



## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 04 2020

# an undelivered gift

**Scripture Story:** Deuteronomy 32.

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

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

The Scripture portion for this week may at first seem tough to teach, but after a closer inspection you will find that it is a very appropriate discussion to have with this age group. As well, it is very easy to personalize and have each student really understand the meaning.

The lesson takes us to the end of Moses' life and his final words to the Israelites. It is almost depressing in its nature, seeing that God is so disappointed in His people. However, the declaration that Moses gives to Joshua in verse 47 is a powerful admonishment for all of us to take to heart. Young people will certainly understand the direct tone the author uses for his student who is about to take the reins of leadership.

The stage is set with a God who is angry at His chosen people. The reading in *Prophets and Kings* shows us that God is not just upset that they are worshiping idols; He is also angry that they have chosen not to become a blessing to the surrounding nations by showing His character on this earth. He is sorely upset that they have shirked the calling He has charged them with and the opportunity He has given them to join Him in blessing the world.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand why God was upset at the Israelites. (*Know*)
- Feel that they can use the words as a warning to themselves as well. (*Feel*)

- Seek to do what God is calling them to do in response to His charge of being a blessing to the world. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- The church
- God (existence of a personal)
- God (existence of a sovereign)
- Knowing God

## 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.*

Invite the students to share what they think the greatest gift they could get for a major milestone birthday might be. Make a list on the board so they can see their answers. Chances are there are many that will be the same. At the end, ask them what they think the value is of a relationship with Christ. You can obviously put no monetary value on this. However, you can impress on them that the greatest gift they can give anyone is an understanding of the grace and assurance of salvation that comes from living in relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

There is a story told about a very selfish, greedy man. He only cared about his money—how he could earn more and where he could cut to save. Comfort, friends, family, and community didn't matter. One night he had several dreams. One was about what his life could have been had he not become so greedy. The next was what his greed was costing him in his daily life. And the final dream was where he was headed if he did not change and become a blessing to others.

Isn't this what God was saying to the Israelites, "You must be a blessing"? This is your purpose—to be a blessing to those around you!

Because we believe in God we know that the charge is much more sincere and carries with it much more weight. We must show the grace of Christ to the world because we have experienced it and our lives have become a reaction to the grace God gives to us each day we are blessed to live in this world.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Sometimes the most difficult thing to do is to be a blessing when you have the opportunity. Sometimes it is inconvenient to be the blessing. Sometimes it is awkward to change a tough situation into something glorious, but that is what God called the Israelites to do, and that is what He continually calls us to do as well. What a wonderful opportunity we have to show the world what God is like!

### **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* everything God mentions that they are doing wrong.
- Does God seem personally offended? Explain.
- *Circle* Moses' command to Joshua.
- *Create* a list of things we can do to be the blessing God wants us to be.

*Use the following as another teachable passage that relates to today's story: 2 Samuel 22:50.*

### **Sharing Context and Background**

*Use the following information to shed more light*

*on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

These texts take place at the end of the life of Moses. He has done all that he will be allowed to do, and apparently he wants to leave the children of Israel with just a few words of rebuke and encouragement in order for them to continue in, or even go back to, the ways of God. His rebuke is because the children of Israel were having trouble with idolatry as they were making their way through the nations of that region. Moses desperately wanted them to understand that God's way was certainly better than what they were searching.

His charge to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:47 is so powerful it needs to be mentioned. The concept that we must take these words seriously because they are truly the words that give us life is very important. It is another indication of the grace God continually gives us in order to be able to live out our lives much better here on earth.

The question of how many people actually left Egypt to go to the Promised Land is an interesting one. There have been estimates of as little as 3,000 to as many as 3 million people. How can this be? It has to do with the translation of a particular word in the Hebrew language. What sort of impact does this have on the story? Well, if you think about it, the handling of 3 million people vastly differs from the handling of 3,000. It would make the difference between a group that could move quickly and a group that would literally take days to move. It also raises the question of how they could easily integrate into the other cultures they were running into. With a smaller group it would be easier to be insular; with a large group it would be much more difficult to keep to themselves, as assimilation of those around would take place much easier and growth or loss of people would be more difficult to see and manage.

Regardless of their numbers, it is plain to see that they were continually doubting God and His sovereignty over their lives. This might seem strange in conjunction with the fact that there were miracles daily for these people. However, it proves that faith is not built on miracles, but on relationships. Regardless of what they were seeing God doing, they were still following idols. God sought to be in relationship with them so that He might be able to bless them!

## III. CLOSING



## Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

### Improvisation

Students do better when they can see or hear what they are learning. Do some impromptu plays that the students write to show some real practical ways they can become blessings to this world. The plays can be short or long, depending on the scripts the students come up with. There doesn't even have to be a script, and the students can "wing it" just to mix it up a bit. You can even pick the students, give them a situation, and then have them act out what being a blessing would look and sound like in that situation. This could be quite fun and entertaining.

RABBI 101

### Activity

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

Have the students write a list of four to six ways they were blessed by people in the last week or two. Have them be specific. Let them share these blessings

with one another in a corporate setting. It will be good for them to hear the great ways God is blessing them all through the people in their lives. As well, it may give them ideas about how they can become better blessings in the lives of those around them.

### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Israel had simply forgotten their calling from God. They thought He was there for them, not the other way around. They became selfish and unwilling to partner with God for the blessing of the nations around them. God was understandably upset with this and told them in no uncertain terms. That makes up the major portion of the Scripture this week. It's OK to understand that God desires something from us. He desires our partnership with Him in order to let the world know what God is like. We must be His hands and His feet on this earth (play the song "Hands and Feet" by Audio Adrenaline if you have the time). As we understand God's call on our lives we begin to understand that we have a job, a blessing really, given to us by the Creator of the world. How can we possibly bless the nations? Well, maybe we need to start by understanding the blessings that we can bring to one another in a very small way each day.

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*



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*), Introduction.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 04 2020

**Scripture Story:** Deuteronomy 32.

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

## an undelivered gift

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### flashlight

"Through the chosen nation, God had purposed to bring blessing to all mankind. . . . They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. . . . Christ was their instructor. . . . In the tabernacle and the temple His glory dwelt in the holy Shekinah above the mercy seat. In their behalf He constantly manifested the riches of His love and patience" (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 17, 18).

### keytext

"For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance."

(Deuteronomy 32:9, NIV)



# what do you think?

What would be the best thing you could think of as a gift for your 18th birthday?

- \_\_\_ A computer
- \_\_\_ Clothes
- \_\_\_ A cell phone
- \_\_\_ Something else \_\_\_\_\_

## did you know?

**T**here has always been a difference of opinion about how many Israelites came out of Egypt. The confusion comes from the way you translate one of the Hebrew letters! Why is this important? The children of Israel had been told to take possession of the Promised Land. The only problem with this was that they were not the only people living there! So the question of how many people came out of Egypt becomes important since they had to fight their way through the Promised Land that was already occupied by others. They could have been as few as 3,000 to 5,000 people or perhaps as many as a million

or so. Regardless of how many people there were supposed to be, they were expected to be the Lord's gift to the nations.

How could they have done that in the midst of trying to conquer a territory? They could have accomplished it by continually following the Word of God, much the same as we are called to do.

## INTO THE STORY

**"The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him.**

"He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields.

"He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag. . . .

"The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters.

" 'I will hide my face from them,' he said, 'and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.

" 'They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols.

" 'I will make them envious by those who are not

a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.' . . .

"Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, 'Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.'

"On that same day the Lord told Moses, 'Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.' "

(Deuteronomy 32:12, 13, 19–21, 44–52, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

What is God's attitude toward His "chosen" people at this point?

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Why was Moses not allowed into the Promised Land?

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Do you think it was fair of God to keep Moses out? Explain.

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What does it mean when God says that He is a "jealous" God?

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What reason did God have to be angry with the Israelites?

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Why do you think Moses said, "They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (verse 47)?

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## punch lines

**"For you singled them out** from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, Sovereign LORD, brought our ancestors out of Egypt" (1 Kings 8:53, NIV).

