Lines* section. If you have a small class, choose one text that class members find inspiring. For a large class, divide into groups and assign one text to each group.

Supply fabric, glue, and fabric paint or markers

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Hands-on Illustrations

Making banners provides not only a hands-on art project that will vividly illustrate the lesson of God's power to protect us, but an ongoing reminder that God is on our side. Don't let the project end when the banners are made—choose as a group where in your Sabbath School room or church you will put them on display. Use them and refer back to them to remind your students that we may be under siege by Satan, but God is going to fight for us.

RABBI 101

Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 300).

Siege Warfare. A common tactic in ancient times when cities were surrounded by walls occurs when an attacking army encounters a city or fortress that won't surrender and can't be easily conquered. The attacking army surrounds the city, cutting off supplies, reinforcement, and escape routes for the people inside. While waiting outside, the attacking army usually attempts to break through the walls by the use of siege weapons such as catapults. The defenders, inside the city walls, are in a strong defensive position but can hold out only as long as food supplies and morale last. This was the approach that Sennacherib of Assyria used in trying to conquer Jerusalem.

Hezekiah stopped the water supply with a double purpose in mind: "To cover the springs . . . so that the Assyrians would not have a convenient water supply, and to convey the water through a tunnel into the city to increase his own supply during the siege (2 Chron. 32:30; see on 2 Kings 20:20)" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 300).

We often talk about "spiritual warfare," but Satan's war on Christians is often more like a siege. We may not feel like we're actively fighting, but there's an enemy camped outside the walls, ready to attack when we let our guard down, always trying to lower our morale. How can we defend against Satan's siege? We need to strengthen our defenses—just as Hezekiah strengthened the walls of Jerusalem—by being firmly grounded in God's Word and surrounding ourselves with Christian influences. We can keep our spirits up and resist the enemy's morale-sapping attacks by reminding ourselves, as Hezekiah reminded his people, that the Lord will fight for us.

Encouraging Words. Hezekiah was a compassionate leader, speaking comforting words to his army and encouraging them to trust in God. "Regardless of the power of the enemy, the man who trusts and reveres the Lord always has reason for courage, for the battle is not his but God's (see ch. 20:15)" (*ibid.*, p. 301).

to each group and have them make a banner of their Bible text. Say: Throughout history, armies have carried banners into battle showing their allegiance to their kings and commanders. These banners we are making today will remind us that we go into battle under the colors of a God who promises to fight for us and deliver us.

For further discussion, ask the following questions:

- What does this story tell us about God?
- What does this story tell us about us?
- What does this story tell us about our relationship with God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Story of Jericho (Joshua 6); story of Gideon (Judges 6; 7); Jehosaphat's victory over Moab and Ammon (2 Chronicles 20:1-30).

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The same account of this military campaign can be found in 2 Kings 18:13–19:37, as well as in Isaiah 36 and 37.

Sennacherib, King of Assyria. Sennacherib was a formidable foe. This narrative, which took place in 701 B.C., describes the first of many campaigns against Hezekiah. "In his annals he claims to have taken 46 of the fenced, or walled, cities of Judah and to have carried away captive 200,150 people, besides a large amount of booty" (*The*

III.CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

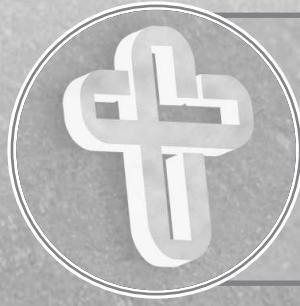
Direct the students' attention to Tuesday's and Thursday's portion of the student lesson. In pairs, invite them to share with each other examples of times when God has helped them (or family members or friends) in the past. Remind them that these experiences, along with Bible stories and promises, can build our faith to help us prepare for difficult times in the future.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The army of Assyria was a powerful enemy. King Hezekiah and his people must have been terrified as Sennacherib's soldiers marched toward the city. They did everything they could to prepare, but they also knew that they couldn't face this threat alone. They needed God's power.

The same is true for us. Of course, we should do everything we can to be well-prepared to face life's challenges. But, ultimately, our hope is in the Lord. We can trust Him to care for us and fight life's battles for us. And the more we trust Him with our problems and challenges, the stronger our faith will grow.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 30.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 15 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 32; 2 Kings 19.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 30.

not like other gods



Photo by The Crystallene

flashlight

"Nothing more quickly inspires faith than the exercise of faith. The king of Judah had prepared for the coming storm; and now, confident that the prophecy against the Assyrians would be fulfilled, he stayed his soul upon God. . . . What though the armies of Assyria, fresh from the conquest of the greatest nations of earth, and triumphant over Samaria in Israel, should now turn their forces against Judah? . . . Judah had nothing to fear; for their trust was in Jehovah" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 351).

keytext

"So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side."

(2 Chronicles 32:22, NIV)

what do you think?

Circle "Agree" or "Disagree" to indicate your opinion on each statement.

- | | | |
|-------|----------|---|
| Agree | Disagree | People who believe in God never need to be afraid. |
| Agree | Disagree | God will make sure nothing bad ever happens to His people. |
| Agree | Disagree | We can trust God to care for us even when things are going wrong. |
| Agree | Disagree | Preparing for hard times shows a lack of trust in God. |

did you know?