**"Therefore I will praise you,** LORD, among the nations; I will sing the praises of your name" (2 Samuel 22:50, NIV).

**"LORD, the God of our ancestors,** are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you" (2 Chronicles 20:6, NIV).

**"In that day you will say:** 'Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted' " (Isaiah 12:4, NIV).

**"Ask me,** and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalm 2:8, NIV).

**"And your fame spread** among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD" (Ezekiel 16:14, NIV).

## further insight

**"Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. Fear not that He will fail of fulfilling his promise."**—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 164.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read 1 Kings 8:53.

After having completed the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section at the beginning of this lesson, you must have some thoughts about gifts. In our biblical passage for this week we realize that God meant for Israel to be the salvation of the nations. But they thought only of themselves as receiving the gift of a homeland from God. They did not understand the gift they were to be to the rest of the world. They were to exemplify God's character on the earth for the world to see. Unfortunately, they were continually trying to be like the world rather than an example to it. Have you ever made that mistake? How can you better reflect God's character to those around you?

## Sunday

Read Deuteronomy 32:46, 47.

Most of Deuteronomy 32 is a type of song or poem for the children of Israel to understand what God is thinking about them at that particular time.

However, Moses placed great importance on verses 46 and 47 for Joshua and the children of Israel. If someone gave you those same words, how could you apply them to your life? How would you be different than the children of Israel? What would cause you to take to heart the words in this text as if they were meant for you?

## Monday

Read Deuteronomy 32:9.

What do you think the verse for today and this week's *Key Text* means? Could it mean that God blesses the world through His people? Could it mean that the only way the world will really get to know God is through the inheritance (or legacy) God gives to those

who choose to follow Him? If that is the case, what does that mean for you? Are you God's inheritance? Are you the one who is supposed to bless the world for God? How might you go about doing that?

## Tuesday

Read Psalms 2:8.

In the *Flashlight* section we see that Israel had a responsibility to be the character of God for the nations surrounding Israel. Could God say the same thing to you? Would you be comfortable with that responsibility? Could you be the face that has to show the world who Jesus Christ is? Do you look different or the same as the world around you? Does anyone know you are a Christian? How would they know? What does being a blessing to those around you really mean?

## Wednesday

Read 2 Samuel 22:50.

In the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson we see many different texts all alluding to the same thing, that Israel was to be a blessing to the nations. The text that best sums up this concept is found in today's Bible reading. This is the theme of all the Scriptures quoted. It seems that this is spoken of a great deal in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament we call this "evangelism." Write down all the things you think of when you hear the word "evangelism."

How can you see yourself "evangelizing"?

## Thursday

Read Ezekiel 16:14.

Being a blessing to those around you takes a serious bit of intent and intentionality. What are you doing today and every day that brings you closer to being that blessing to those in your life?

Make a list of five things that you can do to be a blessing to those in your sphere of influence:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Friday

Read Deuteronomy 32.

Much of Deuteronomy is a serious rebuke of the Israelites by the God they were to love. Read this passage as if it was written directly to you. Replacing pronouns directed to the audience with your name. How meaningful is the text when you look at it as if it is a note written directly to you? Pretty powerful stuff! If you were going to write a response to the person (or God) who wrote this note to you, what would you say? Write that note out and keep it in your Bible as a bookmark in Deuteronomy 32.

## this week's reading\*

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

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s](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.





## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 11 2020

# wise beyond his years

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 3; 4; 10.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 1.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

United we stand—but divided we fall.

Around 800 years passed from when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to when Nebuchadnezzar dragged them off to Babylon. We usually think of them as a united people all those years, but the century of monarchy ruled by Saul, David, and Solomon was about as good as it got. Before Saul the Benjamite was anointed and crowned, civil war nearly wiped out his tribe. Even the legendary rule of David was marked by restless dissenters challenging his grip on the throne, first from members of other tribes and Saul loyalists, then within his own family.

Solomon's reign is remarkable not only for Israel's peace with its neighbors, but for its peace within. Before losing his mule and life in battle, big brother Absalom "stole the hearts of the people of Israel" (2 Samuel 15:6, NIV) with his good looks and charisma, but for young Solomon it would take more than looks or luck. Having to get by on wits alone no doubt contributed to his asking for wisdom above everything else.

When Solomon solved a custody dispute by suggesting a baby boy be sliced in two (prompting the true parent to give up the child while the faker spitefully agreed to the split), "all Israel . . . held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice" (1 Kings 3:28, NIV). Perhaps today we should be awed that he held a country together for so long, for at his death it was torn, and no king's horses or men ever put it together again.

[www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net)

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- *Know* that God desires to bless their talents if they will give Him their lives.
- *Feel* the call to live for God.
- *Respond* by dedicating themselves to God's work.

### III. EXPLORE

- Priorities
- Wisdom/counsel
- Decision-making
- Humility

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net).

## 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.*

Everybody lives by one philosophy or another. "He who dies with the most toys wins." "Eat, drink, and be merry." "Greed is good." "All we need is love." "Just trust God." But whether one's personal philosophy is pessimistic or optimistic, rooted in guilt or in gratitude, the question still lingers: What is wisdom? What does it mean to be *wise*?

Have your students read the following texts in as

many versions as possible: Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:1–7; Proverbs 8:32–36; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 15:31–33; Proverbs 20:1; Isaiah 11:1–3; Isaiah 33:5, 6; Micah 6:8, 9.

What light do these verses shed on the origin of wisdom? How can these words help you make wise decisions in regards to your dating relationships, your choice of friends, and whether or not you will use drugs or alcohol? Discuss and write your students' distinct ideas on a flipchart or whiteboard where everyone can read them.

### Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

“Seek God’s kingdom first, and you’ll get everything else.” Nice words to live by, but is God faithful when we ask Him for wisdom for everyday life?

Nineteenth-century London preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “Men do not seek God first; God seeks them first; and if any of you are seeking Him today it is because He has first sought you.” The great Christians of history weren’t all prosperous by worldly standards, but they were all rich in wisdom. They put God first, and people respected them because they respected God. Wisdom brings humility. Ellen White wrote: “I have no special wisdom in myself; I am only an instrument in the Lord’s hands to do the work He has set for me to do” (*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 46).

Paul Rusesabagina, who saved the lives of more than 1,200 people during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, grew up watching his wise father quietly command the respect of villagers. “He was usually the elder who spoke last,” Rusesabagina remembers. A particularly petty dispute his father resolved, “a small misunderstanding that had blossomed into a full-scale war of pride,” stands out in his memory. One farmer’s crop had jumped the line onto another man’s property, but most was where it should be, so there “was no clear villain or victim. ‘Listen, you two,’ [my father] said, motioning with the blade of his hand. ‘This is where the line is. Respect it from now on, and respect each other as well. I don’t want to hear about this again’ ” (*An Ordinary Man: An Autobiography*, by Paul Rusesabagina. Penguin Books, 2006).

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

What’s your biggest priority in life? To find true love? To be the greatest at your art, sport, or business? To find yourself?

Solomon’s story may seem far removed from us (most people don’t find themselves ruler of God’s own theocracy, offered anything we desire), but the book of Proverbs makes clear that wisdom is for everybody. Proverbs 30 brings us the wisdom of one Agur, son of Jakeh, with a prayer that any longtime Christian will find familiar:

“Two things I ask of you, LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:7–9, NIV).

How do those verses sum up a Christian perspective on life?

### 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.*

- How did Solomon win his people’s approval despite so much intertribal conflict?
- What mistakes do you see Solomon making that will later come back to haunt him?
- The people were happy and prosperous under Solomon. What spiritual dangers does prosperity bring that can result in poverty?
- How would you describe God’s offer to Solomon?
- *Underline* what’s new to you in the story.
- *Circle* the words or phrases that best capture the story’s various emotions.
- What questions does this story prompt in your thinking?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:* James 1:5; Proverbs 2:1–5; 3:13–18; Philippians 1:9.