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, ruled his empire for 24 years. During those years, Assyria was the most powerful and feared nation in that part of the world. Sennacherib's father, Sargon, defeated the northern kingdom of Israel and led 27,000 Israelites into captivity. The deported people were probably put to work digging canals in the new Assyrian capital city of Nineveh. Sennacherib also defeated the Babylonians, but he was unable to defeat King Hezekiah of Judah, even though Judah was a small nation and not very powerful. Trusting God made King Hezekiah and his people able to stand their ground against a tyrant who defeated all others.

INTO THE STORY

discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.' And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

"Later, when Sennacherib king of Assyria and all his forces were laying siege to Lachish, he sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah king of Judah and for all the people of Judah who were there:

"After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him.... Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it.... He also made large numbers of weapons and shields.

"He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or

"King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to heaven about this. And the LORD sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the commanders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons, his own flesh and blood, cut him down with the sword.

"So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from

the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side."

(2 Chronicles 32:1-22, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What preparations did King Hezekiah make for Sennacherib's attack on Jerusalem?

What message of hope did Hezekiah have for his people?

How did Sennacherib try to frighten the people of Judah? What was his confidence based on?

How do you think the people of Judah reacted to Sennacherib's message?

Why do you think the Lord defeated the Assyrians directly, rather than having Judah's army fight and win?

punch lines

"**I lift up my eyes to the mountains**—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth" (**Psalm 121:1, 2, NIV**).

"**Do not be afraid of them;** the LORD your God himself will fight for you" (**Deuteronomy 3:22, NIV**).

"**Some trust in chariots** and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God" (**Psalm 20:7, NIV**).

"**Do not be afraid or discouraged** because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" (**2 Chronicles 20:15, NIV**).

"**What, then, shall we say** in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (**Romans 8:31, NIV**).

further insight

"Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 77

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Chronicles 32:1-6.

When Sennacherib's army came to lay siege to Jerusalem, Hezekiah took some practical steps to get ready for war. List three specific things Hezekiah did to get Jerusalem ready for attack.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What do Hezekiah's preparations tell us about his trust in God? Do they show that he did trust God, or that he didn't?

Imagine you're taking a tough exam. You ask God for help—but you also study as hard as you can! Being well prepared doesn't show a lack of trust in God—rather, it puts us in a place where God is able to help us.

Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 3:22.

Siege was a popular battle tactic back in the days of walled cities. You simply parked your army outside the enemy city and waited for them to surrender or starve. This was Sennacherib's plan for conquering Jerusalem.

Of course, if you were the one sitting outside, your soldiers might get bored, or sick, or simply start to drift away if they didn't have some action. So the attacking army did what they could to make the siege go faster. This included sending messages to try to weaken the morale of those inside the walls.

Sennacherib's message to the people of Jerusalem hit right at the heart of their hope—Hezekiah's faith in God. What did Sennacherib remind God's people of, to try to weaken their faith?

The Assyrian armies had experienced huge success. None of the gods of the nations they'd conquered had been able to stand against

them. But the God of Israel wasn't like other gods—He was real, ready, and able to defend His people.

Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 32:22.

Read the *Key Text* in a few different Bible translations (if you don't have multiple Bibles handy, go online to www.biblegateway.com). Notice how the last part of the text ("He took care of them on every side," NIV) is translated in different versions.

Which of these translations is most encouraging to you, when you think about God's protection over you? Explain.

Tuesday

Read 2 Chronicles 20:15.

Nothing more quickly inspires faith than the exercise of faith." The *Flashlight* passage from *Prophets and Kings* tells us that the best way to develop greater trust in God is simple—try trusting Him! The people of Judah discovered that the Lord was not like other gods—He actually had the power to save them.

Think about a situation in your life today in which you need to trust God to care for you. Then, think of three times in the past when you know God protected and helped you. List them here:

How does the knowledge of your experiences in the past of God's guidance and protection give you hope for the future?

Wednesday

Choose one of the Bible texts from *Punch Lines* that you find encouraging. Cut a 1-inch strip from a piece of construction

paper or cardstock and copy that verse neatly onto the strip. Use it as a bookmark in your Bible to remind you to trust God in difficult times!

Thursday

Read Psalm 20:7.

Look back at Tuesday's lesson. Do you have trouble trusting God because you don't have a lot of experience trusting Him? You can also learn from the experiences of others! If you didn't have three things to list on Tuesday, talk to a parent, teacher, or friend who's been a Christian longer than you have. Ask them for examples of times God has proven His ability to take care of them.

How do their experiences encourage you?

Parent _____

Teacher _____

Friend _____

If you still need a third example, write: "God saved Jerusalem from Sennacherib's army." The Bible is full of examples showing how God comes through for His people!

Friday

Read Romans 8:31.

Ellen White tells us, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 162). How do these words encourage you as you think of those experiences that you and others have had of God's guidance, protection, and power?

this week's reading*

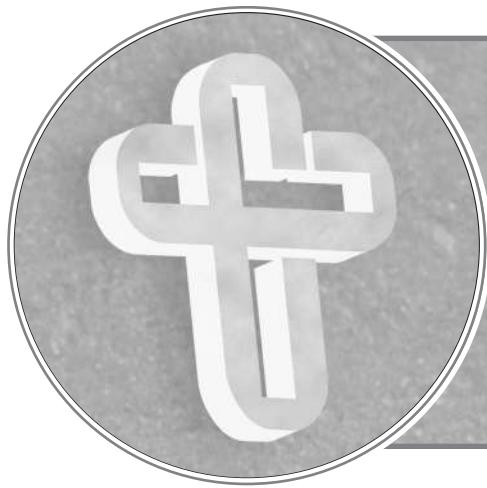
Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 30.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 12

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 22 2024



what legacy?

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 32.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The storied lives of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah portray examples of extreme contrast in their loyalty and faithfulness to God. Manasseh was literally hell-bent on defying God's leadership and guidance. It was written about Manasseh: "He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 33:6, NIV). Even though he experienced a last-minute repentance, the effects of his sin bore fruit in his son Amon.

Amon "increased his guilt" and sinned, causing others to sin boundlessly during his brief two-year reign, but was assassinated by officials of his own court with the support of the people. The depravity of idolatry and self-absorbed behavior prompted the people to choose Josiah, a God-fearing child, to be king. While Josiah was not perfect, he led God's people faithfully, causing a much-needed reform in Israel.

This lesson arrests many angles for discussion, but consider a few areas of emphasis: 1. God has and will discipline leaders, such as Manasseh, who lead His people astray, in whatever way is necessary to bring about repentance. 2. Leaders don't always repent but respond to God's voice by a more earnest rebellion, as Amon illustrated. 3. Many great themes emerge from Josiah's reign about how allegiance to God while we are young is crucial, or how the cooperation between faithful children and godly elders produces blessings

and growth. But another amazing facet of Josiah's leadership is that he completely changed the direction his father postured before him. As a young person, he personified what it means to "go against the flow." Josiah led a reformation against the tendencies of his own heritage, against the religious apathy of unconverted leaders, and against the habitual idolatry of three generations of Israel.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Deepen their knowledge of the storied lives of the kings of Israel. (*Know*)
- Sense the urgency of choosing to be loyal to God while young. (*Feel*)
- Decide to live deliberately for God and avoid evil. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

The Great Controversy, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 8

"All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. . . (Gen. 3; 6-8; Job 1:6-12; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18; Rom. 1:19-32; 3:4; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:6; Rev. 12:4-9.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. Once done, discuss their responses.

Invite the students to share their responses to the ranking activity. Why do you think the leadership qualities you chose are essential? In what ways can these qualities help you to resist negative peer pressure?

Illustration

Share this illustration from Mark Finley's devotional, Solid Ground:

Pastor Mikhail Azaroz's faith landed him in a Siberian prison camp. Among the men crowded together in his cell was a blood-thirsty giant named Yura. He and his criminal gang spent much of their time terrorizing other prisoners. They never touched Pastor Mikhail, but the shrieks and groans of the victims were heart-rending.

As the pastor began to pray about this a verse in Luke came to mind. "I give you the authority to trample . . . over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19).

Mikhail felt God was directing him to do something. That night when Yura began shouting his usual order, "I want to see blood!" the pastor took hold of his arm and said, "Yura, the Scriptures say, don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you."

All eyes froze on the scene. Yura pulled his arm away and barked, "I don't want to hurt you, old man. Go sit on your bunk."

But the pastor persisted. "Let's make a deal. You give me just one hour to talk, and I'll tell you about my past."

Yura thought for a moment. He knew that Mikhail always told the truth. Turning to his gang members, he asked, "Should we let him talk?"

They shrugged. Yura said, "Go ahead!"

So the pastor started talking. He told them about his faith and about the persecution that believers had to endure. He talked for an hour. Then two hours. Then three hours. By then the guards had come to turn off all the lights.

Amazingly enough, Yura wanted to hear more. Mikhail promised to continue the next evening. And that's what he did night after night, telling these men about Jesus. The savagery in that cell ended.

This lone Christian pastor had proved that even in the gulag God is stronger than brutality. He's bigger than the wild beast within human hearts.

God changed the entire prison environment through the Christian witness of one individual. That's

not surprising. God changed the course of history through Moses. God changed Babylon through Daniel. God changed Persia through Esther. God changed Rome through Paul. God can change your family, your workplace, your school, your neighborhood, your apartment complex—through you.

One man, one woman, one young person—plus God>equals a majority.¹

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Mikhail was a father figure to Yura in the Siberian prison camp. Yura knew that Mikhail would not inflict harm on him or his gang, thus there was no need to hurt Mikhail. God guided Mikhail to lead Yura on a less destructive path and change his ways, so that he would be saved by our loving and forgiving Lord. God gives all His children the opportunity to change and follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Identify and *circle* the three different generations of kings mentioned in this passage.

Briefly describe what the text says about the kind of people they were. (Use only the words and phrases in this passage.)

—Manasseh—Amon—Josiah

What are some words or phrases that are repeated in this story?