### 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 Proverbs, wisdom is next to godliness. Proverbs' themes have been summarized in five major points:

1. Actions have consequences. In God's world good deeds lead to blessing and bad deeds result in negative consequences or punishment. God is passionate about justice.
2. How we treat others and relate to God is as important as the technical things we know.
3. God gives everyone freedom of choice. In contrast to much of Greek philosophy and fear, we are not ruled by fate. The ideal of wisdom is that when people know the good, they will do it.
4. In everything we do we either follow the road of righteousness or the highway of folly, with sure results.
5. Proverbs contrasts the opposite types—the wise and the foolish, the slothful and the studious, the rich and the poor.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." It's a familiar text to most Christians, but while archaeologists find parallels between many of the Bible's proverbs and other "wise sayings" in ancient Middle Eastern manuscripts, only the Bible describes wisdom as beginning with worship. Gerald Wheeler writes: "A major difference between nonbiblical wisdom and that of Scripture is that the other wisdom documents taught that one could have success by what one did. The Bible teaches that true success comes from whom one worships. . . . 'The fear of the Lord/God'

## Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

### More Improvisation

Laugh and learn with some Bible improv. Proverbs' contrasts and vivid imagery provide endless possibilities for improvisational fun. Have one student narrate while others act out some of the "wise vs. fool" descriptions from Proverbs. The lighthearted humor, visual reinforcement, and whole-body learning will cement the principles in their minds like nothing else. For example:

- "The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin" (10:8, NIV).
- "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down" (14:1, NIV).
- "Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues" (17:28, NIV).
- "The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down" (21:20, NIV).
- "Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end" (29:11, NIV).

See also Proverbs 6:6–11; 12:27; and other verses throughout the book.

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

is a fundamental and widespread image. It combines awe, reverence, faith, and obedience—the whole life of the believers as they relate to God. As His followers live out a concrete expression of their loyalty and faithfulness, they respond to the leading of God, who alone can provide atonement. A truly godly life can only come through God Himself” (*Wisdom: Timeless Treasures from Proverbs*, Review and Herald, 2000), p. 42.

Proverbs focuses primarily on external behavior, for Bible writers believed that what we do reflects who we are. We see this in Proverbs 6:16–19, NIV: “There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.”

Violence of words and deeds is equally condemned in Proverbs, “For as churning cream produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife” (30:33, NIV).

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Have your students rewrite specific proverbs, in

groups, to apply to their own situations—at school, with parents and siblings, with friends—and in their own words. For example, Proverbs 30:32, 33; Proverbs 28:1, 6–8; Proverbs 13:20–22; Proverbs 11:4–6; Proverbs 11:22–27.

#### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Proverbs are timeless. “Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion” (11:22, NIV). You don’t have to live in 900 B.C. to come up with an instant association for those words—just look at the nearest tabloid newspaper. “Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise” (11:29, NIV). Remind you of anyone you know?

“Whoever winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin” (10:10, NIV). “An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips” (24:26, NIV). “The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion” (28:1, NIV). Each one is still as true as it’s ever been.

Proverbs is one of the most underrated books of the Bible, but it’s packed with power for anyone who wants to glorify God and live an outstanding life. James 1:5 says: “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (NIV). In Proverbs, God gives us some words to live by.



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 1.





# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 11 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 3; 4; 10.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 1.

## wise beyond his years

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Photo Getty Images



### flashlight

“The language used by Solomon while praying to God before the ancient altar at Gibeon reveals his humility and his strong desire to honor God. He realized that without divine aid he was as helpless as a little child to fulfill the responsibilities resting on him. He knew that he lacked discernment, and it was a sense of his great need that led him to seek God for wisdom. In his heart there was no selfish aspiration for a knowledge that would exalt him above others. . . . Solomon was never so rich or so wise or so truly great as when he confessed, ‘I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in’ ”  
(*Prophets and Kings*, p. 30).

### keytext

“I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.”

(1 Kings 3:12, 13, NIV)



# what do you think?

Which of the following proverbs do you think people struggle with more? Which ones might you struggle with?

1. "Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways" (Proverbs 3:31, NIV).
2. "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Proverbs 3:11, 12, NIV).
3. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1, NIV).
4. "Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues" (Proverbs 17:28, NIV).

## did you know?

**A**rchaeological discoveries have confirmed the existence of such later kings as Ahab and Hezekiah. Yet little archaeological evidence of Solomon's reign has been discovered (though areas such as the likely site of Solomon's temple have not been thoroughly excavated). Solomon's story includes about the only biblical reference to any seafaring on the part of Israel.

The book of Kings credits Solomon with some 3,000 proverbs, though only a few are preserved in the Bible, and many of the Bible's proverbs are credited to others, such as the mother of King Lemuel, an otherwise unknown ruler. The proverbs are grouped into sayings such as "Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked" (Proverbs 10:6, NIV) and advice such as "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness" (Proverbs 23:4, NIV).

## INTO THE STORY

"Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.

"The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, 'Ask for whatever you want me to give you.'

"Solomon answered, 'You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.

" 'Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?'

"The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, 'Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.' Then Solomon awoke—and he realized it had been a dream.

"He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court."

"The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy."

(1 Kings 3:3–15; 4:20, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

Solomon asked God for wisdom, and what he hadn't asked for—riches and glory—were added as well. What do you think might have happened if he'd asked God for material things instead of wisdom?

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God blessed Solomon's reign with wealth, yet many of his proverbs warn against the dangers of riches. Are financial blessings necessarily a sign of God's favor for His followers today? How should we relate to money as Christians?

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Solomon was fascinated by all kinds of science and natural things. What can the natural world tell us about God? (See Psalm 33:5 for one idea.)

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After Solomon returned to Jerusalem, he threw a party for his people! What does this say to you about the role of celebration in the Christian life?

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How would you define "wisdom"? How is it a "tree of life" as Proverbs describes?

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## punch lines

**"The fear of the LORD** is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (**Proverbs 1:7, NIV**).

**"For the LORD gives wisdom;** from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (**Proverbs 2:6, NIV**).

**"Do not forsake wisdom,** and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding" (**Proverbs 4:6, 7, NIV**).

**"Wisdom's instruction is** to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honor" (**Proverbs 15:33, NIV**).

**"But seek first** his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (**Matthew 6:33, NIV**).

**"If any of you lacks wisdom,** you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (**James 1:5, NIV**).

## further insight

**"Those who today occupy positions of trust should seek to learn the lesson taught by Solomon's prayer. The higher the position a man occupies, the greater the responsibility that he has to bear, the wider will be the influence that he exerts and the greater his need of dependence on God."**—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 30.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read Proverbs 15:33.

This week's *What Do You Think?* looks at some words of wisdom from Proverbs. Today's reading from Proverbs states: "Wisdom's instruction is to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honor" (Proverbs 15:33, NIV). How does devotion to God develop wisdom? What's the relationship between humility and wisdom?

## Sunday

Read 1 Kings 4:29–30.

The book of 1 Kings describes Solomon as both wise and intelligent, curious about everything around him. Though God doesn't guarantee us material wealth if we follow Him, life usually works better, and we can spare ourselves much pain when we follow God's principles.

Read this week's *Out of the Story*. What are some ways we can become more wise? How do we tell the difference between wisdom and foolishness? In what situations is wisdom particularly necessary?

## Monday

Read Proverbs 9:10.

This week's *Key Text* is God's promise to Solomon after he asked for wisdom above anything else God could offer. If someone looked at your priorities, what would they think is most important to you? Do your actions live up to what you believe in? If "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10), how can you make following God more central in your life?

## Tuesday

Read Matthew 23:11, 12.

This week's *Flashlight* quotation addresses the idea of true greatness. Today, as throughout history, people think greatness means possessions, power, or personality. We imagine greatness to mean the clothes we wear, the car we drive, the home we live in, the money we make, the influence we wield, or the attention we command. Solomon's story reminds us, however, that true greatness is rooted in selflessness.

Solomon's number one goal was to serve his people. Looking back at how Israel's two previous kings had tripped over their own importance, forgetting their obligations to God and citizens, Solomon knew that ruling a troubled nation was too great to handle on his own. With such a humble heart, Solomon became the greatest of earthly kings. It was only as he forgot his commitment to God that things began to fall apart.