This story is mostly about . . . (choose three and explain)

1. Obedience to God
2. Influence of parents/leaders
3. Results of sin
4. Blessings of faithfulness
5. Selfishness and idolatry
6. Moral courage

Some might perceive God's punishment of Manasseh to be harsh, but the ultimate result was his repentance. Compare the religious experience of these three kings and consider how God dealt with each of them, and how they responded to His promptings. How has God found ways to arrest your attention when you were growing distant from Him?

What do you think is the most difficult challenge for a king/leader?

To what degree do parents shape their children's faithfulness to God?

Which verse do you think conveys a key lesson or point of this story?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Acts 5:29; Daniel 3; Exodus 10; Matthew 18:4; Romans 2:4.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Manasseh: From One Extreme to the Other

Consider Manasseh's claim to fame as a leader: "Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites" (2 Kings 21:9, NIV). In 2 Chronicles 33:6, it says, "He [Manasseh] sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD" (NIV). But a few verses later the Bible says: "In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom" (verses 12, 13, NIV). Furthermore, Manasseh is one of the kings listed in the proud lineage of the Messiah (Matthew 1). Clearly this man made a last-minute turnaround,

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Teach by Storytelling

The unmistakable quality of stories is that everyone—young and old—connect with narratives personally. Lists and equations, acronyms and paradigms, and clever sayings may lodge themselves in the mind, but stories evoke the human experience to action. William Barclay says it well when he states: "To teach in parables is to teach in pictures, and most men think in pictures" (William Barclay, *The Mind of Christ*, p. 95). Another rich quality of storytelling is that stories don't necessarily tell people "the truth," but engage the listener in a thoughtful journey through which he/she discovers the truth for themselves. As we teach, we can trust the story to do more than we will ever do by trying to explain. Some teachers simply tell the story or have students read it and ask: "What does this story teach you?" or "What is the central truth of this story?" or even "Why do you think this story is meaningful?"

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

What might be the downside to such stories?

2. Amon: Like Father, Like Sun

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary states that Amon's name is "identical with that of the Egyptian sun-god Amen. It would appear that Manasseh selected this name for his son to show his regard for that Egyptian deity" (vol. 2, p. 971). The commentary continues by asserting that "Manasseh's apostasy had left a stamp of evil upon Amon that shaped his life beyond recall" (p. 971). Apparently, the pattern of behaving badly became so deeply ingrained in his childhood that he simply increased his sin over time. After reigning for only two years, he was assassinated by palace officials. Some think this might have been a grudge against the king while others infer that it was a reaction to the horrible direction Amon was taking the nation. Either way, his miserable reign was short (he died at age 24; his son Josiah was 8). Imagine what it must have been like for Josiah. How did he maintain the sensibilities to God while living with such an evil parent? What are some truths you glean from looking at the odds Josiah faced as a believer in God and as a young leader of a nation?

The more you dig into the details given in Scripture about these three men, the more you marvel at what God can do with seemingly impossible situations.

III.CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Fill one bowl with hot water (hot enough to touch but not burn) and another with ice-cold water. Invite the students (or volunteers) to place their right hand in the cold water long enough for it to get a little uncomfortable, then dry the cold hand off and immediately place it in the hot water. Clearly, a cold hand experiences the contrast in the hot water more keenly

than if you were to place your room temperature hand directly in the hot water. The students can try it with the other hand to note the difference. You can also have them go from cold to hot. You might also make available two other bowls of water (one lukewarm and the other only slightly cool) and note the contrast.

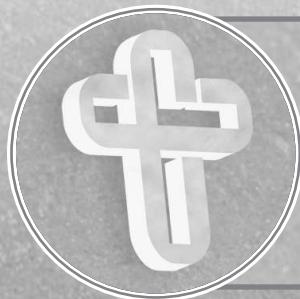
Ask: What are some spiritual truths that this exercise illustrates? (Have them get into groups of two or three to discuss and share their responses.)

Summary

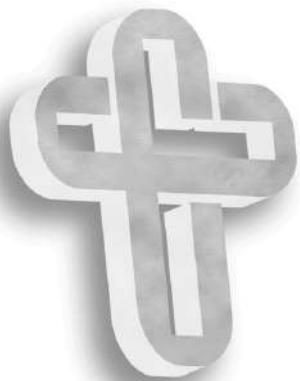
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

You are not trapped by your genetic makeup. You, like Abraham (whose father was an idolater), are endowed with the potential to choose God whether your parents have or not. Manasseh was evil, and God rattled him through failure and shame. But he responded in the sunset of his life—although too late to really make a positive difference in the lives of others. Perhaps you know someone who lived a life of rebellion against God for the majority of their life but finally turned to the Savior in the final hour. And like Amon, some don't repent. This story can easily seem like a sensational testimony of bad guys who turn good or bad guys who stay bad, but maybe this story is more about God's desire and ability to save the worst of sinners. You might appeal to the students, saying, "Maybe you feel as if you have refused God's promptings too much to be saved. As long as your heart beats in your chest God can redeem and restore your life. It simply takes a humble response to God's voice speaking to you now. Let's pray. . ." Invite the students to use this story to evaluate their journey with God, gleaning positive attributes of faith they have learned from their parents and asking, "How can I move closer to God and be more faithful to His leading in my life?"

¹Mark Finley, *Solid Ground* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald®, 2003), p. 190.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 32.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 22 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 32.

what legacy?

Photo by Audrey Goforth



cornerstoneconnections 49

flashlight

"Born of a wicked king, beset with temptations to follow in his father's steps, and with few counselors to encourage him in the right way, Josiah nevertheless was true to the God of Israel. Warned by the errors of past generations, he chose to do right, instead of descending to the low level of sin and degradation to which his father and his grandfather had fallen" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 384).

keytext

"In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God."

(2 Chronicles 33:12, 13, NIV)

what do you think?

What do you think are the most essential qualities in a leader? Rank them in order of importance (1=most important; 8=least important).

- confidence
- compassion
- humility
- selflessness
- courage
- honesty
- wisdom
- perseverance

What are the three qualities you ranked to be the most necessary in a leader? Why? Who do you know that exemplifies these qualities, and how have you seen such attributes in action?

did you know?

Current research suggests that parents have a lot more influence than they realize. Not only are their kids listening, but more important, they are watching closely and modeling their lives after them.

Whether you believe it or not, parents are the biggest influence in their children's lives. But at what point do you begin to assume responsibility for your relationship with God on your own?



He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah.

"He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

INTO THE STORY

"The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

"Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher.

"The other events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all these are written in the records of the seers. Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

"Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped and offered sacrifices to all the idols Manasseh had made. But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the LORD; Amon increased his guilt.

"Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his palace. Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah his son king in his place."

OUT OF THE STORY

Circle and identify the three different generations of kings mentioned in this passage.

Briefly describe what the text says about the kind of people they were. (Use only the words and phrases in this passage.)

Manasseh _____

Amon _____

Josiah _____

What are some words or phrases that are repeated in this story?

This story is mostly about (choose three): obedience to God, influence of parents/leaders, results of sin, blessings of faithfulness, selfishness and idolatry, moral courage. Which one do you see exhibited the most among God's people today? Explain.

Some might perceive God's punishment of Manasseh to be harsh, but the ultimate result was his repentance. Compare the religious experience of these three kings and consider how God dealt with each of them and how they responded to His promptings. How has God found ways to arrest your attention when you were growing distant from Him?

What do you think is the most difficult challenge for a king/leader?

To what degree do parents shape their children's faithfulness to God?

Which verse do you think conveys a key lesson or point of this story?

punch lines

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (**Romans 12:1, 2, NIV**).

"Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'" (**Ecclesiastes 12:1, NIV**).

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (**James 4:10, NIV**).

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" (**Matthew 23:37, NIV**).

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent" (**Revelation 3:15-19, NIV**).

further insight

"The true, joyous life of the soul is to have Christ formed within, the hope of glory."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 46

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 1 Peter 5:6.

Read and respond to the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Which quality did you choose as a primary attribute of a leader? Why? Today's Bible passage points out that success and abundant living are the result of humility. Read this passage and write it out in your own words. Reflect on the lives of people in the Bible who followed this principle.

Sunday

Read James 4:10.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to guide your study, you will notice three kings who responded to God in three different ways. What key insights emerge in this story for you? What is the message you think God is trying to say to you in this week's lesson?

Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13.

Today's Bible passage is a promise that God will use any means necessary to bring His people back to a right relationship with Him. Clearly, the choice to respond to God's voice, the still small voice or the roaring wake-up call of discipline, is ours to make. Manasseh responded to an abrupt wake-up call of being captured, tortured, and ridiculed. Amon chose not to listen and respond. Are there areas of your life in which you are getting a wake-up call? What are they?

When will you begin to make this change? And to whom will you hold yourself accountable to make the changes you promised to God?

Tuesday

Read Revelation 3:15-19.

Read the quote from *Prophets and Kings* in the *Flashlight* section of this lesson. Think about your legacy of faith. How have your parents and leaders shaped your walk with God? What are some examples you want to follow? What are some patterns you need to avoid?

Examples to follow: _____

Patterns to avoid: _____

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse speaks most prominently to you today? Why do you think this verse is particularly relevant to you today? What can you do this week to respond actively to the message in this Scripture?

Thursday

Read Romans 12:1, 2.

In *Prophets and Kings* we are told that Josiah had "few counselors" urging him

in the right direction. Do you ever feel alone in your desire to be more devoted to God? Take some time this week to find someone you admire as a spiritual leader. Ask them to share with you one spiritual insight that God has revealed to them. Also, ask them how they would like for you to pray for them so that they can continue to be faithful and filled with God's Spirit.

Spiritual Insight

Friday

Read Ecclesiastes 12:1.