Jesus came to show us how to serve others, telling us that whatever kindness we do for someone in need, we're doing for Him. Everything we do should be for God's glory—but that requires humility. How can we keep the perspective in today's Bible verses in our everyday lives?

## Wednesday

Read Matthew 6:33; Proverbs 2:6–8; 4:6, 7.

Have you ever faced a situation through which you knew you couldn't make it without God's help? If so, how did God make the difference for you?

How does the picture of God in today's Bible verses make you feel? When you look at the tragedies in the world around you, affecting even faithful Christians, do you feel as if God is as trustworthy as these verses describe? How can you reconcile such a Bible promise with the reality that God allows bad things to happen to

some of the best people?

The book of Proverbs sometimes personifies wisdom as someone with whom the reader can have a protective relationship. What does this tell you about how ancient cultures valued wisdom?

## Thursday

Read Luke 14:7–14.

Solomon described himself as like "a small child" as he faced the enormous challenge of becoming king. Is it possible to be too humble? What role does self-confidence play in a successful life? How does someone balance self-confidence and humility? In what ways is it important for us to be self-confident? In what ways is it important for us to be humble?

How might true humility affect our career and social standing?

## Friday

Read James 1:5.

Think of someone you know whom you would describe as wise. Why do you think they are? What situations have they handled particularly wisely? What can you learn from their life that can help you to make wise decisions? How does asking God for wisdom help us in line with today's Bible passage?

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 1.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlhF1rB09s](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.



## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 18 2020

# a house for God

**Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 5:2–14.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 2.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

This week's lesson captures the spiritual highpoint of King Solomon's life. He lived many years, but his greatest achievement occurred early in his reign. That accomplishment was the building and dedication of a permanent place where God's presence could dwell with His people.

Solomon spared no expense in the construction of the temple, conscripted as much manual labor as needed, and then found artisans from Egypt who could do the special work of the temple. This latter act foreshadowed his penchant for depending on other nations for that which he should have trusted God.

Nonetheless, the righteous desire of Solomon to build a house for God should be the same desire that drives us to build a place for God in our lives. The care Solomon demonstrates in the building of the temple can be likened to that which we should exhibit in the development of a Christian character. We should use no shoddy materials in this process, so that we may render to God the best that we have to give.

Solomon also understood the sanctity of God's holy law kept in the ark. The law, transcript of God's character, was very much at the heart of the ceremony. Today, it should be written on our hearts as we seek to love, worship, and obey God.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that we were created to worship God. (*Know*)

- Feel the necessity to give God their best in all areas of life. (*Feel*)
- Respond by selecting a place where they can meet with God each day. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- Worship
- Prayer

## 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 students to share the "form" their worship takes in their selected spot for communication with God. Share aspects from your own life that are closely tied to worshipping God.

#### Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) was present at the Vienna Music Hall, where his oratorio *The Creation* was being performed, the story goes. Weakened by age, the great composer was confined to a wheelchair. As the majestic work moved along, the audience was caught up with tremendous emotion. When the passage "And there was light!" was reached, the chorus and orchestra burst forth in such power that the crowd could no longer restrain its enthusiasm.



The vast assembly rose in spontaneous applause. Haydn struggled to stand and motioned for silence. With his hand pointed toward heaven, he said, “No, no, not from me, but from thence comes all!” Having given the glory and praise to the Creator, he fell back into his chair exhausted (see *Our Daily Bread*, September 20, 1992).

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Something truly special happens when praise and honor are directed toward the One who alone deserves it. That’s what Haydn understood, and it’s also what King Solomon understood. The ingenuity used to build the magnificent temple he had just constructed for God did not come from Solomon. The materials were not of his making. Solomon did the only thing that any human can do at such an awesome moment; he directed all glory to God.

Worship is the heartbeat of the Christian’s life, and we are at our best when we are praising and worshipping 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 process it with them.*

- *Mark* each place where the ark of the covenant is mentioned. What is its significance in this passage?
- Solomon is the nation’s political leader. Does the passage reveal him to be its spiritual leader also?
- *Underline* the places where there is a major change in the tone of the ceremony.
- What contribution does music make to the service? What is the significance of the song that is sung and why does the writer highlight the oneness of the musicians and singers?
- *Circle* the spots in the text where you see God.
- Those involved in the worship service dressed a certain way, even the musicians. How do we reconcile this with the “come as you are” idea of worship?
- Is there a right or wrong way to worship God? (See Genesis 4:1–7)

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:* Isaiah 6:1–8; Romans 12:1–5;

Isaiah 55; Habakuk 2:20; Ecclesiastes 5.

### **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. As wise and great as Solomon was, it is evident that his father, David, had a tremendous impact on him. This is seen in the way in which Solomon orchestrated the dedication ceremony for the building of the temple.  
In 1 Chronicles 15:11–16 David summons the tribal leaders and the leaders of the nation to go with him to bring the ark to Jerusalem. When the ark gets to Jerusalem an elaborate ceremony is executed, complete with music, sacrifices, and a special psalm written and performed by none other than David himself (1 Chronicles 16). David’s psalm of praise carries much of the sentiment of Solomon’s dedicatory prayer. There is no doubt that David greatly influenced his son, but nowhere is it seen more clearly than in the way Solomon carried out the dedication of the temple.
2. Some moments are years in the making. The story of the building of God’s temple and its special ceremony was a moment that was centuries in the making. Consider that after God’s people were delivered from the hand of Pharaoh, among His first commands to Moses was this: “Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8, NIV). Moses went on to construct the traveling wilderness sanctuary that housed the ark as the Israelites wandered through the desert. All the Israelites dreamed of the day when they would have a permanent place for God, one that didn’t need to be broken down and hauled everywhere. Countless died never seeing that day. When Solomon completed the temple, he had brought to fruition the dream of numerous Israelites. This dedication was no insignificant occurrence.
3. The spot on which the temple was constructed held special significance to all the Israelites. Ellen G. White writes: “It was here that Abraham, the father of the faithful, had revealed his willingness to sacrifice his only son in obedience to the command of Jehovah.



Here God had renewed with Abraham the covenant of blessing, which included the glorious Messianic promise to the human race of deliverance through the sacrifice of the Son of the Most High" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 37).

This spot was a place of mercy, a place where sins were forgiven, a place of healing.

4. It was evident from God's presence that day that He approved of the worship rendered to Him at the dedication of the temple. But it was not until several years later that God spoke to Solomon directly to let him know just how much He appreciated the seven-year effort that led to the building of the temple: "When Solomon had finished the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the LORD and in his own palace, the LORD appeared to him at night and said: 'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. . . . 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 7:11–14, NIV).

Some things are worth the wait.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

#### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

##### Visual Learning

Some students are auditory learners and take in the spoken word to maximum benefit. Some are kinesthetic (sensory) learners, needing experiences that involve movement and the senses. But still others are primarily visual learners.

Consider bringing to class a picture of the Lord's temple built by Solomon. Several of these are available in Jewish history books. Better yet, give the students a living, breathing image of the temple and its worship.

Christian Book Distributors offers a very good DVD titled *Solomon's Temple*. This DVD details the temple's "design, construction, meaning for Israel, and what went on there and why." The video runs about 30 minutes, so you'll no doubt want to select a portion of it to show your students.

Most young people today struggle to see and understand the meaning of the temple in biblical times and its connection with them today. This is one way of making this week's subject more real.

Before class, make copies of a seven-day calendar. Each day of the week should have enough space for the students to make notations. Distribute the

### 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

one-week calendar. Ask the students to choose a time each day when they will spend time in worship to God. Then ask each to come up with a way to make each day's worship special. (They may choose to listen to a favorite song after completing their lesson, morning devotional, or Bible reading, for example.) Close with a prayer asking God to reveal Himself to the students this week.

### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

The worship of God requires our best efforts. To honor God as He deserves requires a preparation of heart that many neglect. It would have been easy for Solomon to grow weary during the building process. We sometimes forget that Solomon built the temple of the Lord *before* he constructed a palace for himself.