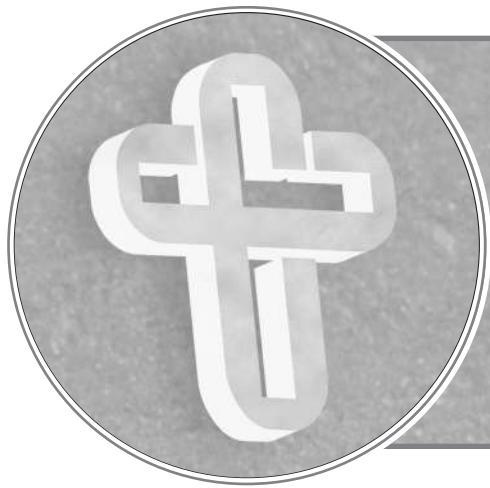
Reject on the three kings referred to in this lesson and consider how God labored with each of them to different ends. Consider the many ways God has labored with you, patiently prompting you to deeper devotion. Are you listening to His voice? How are you going to respond?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 32.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

LESSON 13



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 29 2024

cleaning house

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 23; 2 Chronicles 34.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 33.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week's lesson has to do with Josiah's emerging leadership and faithfulness to God's voice on behalf of Israel. The youthful King Josiah began the process of cleanup in the kingdom, starting with the Temple. It was in the Temple that Hilkiah, the high priest, found the forgotten Book of the Law. This ancient manuscript contained basic, straightforward guidelines that marked the road to freedom and prosperity in God's revealed will.

The book of Deuteronomy begins with the urgent command to be faithful, offering the promises and blessings of single-minded devotion to God as well as clear and distinct warnings against forgetting or minimizing the importance of God's law. Then the law gets even more clear with steps and specific rules about the everyday aspects of life as a community of faith—from laws about health to guidelines on worship. This book concludes with another reminder of the importance of uncompromising fealty to God as the utmost priority in life, saying of the law: "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life" (Deuteronomy 32:47, NASB).

The vivid imagery in this week's lesson of discovering the dusty, old-forgotten manuscript is not only relevant to our day, but just as essential. Perhaps the Bible is perceived as an ancient book of rules that only stymies freedom instead of guiding people to abundant life. But as God's Word was read in the presence of the youthful king, a fire was rekindled in the hearts of people for God again.

Scripture tells us that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). So, in the same way today, if God's Word is read with a seeker's heart, we can ask the Lord to begin the process of "cleanup" in our own temple, and experience a new fire of passion for God that will light up the dark places in our lives.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Discern the magnitude of God's revealed will in the law. (*Know*)
- Feel God's hopeful plea for renewal by returning to His Word. (*Feel*)
- Value the practice of prioritizing God's direction in our life. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 14

"The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. . . (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Check the response that fits your attitude about God's Word the most; then explain why.

I fail to read or apply the Bible to my life because (or my Bible collects dust because) . . .

- I'm so busy I don't have the time it takes to study.
- I don't know how to study the Bible in-depth.
- I forget to integrate it into my life each day.
- I believe that Bible study is crucial.
- I read my Bible daily and I seek to apply in practice what I learn.
- I enjoy studying the Bible with others regularly.
- I consider it my responsibility not only to believe and apply what I learn from the Bible but also to share with others the treasures of God's Word.

How do you think your response compares to your peers?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"I'm not a sensational guy when I speak to young people. One time, though, I couldn't resist the urge to be edgy. As I began the sermon I announced, 'Enough of this—this is so ridiculous! What are we all doing here, anyway? What does this Book have to say that's relevant to us?' I began ripping random pages, . . . crumpling them roughly and throwing them to the ground. . . .

"Gasps exploded through the chapel like gunshots on a battlefield. Students gazed at me in horror, amazed by my blasphemous treatment of the sacred Scriptures. Older adults in the back of the room began murmuring about how to get rid of me before I inflicted any further damage on innocent young minds.

"'Relax,' I said finally. 'Anyone who knows me knows I would never tear up a Bible. I simply took a cheap . . . novel and [tore out its pages].' The tension eased a little, but before I lost the crowd's attention, I posed a question to the squirming group: 'Which is worse—openly defacing God's Word or quietly ignoring it day by day?'" (*Christwise Leaders Guide: Youth*, pp. 215, 216).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Whether you openly defy God's leading in your life or simply numb yourself to His voice over time, the result is the same. Almost a hundred years of dust caked over the Book of the Law that God passionately instructed the people not to forget. It was simple: keep these words before and live by them and live abundantly, or forget these words and slide into destruction. Israel's condition when Josiah became king can be described as the "brink of destruction." But even in light of the oncoming punishment from years of rebellion, Josiah faithfully sounded the call for repentance.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

1. Read the story through a few times and make a list of elements of the story that arrest your attention during each reading.

Reading 1 _____

Reading 2 _____

Reading 3 _____

2. Circle and identify all of the characters/people mentioned in this story. Who are they and what is their contribution to the story?

3. Underline what you think the key phrase, sentence, or verse is in this passage. Explain why you think this passage of Scripture is central.

4. What truths about people emerge from this story? What truths about God are made clear to you?

5. What other story or event in Scripture does this passage remind you of, and why?

6. It is possible that for almost a hundred years the Book of the Law had not been read or even spoken of by the king or the people. Imagine this scene and describe some of the emotions you think the king and the people listening were experiencing.

7. In this story, is there . . .

an example to follow?

a prayer to pray?

a sin to confess?

a challenge to embrace?

a promise to claim?