He could have easily decided on second-rate materials when the best proved difficult to get. He could have chosen to cut corners when logistical nightmares occurred during the building process. Perhaps a lesser person would have folded under the pressure, but Solomon was motivated by a vision of God, motivated to put the worship of God at the center of the nation's life. How he could later in his life fall away from so noble a beginning is beyond comprehension.

Solomon had made a request of God for wisdom to rule the people, and God had answered him and given him more than he could ever dream. Fresh from his special revelation from God, he had a burning desire to please God. While he fell during his later life, his early desire to please God calls us to a higher standard of service and worship to God.



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 2.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 18 2020

**Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 5:2–14.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 2.

## a house for God

cornerstoneconnections  
13

Photo by Jennifer and Company



### flashlight

“In bringing to the temple the sacred ark containing the two tables of stone on which were written by the finger of God the precepts of the Decalogue, Solomon had followed the example of his father David. Every six paces he sacrificed. With singing and with music and with great ceremony, ‘the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place’ ” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 38).

### keytext

“The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: ‘He is good; his love endures forever.’ Then the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud.”

(2 Chronicles 5:13, NIV)

# what do you think?

Which of the following places would you choose as your spot, your special place to meet and talk with God?

1. Your room
2. Beside a lake
3. A park
4. On a bench downtown in the city
5. In the woods
6. In your church sanctuary

Share what place you chose and why. What's special about your spot with God?

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## did you know?

**T**he building of the Lord's temple was no small undertaking. Solomon conscripted 30,000 Israelite men to work in Lebanon. He had 70,000 men to carry materials and 80,000 dedicated to cutting out the best stones in the nearby hills. He needed 3,300 foremen to oversee the work. In spite of the fact that Solomon had many workers, the building of the temple still took seven years to finish.

## INTO THE STORY

**"Then Solomon summoned to Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD's covenant from Zion, the City of David. And all the Israelites came together to the king at the time of the festival in the seventh month.**

**"When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the Levites took up the ark, and they brought up the ark and the tent of meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The Levitical priests carried them up; and King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted.**

**"The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner**

**sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and covered the ark and its carrying poles. These poles were so long that their ends, extending from the ark, could be seen from in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.**

**"The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang:**

**" 'He is good; his love endures forever.'**

**"Then the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God."**

**(2 Chronicles 5:2-14, NIV)**

# OUT OF THE STORY

What aspects of this Scripture story are new to you?

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Draw a *rectangle* around the “minor characters” in the story.

*Circle* the person who is the main focus of the passage.

What does this passage say to you about the importance and meaning of worship?

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What role did music play in the ceremony?

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What role did the ark of the covenant play in the dedication ceremony?

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The priests sanctified themselves for this ceremony. What does this mean? Does this apply to us? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23; John 17:17–19; 1 Peter 1:2.)

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## punch lines

**“Then I saw another angel** flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’ **(Revelation 14:6, 7, NIV).**

**“Lord, I love the house** where you live, the place where your glory dwells” **(Psalm 26:8, 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).**

**“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).**

## further insight

**“The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence.”**—Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 51.



# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read 2 Chronicles 5:2–6.

In the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson you were asked to choose a place from the list provided where you and God could meet together. Besides the obvious physical differences between the temple that Solomon built for God and dedicated with an elaborate ceremony and the place you have set aside to talk with God, what similarities do you see between the two places? What differences?

Similarities: \_\_\_\_\_

Differences: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think made the temple Solomon constructed special? How can you make your place of worship to God special?

## Sunday

Read Psalm 95:1, 2.

Read carefully the *Into the Story* passage selected. Now complete the *Out of the Story* questions given. One of the questions referred to the role that music plays in worship.

In today's lesson passage, who did the singing during the ceremony?

What instruments were played?

Think about the music that accompanies the worship in your church. Do you feel that it enhances or detracts from the worship experience? Explain.

The song sung at the temple dedication was

fairly simple by today's standards. What happened when these simple words were sung?

## Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 5:13.

This week's *Key Text* is one of the most powerful in all of Scripture. It tells us that the glory of God filled the temple, so much so that the priests could not enter it. There are services throughout Scripture that are holy and exalted, yet God never made His glory visible in them.

Why did God choose to make His presence visible during the dedication of Solomon's temple? What do you think moved Him to do so?

What can you do to attract God's presence to your life?

## Tuesday

Read 2 Chronicles 6:11.

This week's *Flashlight* shines on an often overlooked part of the dedication ceremony for the Jerusalem temple: the ark of God.

The ark held the two tables of stone given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. On them were written the Ten Commandments.

What do you think was the purpose of stopping every six paces to offer sacrifices to God before the ark? What was Solomon trying to say to God through this practice?

## Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*, paying close attention to Psalm 26:8. King David expresses his love for God's house in a fit of raw emotion. This is no doubt where Solomon developed his passion for worshipping God.

If you love God's house—your church—what can you do to make it better? How might you improve it?

## Thursday

Read John 4:24.

Worship to God is both a personal experience and a corporate experience. There is something special about worshipping God with people who share a love for God and a desire to live for Him.

How can you help people who are sick and cannot get to church experience the joy of corporate worship? Why not gather some friends together and plan a worship service at the home of a sick member?

## Friday

Read Leviticus 26:1.

Believe it or not, God wants His glory to be seen in your life, just as it was seen during Solomon's special dedication of the temple. What can you do to build a place in your life for God? What would you have to give up? What music sacrifices would you offer?

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 2.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlhF1rB09s](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.



## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 25 2020

# the wise and foolish king

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 3; 4.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

No Bible character had a better start in life than Solomon. Raised the son of a wealthy, respected king, he stood to inherit riches beyond his wildest dreams, not to mention a good name. His father was not perfect, but when shown his wrongs, he righted them.

Solomon at first felt the weight of his responsibility as king. That explains his request to God for wisdom, his careful construction of the Lord's temple, and the awesome prayer that highlighted the dedication of that temple. But something happened to Solomon after these accomplishments.

Solomon's tremendous wealth, international prestige, and relative national peace meant that he had time to indulge in unwholesome interests. He did. He formed alliances with surrounding nations against God's will, and sealed each of them with a marriage. Almost imperceptibly Solomon's heart began to leave God. He worshiped the gods of his wives and concubines, and forsook the God of the universe.

The rise and fall of Solomon teaches several lessons, but none more important than the dangers of unfettered prosperity and wealth. Solomon believed that his immense learning and wisdom could overcome the pull of beautiful women, foreign gods, and unmatched wealth. He was sadly mistaken. He had forgotten that the source of his blessing was God. Whether in times of famine or plenty, God's people must always put Him first in their lives.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God's blessings are always given for His glory and not our own. (*Know*)
- Experience the peace that comes through obedience to God's commands. (*Feel*)
- Commit to never allow anything or anyone to occupy God's place in their lives. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- Self-discipline
- Idolatry
- Humility

## 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 them to discuss their answers. Point out to them the things in life that they feel they "must have." Bring this discussion around to what they might "sell out" in order to keep Jesus in their lives.

#### Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is quite grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sin.

“First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood.

“Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more—until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!”

“It is a fearful thing that people can be ‘consumed by their own lusts.’ Only God’s grace keeps us from the wolf’s fate.”—Chris T. Zwingelberg at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org).

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, but he was also one of the weakest because of his inability to rule his own passions. He was a person with an outsized desire for opulence and grandeur, and this desire engulfed his life much as the taste of fresh blood leads to the wolf’s death. It didn’t have to be that way for Solomon, and it certainly does not have to be that way for 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.*

- If you were to summarize the main thrust of this passage for a friend, what would you say?
- Place a *checkmark* by each turning point in the story.
- *Underline* each place in the passage where you see the grace of God.
- *Circle* the minor characters in the story and note the role that each plays in relationship to Solomon.
- What picture of God do we see from this passage? What one word would you use to

describe God, as He is seen in this passage?

- What is different in this passage between God’s anger and that of humanity?
- What kinds of idols do we worship today? What must we do to keep from falling into their traps?
- How does Solomon’s example with women inform you in your relationships with the other gender?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Daniel 4:28–32; Mark 10:17–31; Matthew 6:20; John 15:1–6.*

### **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. We can learn much from the gods whose worship Solomon introduced to Israel. One of the gods to which he built a temple was Chemosh, the war god of the Moabites. Wikipedia states that the name Chemosh means destroyer, subduer, or fish-god. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Chemosh was an “ancient West Semitic deity, revered by the Moabites as their supreme god. Little is known about Chemosh; although King Solomon of Israel built a sanctuary to him east of Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:7), the shrine was later demolished by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:13).” The temple to Chemosh remained in place for more than 300 years before Josiah destroyed it.
2. Another god that Solomon introduced to the people is Ashtoreth, the moon goddess of the Phoenicians. According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the worship of this goddess did not just occur among the Hebrews. The Greeks called her Hera, the Romans referred to her as Juno, and the ancient Egyptians called her Isis. She was referred to as the Queen of Heaven by those who worshiped her.
3. By far the most detestable god worshiped in Israel during the reign of Solomon was Molech. Human sacrifices were offered to him, mainly firstborn children. The god possessed hollow metal arms that were outstretched. The arms were heated from the inside. Firstborn children were placed on the heated arms of this god and slowly burned to death. Molech was also wor-



### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### More Visual Learning

Many students learn better when they can actually see something related to the lesson, and not just hear it.

Consider bringing to class a timeline detailing the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, beginning with Saul. If possible, make special note of the idolatry begun under Solomon and how long it took before these sinful practices were abolished.

Share this timeline with the students as a way of demonstrating to them the effect that Solomon's worship habits had on the nation of Israel. It can be argued that Israel never fully recovered from what Solomon did.

### RABBI 101

shipped in ancient Carthage, where at one time about 200 little boys were sacrificed in hopes of saving that city from a siege. Young King Josiah destroyed this temple and its worship (see *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, p. 205; *Encyclopedia of Gods*, p. 168).

4. The apostasy that Solomon's reign ushered into the life of Israel can be summed up by 1 Kings 11:5, 6: "He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of

the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done" (NIV). As is often the case, apostasy rarely gets better with time and indulgence, and that is as true today as it was during biblical times.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Ask each group to come up with three ways that Solomon could have impacted Israel and the surrounding world had he not sinned.

Close by making the point that just as one person's sin has the power to corrupt many, acts of righteousness also have the power to lead many to God. Jesus proved this truth.

#### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

King Solomon's life was the stuff of dreams. He had an adoring public, beautiful women constantly around him, the best clothing money could buy, important friends and well-wishers. He had it all. Yet none of it was enough to satisfy Solomon.

Foreign alliances led to national spiritual ruin, love

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

of opulence left the citizens of Israel in financial ruin due to the heavy taxes he levied on them to support his lifestyle, and his indulgence of lust left him spiritually bankrupt.

Perhaps it was an act of mercy that God pro-

nounced judgment on Solomon while he had an opportunity to change his life. Had God not told him that the kingdom would be taken from him, Solomon might never have changed. So even in God's justice there is love and mercy.



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 3; 4.





# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JANUARY 25 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 3; 4.

## the wise and foolish king

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Photo by Jacqui Janetzko



### flashlight

"Had Solomon continued in humility of mind to turn the attention of men from himself to the One who had given him wisdom and riches and honor, what a history might have been his! But while the pen of inspiration records his virtues, it also bears faithful witness to his downfall. Raised to a pinnacle of greatness and surrounded with the gifts of fortune, Solomon became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 68).

### keytext

"The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command."

(1 Kings 11:9, 10, NIV)

# what do you think?

Imagine that your parents are going to take one of the following items away from you. On a scale from 1 ("Gotta have it") to 4 ("No sweat without it"), rank the items in order of importance to you.

- a. Money
- b. Cell phone
- c. Internet access
- d. Freedom to hang out with friends

## did you know?

**D**id you know that Solomon built temples for the worship of heathen gods in addition to the temple he built for the true God? What's more, he didn't just build them in some obscure place, safely out of sight; He built them on a hillside opposite Mount Moriah, the exact spot where he had built a magnificent temple for God (see *Prophets and Kings*, p. 57).

## INTO THE STORY

**"King Solomon, however,** loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites.

So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely,

as David his father had done.

"On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

"The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. So the LORD said to Solomon, 'Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.' "

(1 Kings 11:1–13, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

What parts of this passage are most striking to you?

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What parts of the story are new to you?

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Who is the main character of this Scripture?

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*Circle* some of the other characters playing a role in this passage?

*Underline* what you believe is the main point of the passage.

*Number* each portion of the passage where you see an important lesson to be learned.

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In spite of David's sin with Bathsheba, this passage says that David "followed God completely." What does this tell us about what God values in His children?

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What does this passage say to you about self-discipline in the choice of a life partner? How can that choice influence our relationship with God?

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What are some biblical examples of people who made wise decisions in their choice of a life partner?

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## punch lines

**"Keep your servant** also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression" (**Psalm 19:13, NIV**).

**"I am too ashamed and disgraced,** my God, to lift up my face to you, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens" (**Ezra 9:6, NIV**).

**"The LORD warned Israel** and Judah through all his prophets and seers: 'Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets' " (**2 Kings 17:13, NIV**).

**"But the LORD is faithful,** and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one" (**2 Thesalonians 3:3, NIV**).

**"Good and upright** is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways" (**Psalm 25:8, NIV**).

## further insight

**"He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give."**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 30.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read 1 Kings 11:11.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What item would you most hate for your parents to take from you? Now, think of all the different things that Solomon stood to lose as a result of disobeying God. What would you say is the thing he most hated to lose:

What judgment did God pronounce upon Solomon? If you were Solomon, how would you have reacted to such an awesome statement from God?

## Sunday

Read 1 Kings 11:1–13.

Read this week's *Into the Story*. Pay close attention to verse 2. God gave His people what specific command?

What would happen to the people of God if they did not obey this command?

What did Solomon do? How far did he go in breaking God's command?

As the most important earthly figure in all of Israel, how do you think his example impacted the nation?

## Monday

Read 1 Kings 11:9, 10.

After careful thought, I am quite sure the wise person would not want to have God angry at them. After all, He is the all-powerful

Creator, and we are created beings. He is the source of our breath, our very life. And yet, according to the *Key Text*, wise King Solomon did the very things that called out God's righteous anger.

Read the *Key Text* closely. Why did God become angry with Solomon? The Bible says that Solomon's heart "had turned away from the LORD." In your own words, write what you think God was saying here:

Is it possible for your heart to be turned away from God, even though you are a Christian?

## Tuesday

Read Ezra 9:6.

Read this week's *Flashlight*. Ellen White says that Solomon became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell. Explain what you believe she means by these statements.

Solomon became dizzy:

Lost his balance:

Fell:

## Wednesday

Read Matthew 12:31, 32.

Check out the *Punch Lines* in this week's lesson. Does the sorrow for sin catch your attention in Ezra 9:6? What about the promise of protection in 2 Thessalonians 3:3?

What do you think is the "great transgression" or sin that David was afraid of in Psalm 19:13? What do you think continued willful disobedience and rejecting the guidance of God's Holy Spirit leads us to?

## Thursday

Read Proverbs 12:4.

Most people who read the life of Solomon focus on the number of wives (700) and concubines (300) that he had. But the numbers are not of utmost importance. It is the impact that they had on his worship and allegiance to God that was most unfortunate.

What does this say to you about the importance of your choice of a boyfriend/girlfriend or life partner and how it impacts your relationship with God?

## Friday

Read 2 Kings 17:13.

We can be fairly certain that God did much to warn Solomon to change his behavior. Is God warning you to change something in your life before it's too late? What might that be? Why not surrender it to God right now in prayer? Ask Him to make you willing to be made willing to have Him take it from you.