- a truth to believe?
an action to take?
8. What questions do you have about the various parts of the story?
 9. Do you think Israel slipped into idolatry because they lost the Book, or did they lose or set the Book aside because they deliberately chose idolatry?
 10. What do you think enabled Josiah, at such a young age, to be able to make such a difference in Israel?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:

Revelation 3:3; Hebrews 13:7; Deuteronomy 32:7;
Malachi 4:4.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

In this lesson there are a few facets of the story that could be developed further:

1. The first work Josiah initiated had to do with getting the Temple of God back in shape. During the basic housecleaning, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law. Some think this was the written Law that went alongside the ark of the covenant, and some suggest this was the book of Deuteronomy. What other seasons of housecleaning did the Temple go through? The Jewish celebration of the Feast of Lights (or Hanukkah) relives the experience where the Jews fought to get Jerusalem back from their

enemies, secured the Temple, and immediately began cleaning it. There was only one flask of oil for the lights in the Temple, but that oil continued to burn miraculously for eight days. Even while the city was still a mess, the Temple services began and people found themselves in the presence of God again. Also, consider the times when Jesus stormed the Temple and caused serious upheaval (Matthew 21:12-14 and John 2:14-20). But the point of His tirade was to tear down the walls that obscured the face of God from the people who came to worship. It seems as though regular housecleaning is needed when it comes to worship.

2. When Josiah heard the words of the Book of the Law it did a spiritual work in the king. It was not simply hearing new information but hearing a call to obey God's Word to experience transformation. This may not seem like a big event—to find God's Word and read it—but remember that the Word of God had not been read in decades; maybe even close to a hundred years. The oral tradition probably continued, but few people at this time could recall the stories, promises, commands, and instructions that were written in the Law.
3. When Josiah heard the Scriptures read to him he tore his clothes. The tearing of clothing was a traditional expression conveying a deep sense of horror and astonishment. It is perhaps the most emphatic gesture one could make to show how shocked they were. Josiah showed

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.



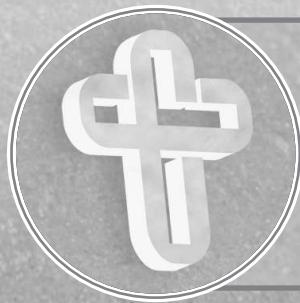
Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Dynamic Rituals

Sometimes active rituals can enhance the teaching and learning. When music is played softly during an appeal, it evokes more of our senses, enhancing our experience. Kneeling when we pray puts our body in a unique posture that can deepen our conversation with God. Rituals can become a burden as well, but there is a dynamic element to physical involvement. In this week's lesson have the students stand up as the Bible is read to them. Have five or six students stand and read expressively the punch lines or the story, and observe whether they are more attentive and thoughtful about what is being read. Some churches stand every week during the reading of God's Word to physically say, "We are at attention so God can have our attention."

his grief on his own account and on account of the nation. This was an expression of deep conviction of sin, and he resolved to renew his commitment to God and the people.

Shaphan read the book in the presence of the king, and the Word of God spread. It had been forgotten and considered to be nothing more than an old, dusty book. As a result of the Book being found and read, the reformation began to spread. Compare this reformation to the reformation that took place as a result of the Dark Ages where God's Word was obscured in a dead language, known only by priests.



Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 33.

RABBI 101

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Make a list of five active ways you can remember to "not forget" or lose sight of God's Word this week. Invite the students to be as creative yet practical as possible. Have the students debrief, and share their list with the rest of the class.

Alternate Activity

Ask the students to read Matthew 5:29-30 (NASB).

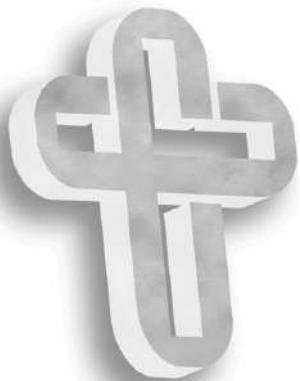
Ask them to write what they think it means, and then have them rewrite it using common things such as "cell phones, media, relationships, etc."

Debrief.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It is amazing to witness how a young person can respond and lead so thoughtfully a whole nation of people who are disillusioned and stubborn. But the Bible is filled with agents of change! 1 Timothy 4:12, 13 says: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (NIV). Note how Josiah did it: 1. Josiah looked at his own life, his evil father, and the desperate scenario of Israel and repented before God. God begins His good work at the point we surrender our own destructive work. 2. Josiah led by doing specific activities that may seem mundane (cleaning the Temple) and discovered that God's presence found a way to his heart. 3. Josiah fearlessly followed through with clear guidelines and insights from Scripture. He was willing to disregard "cold turkey" those things that got in the way of faithfulness to God and His Word. Perhaps a much-needed reformation can happen today in your sphere of influence by following Josiah's example.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JUNE 29 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Kings 22; 23; 2 Chronicles 34.**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 33.

cleaning house



Photo by Audrey Goforth

flashlight

"Thus Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God's holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the book of the law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in the light of its counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 398).

keytext

"He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left."

(2 Kings 22:2, NIV)

what do you think?

Check the response that fits your attitude about God's Word the most; then explain why.