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 3; 4.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlhF1rB09s](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.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 01 2020

## confessions of a foolish wise man

**Scripture Story:** Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 5.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

This is the final installment in the story of Solomon. This king offers a colorful case study in the futile quest to fulfill deep human hungers with cotton candy—stuff, smarts, sex, and so on. In the end, however, Solomon learns that only God can fulfill the deepest desires of the soul.

Ellen White's insightful commentary on this intriguing man offers a great foundation for potentially life-transforming discussions. First, this lesson opens up opportunities to talk about the benefits of confessing sin. Solomon's repentance offers a compelling picture of God's unrelenting grace. Nevertheless, "the harm that his example of evil-doing had wrought could not be undone" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 84). The brutal consequences of Solomon's poor choices speak to the importance of choosing wisely in youth. This lesson offers an ideal opportunity to talk frankly with the young people about their choices (premarital sex, drinking, pursuit of wealth, fame, etc.) and the expensive price tags that could saddle such choices. Ellen White adds: "Among the many lessons taught by Solomon's life, none is more strongly emphasized than the power of influence for good or for ill" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 85).

There are several other points you could emphasize in this lesson. For example, you could explore Solomon's pride and cleanly connect his undoing with an arrogant spirit that sought meaning in every place other than the only true source of ultimate fulfillment—God.

Given our world's obsession with success, you may wish to focus this lesson on Solomon's pursuit of success through possessions, power, pleasure, and so on. And yet in the end he exclaims, "Everything is meaningless, . . . completely meaningless!" (Ecclesiastes 1:2, NLT). What a great example Solomon gives us in meeting our deepest needs only in a relationship with God.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the benefits of finding our ultimate meaning in God alone. (*Know*)
- Sense the need to confess and repent. (*Feel*)
- Look to God for the answers to the deepest questions of the soul. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

- Success
- Pride
- Confession/repentance

### 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.

Invite the students to play a word association game. Invite them to shout out the first word that comes to mind when they hear the following words:



- Confession
- Repentance
- Humility
- Meaning in life
- The purpose of life
- Arrogance
- Success

Unpack the responses with the students. Talk about these things as they emerge from the life of Solomon. Clearly Solomon was glad to come to that place of confession and repentance later on in life; but how would his life have been different had he always remained humble and repentant before God? Are all of the words listed above connected in some way to Solomon's story? If so, how?

### Illustration

*Read or share this illustration in your own words:*

"A company found itself in the middle of tense negotiations with union leaders. Company officials insisted that workers were abusing sick-leave privileges. The union denied it.

"One morning at the bargaining table the company's negotiator held up the sports page of the local newspaper. He pointed to a picture showing an employee winning a golf tournament in town. 'This man,' the negotiator declared, 'called in sick yesterday. But here he is in the paper beside a caption describing his excellent golf score.'

"After a moment of silence a union man spoke up. 'Wow,' he said, 'think of the score he could have had if he hadn't been sick!'

"Nice try! We can deny—we can try to cover up deceptions or our misbehavior. But it usually doesn't take us very far. Our sins have a way of finding us out. The wise man is abundantly clear: 'He who covers his sins will not prosper' (Prov. 28:13).

"Hollow excuses really don't provide many substantial answers. . . .

"Scripture calls for something far different than lame excuses.

"In a culture that often denies the reality of right and wrong, God calls for boldfaced, on-your-knees, heartfelt repentance. Repentance is a deep sorrow for sin. It is hurting because I have hurt the heart of God. It is weeping over my sins because God weeps over them. It is grieving over my sin because God grieves over it. It is feeling the pain of my sin because God has felt its pain.

Excuses produce only more guilt. Repentance

leads to forgiveness. Forgiveness gives way to healing, and healing brings wholeness."—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 21.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### Bridge to the Story

*Use the following questions to connect the introductory story with the lesson:*

Can you relate to trying to hide something you have done wrong? What are the common "stains" that young people today try to hide? Why is confession an important component of spiritual life? How do we imperil the quality of our relationship with God and others when we are dishonest about our sins?

### 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.*

- As Solomon reflected in his journal near the end of his life, he clearly had a lot of regrets. Identify some of these regrets. What are some regrets that you hope to never have? How do you need to live each day to ensure that you will not have these regrets?
- What do you think Solomon meant when he wrote the following observations? How might heeding these observations help us to live wisely?
  - "Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones" (Ecclesiastes 10:6, NIV).
  - "One sinner destroys much good" (Ecclesiastes 9:18, NIV).
  - "Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind" (Ecclesiastes 4:6, NIV).
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 is a fitting summary of what the wisest man who has ever lived had to say at the end of his storied life. The sum total of all his wisdom is captured in this verse. Find as many different translations of that verse as you can. Have each student read a different version of the text out loud until all the translations have been read. Next, have a volunteer read the following texts and then discuss how each text relates to Ecclesiastes 12:13.
  - Philippians 2:12, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:58;

## Sharing Context and Background

*The following themes seem to emerge naturally from Solomon's story. Depending on the theme(s) that you choose, share this broader biblical background in your own words.*

1. **Confession**—If using this lesson to talk about confession, it's important to share what confession is, and what it is not. Listen to James's appeal for confession: "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail" (James 4:8, 9, NIV).

Truth be told, there's plenty to confess in all of us. James's appeal to double-minded sinners to purify their hearts is a key to enjoying life with God. In so doing we come near to God and He comes near to us. We counter conflict and foster community. It works like aloe vera on a sunburned soul.

Confession is not burping our sins in public so everyone can wince. It is the purifying process through which God allows us to experience His grace (see also James 5:16). Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person."<sup>1</sup>

2. **Success**—The Bible is brimming with success stories of young people who modeled time-tested morals. For example, Isaac refused to

rebel against his dad—even though it meant climbing onto an altar to be killed. Joseph refused to compromise his employer's trust in him—even though his choice put him in the prison. David refused to take Goliath's taunts—even though it meant facing a giant with only a slingshot. Throughout the Bible we find stories of young people who refused to compromise their principles—no matter the cost.

Invite the students to brainstorm about other Bible characters who illustrate what true success looks like.

3. **Pride**—Review the origin of sin. Consider Satan's haughty claims: "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

A quick tour through Scripture reminds us that God has zero tolerance for pride. "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).

Why is pride so disdainful to God? How can we nurture a humble spirit?

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

## Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

### Instructional Scaffolding

Wikipedia defines this teaching method as “the provision of sufficient supports to promote learning when concepts and skills are being first introduced to students. These supports may include:

- “Resources
- “A compelling task
- “Templates and guides
- “Guidance on the development of cognitive and social skills.”

The word “scaffolding” was developed as a metaphor to describe the type of assistance offered by a teacher or peer to support learning. In other words, teachers try to help students master a concept by providing support.

As you teach a concept in this lesson, keep in mind types of “scaffolding” you might use in order to support your main idea(s) and reinforce learning. This support could take many forms such as outlines, recommended outside reading, storyboards, key questions, mnemonic devices, and/or training other students.

## RABBI 101

Role-play a scene from a pastor’s office where an actor playing a teenage Solomon comes and confesses his sins. Then have the actor come again as the old Solomon to confess sins that spanned a long life. Encourage the students to be as true to the biblical account of Solomon as they can. In other words, Solomon should confess sins that he really did struggle to overcome. Finally, have the student playing Solomon remain in character and share with the class what he learned in his life. Again, encourage the actor to be as factual as possible.

### Summary

*A well-worn children’s story makes a fitting conclusion to this lesson:*

Once there was a spider that dropped a single strand down from the rafter of an old barn and began to weave his web. Day by day the spider stretched his web until it spanned an expansive fly zone. Daily the web snagged a buffet of bugs, making the spider the envy of all spiders.

One day the spider was cruising along his elaborately woven web and noticed the single strand disappearing into the rafters. *Hmmm*, the spider wondered, *of what value is that strand? It’s not going to catch me my dinner.* With that thought the spider climbed up . . . and severed the single strand. Of course, the entire web swallowed the spider as he floated to his demise.<sup>2</sup> Like the spider, Solomon learned the hard way what happens when you sever the strand that connects you to God. In the end, he confesses that life has no meaning apart from God.