- I fail to read the Bible or apply it to my life because (or my Bible collects dust because) . . .
 - I'm so busy I don't have the time it takes to study.
 - I don't know how to study the Bible in-depth.
 - I forget to integrate the Bible into my life each day.
 - I believe that Bible study is crucial.
 - I read my Bible daily and I seek to apply in practice what I learn.
 - I enjoy studying the Bible with others regularly.
 - I consider it my responsibility not only to believe and apply what I learn from the Bible but also to share with others the treasures of God's Word.
- How do you think your response compares to your peers?

did you know?

The king sought further to establish the faith of Judah in the God of their fathers by holding a great Passover feast, in harmony with the provisions made in the book of the law.

Preparation was made by those having the sacred services in charge, and on the great day of the feast, offerings were

freely made. There was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah.²

Kings 23:22. But the zeal of Josiah, acceptable though it was to God, could not atone for the sins of past generations; nor could the piety displayed by the king's followers effect a change of heart in many who stubbornly refused to turn from idolatry to the worship of the true God."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 405

temple of the LORD—the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings.'

INTO THE STORY

"Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left."

"In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the LORD. He said: 'Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the

"When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant: 'Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.'"

(2 Kings 22:1-13, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Circle and identify all of the characters/people mentioned in this story. Who are they and what is their contribution to the story?

Underline what you think the key phrase, sentence, or verse is in this passage. Explain why you think this passage of Scripture is central.

What truths about people emerge from this story? What truths about God are made clear to you?

What other story or event in Scripture does this passage remind you of, and why?

It is possible that for almost 100 years the Book of the Law had not been read or even spoken of by the king or the people. Imagine this scene and describe some of the emotions you think the king and the people listening were experiencing.

In this story, is there . . .

- an example to follow? _____
- a prayer to pray? _____
- a sin to confess? _____
- a challenge to embrace? _____
- a promise to claim? _____
- a truth to believe? _____
- an action to take? _____

Do you think Israel slipped into idolatry because they lost the Book, or did they lose or set the Book aside because they deliberately chose idolatry? Explain.

What do you think enabled Josiah, at such a young age, to be able to make such a difference in Israel?

punch lines

"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (**Joshua 1:8, NIV**).

"I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart" (**Psalm 40:8, NIV**).

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (**Psalm 119:18, NIV**).

"Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me and teach me your law" (**Psalm 119:29, NIV**).

"I long for your salvation, LORD, and your law gives me delight" (**Psalm 119:174, NIV**).

"Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble" (**Psalm 119:165, NIV**).

"This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome" (**1 John 5:3, NIV**).

"Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left" (**Joshua 23:6, NIV**).

further insight

"God speaks to us in His word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of His character, of His dealings with men, and the great work of redemption.

...

"Fill the whole heart with the words of God."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pp. 87, 88

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Psalm 119:18, 29, 165, 174.

Respond to the exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Based on today's Bible passages, compare David's passion for God's law to the people in Josiah's time. How do you think David would have reacted to discovering the dust-covered Book of the Law buried deep in a storage closet?

How could you overcome obstacles that prevent you from studying God's Word?

Sunday

Read 1 John 5:3.

As you read *Into the Story*, answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section and try to imagine what this story would look like if it happened today. What message do you think God has for you in this passage?

When Josiah tried to start a reformation he began with a cleaning of the Temple to get the people back into the presence of the Lord. What kind of housecleaning can you do spiritually this week to get into God's presence? Think of some specific activities you could do to make room for God's Word in your life.

Monday

Read 2 Kings 22:2.

The Key Text for this week is a brief but powerful statement about Josiah: "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and fol-

lowed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left" (2 Kings 22:2, NIV). A reference is made to David (a great-, great-, great-, etc. grandfather) instead of Amon, Josiah's dad. Why do you think Josiah called David his father instead of Amon? What relative in your family do you take after most? How?

Tuesday

Read Joshua 23:6.

Read the quote from *Prophets and Kings* in the *Flashlight* section and remember that Josiah was perhaps younger than you. What do you think was Josiah's greatest challenge: his perceived youth or the problem of how ignorant people were of God's law of love? Explain.

Whom do you know that possesses great leadership qualities at a young age? Affirm them this week and remind them of Josiah's mark on Israel.

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* verses and choose the one that speaks to you the most. Rewrite it in your own words. Pray this week to encounter someone who is seeking to know God but is not sure where to begin. Be ready to share some of the beautiful passages about how God's Word can transform hearts and lives.

Thursday

Read Joshua 1:8.

Place your Bible on a chair in the middle of your room so it is in the way and not put away this week. If you deliberately place God's Word in your path you will think about reading it more often than if it were on a shelf or in a drawer. What do you think some of your thoughts will be as you walk past it?

Friday

Read 1 Timothy 4:12; Deuteronomy 7:9.

Josiah was told by the prophetess that even a full-blown repentance would not stop the calamity that would soon come upon Israel. He was also told that because of his faithfulness he would not have to witness the sadness of that day. Still, Josiah pressed on with determination to lead Israel to a place where they would be sensitive to God's Word. If they had listened, what might this story look like today?

With whom can you partner for encouragement in order to be more faithful to God in your life, as well as to encourage faithfulness in your home and church?

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 33.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URLhF1rBO9s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.