<sup>1</sup> As quoted in *Bible Illustrator* by Parsons Technology.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Max Lucado, *Turn #1 Toward God’s Glory* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Publishers, 2005).

## III. CLOSING

### Activity

*A fun way to wrap up the lesson is with this improvisational activity.*



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 5.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 01 2020

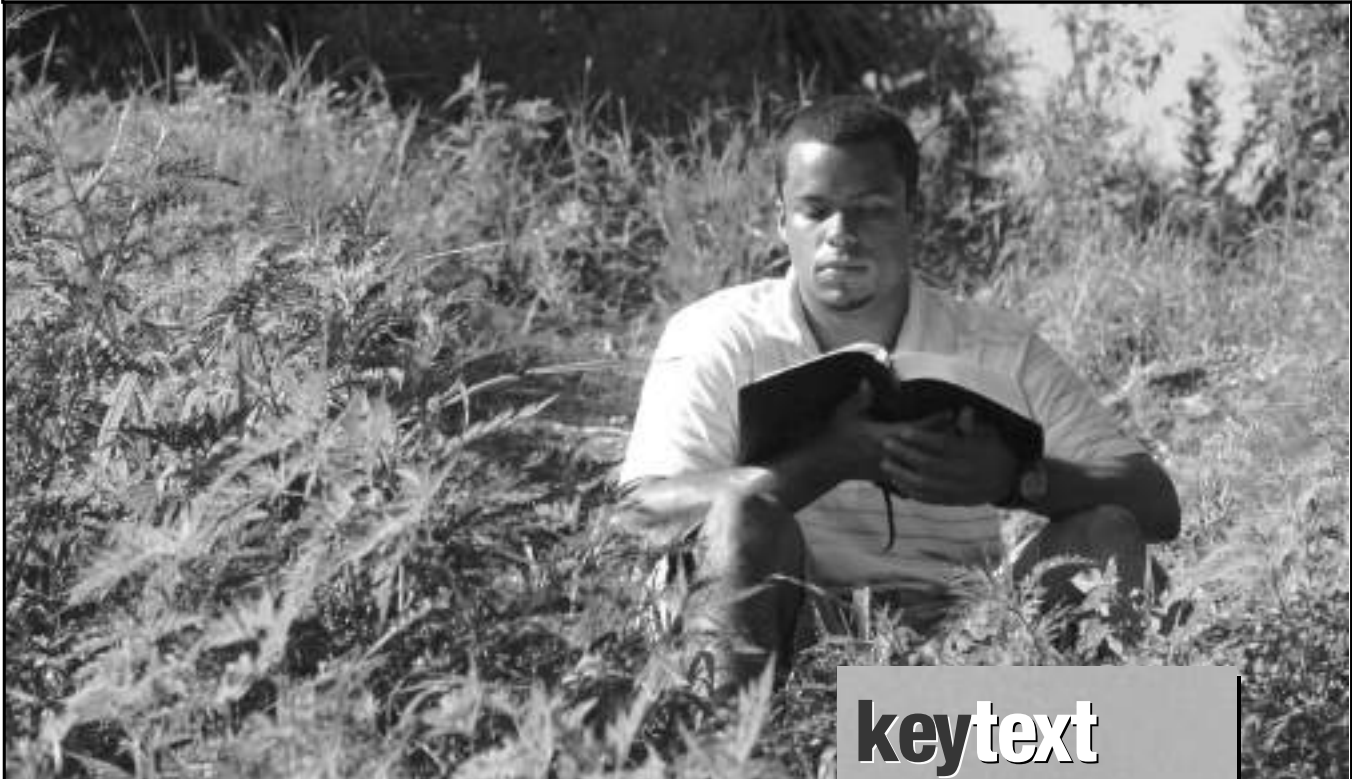
**Scripture Story:** Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 5.

## confessions of a foolish wise man

cornerstoneconnections 21

Photo by Jacqui Janetzko



### flashlight

"By his own bitter experience, Solomon learned the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good. . . . Yet the Lord forsook him not. By messages of reproof and by severe judgments, He sought to arouse the king to a realization of the sinfulness of his course" (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 76, 77).

"Solomon's repentance was sincere; but the harm that his example of evil-doing had wrought could not be undone. . . . Though the king confessed his sin and wrote out for the benefit of after generations a record of his folly and repentance, he could never hope entirely to destroy the baleful influence of his wrong deeds" (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 84, 85).

### keytext

"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**)



# what do you think?

**Number from 1 (meaning it's the most important reason)**

to 10 (the least important reason) why you think people find confession and repentance difficult to do.

- \_\_\_ They don't believe they'll be able to stop committing the sin.
- \_\_\_ They're afraid of what others might think.
- \_\_\_ They feel guilty for what they did.
- \_\_\_ They don't want to feel humiliated.
- \_\_\_ They fear being viewed as hypocrites.
- \_\_\_ They're afraid of punishment.
- \_\_\_ They don't feel the Bible teaches that confession and repentance are all that important.
- \_\_\_ They don't want to stop doing what they're doing.

Which of the following individuals do you think is the most prideful? Why?

- \_\_\_ Josh is constantly showing off his latest electronic toys.
- \_\_\_ Lawrence ignores his friends when a cute girl walks by.
- \_\_\_ Rebecca keeps reminding you that she has a 4.0 grade point average.
- \_\_\_ Benito constantly bullies other students in the dorm.

## did you know?

**I**n 1842 the first bathtub was denounced as a "luxurious and democratic vanity." Boston made it unlawful to bathe, except on doctor's prescription. In 1843 Philadelphia made bathing illegal between November 1 and March 15.

And yet, how many Christians have adopted a similar schedule of spiritual cleansing? Many of us would rather endure the stench of our unconfessed sins than come clean before God!

## INTO THE STORY

**"God gave Solomon wisdom** and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Kings 4:29, 30, NIV).

"I said to myself, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.' But that also proved to be meaningless" (Ecclesiastes 2:1, NIV).

"King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon" (1 Kings 10:23, 24, NIV).

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good" (Ecclesiastes 9:18, NIV).

"There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler: Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones" (Ecclesiastes 10:5, 6, 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'—before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint; when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred. "Then people go to their eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

"Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

" 'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Everything is meaningless!'

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind."

(Ecclesiastes 12:1–8, 13, NIV)



9/20/19 10:35 AM

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read 1 John 1:9, 10.

Read through the *What Do You Think?* section and then reflect on the following questions:

- Which is easier—to confess or conceal wrongdoing? Why?
- What does God think about the practice of confession?
- How can confession bring a person closer to God?
- Why do people try to hide wrongdoing?
- What are the dangers of failing to confess sins?

Compare your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section with that of your friends and discuss:

What is the most common number 1 ranking for failure to confess sin?

What reasons, besides the ones listed, might people give for not practicing confession?

Explain any connection you see between pride and the unwillingness to confess and repent of sin.

## Sunday

Read 1 Kings 10:23, 24.

Review the Bible verses that describe Solomon's quest for meaning by pursuing wisdom, pleasure, and wealth. Why do you think these pursuits failed to quiet the innermost longings of his soul?

What things of the world are you pursuing that are failing to fill the innermost longing of your soul?

## Monday

Read Ecclesiastes 12.

Review the *Key Text* for this lesson. What does it mean for you to "remember your Creator"? Solomon urges you to do this before you get old. He gives some very vivid and colorful illustrations of getting old. Draw lines to match the words of Solomon to the aging ailment that he is describing.

Words of Solomon	Ailments of Aging
1. "... the grinders cease because they are few"	A. Failing eyesight
2. "... those looking through the windows grow dim"	B. Loss of hearing
3. "... people rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint"	C. Phobias and paranoia
4. "... people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets"	D. Teeth rot and fall out
5. "... the almond tree blossoms"	E. The get-up-and-go got up and went
6. "... the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred"	F. Death
7. "... the silver cord is severed, and the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, and the wheel broken at the well"	G. Hair turns gray

ing. Check your answers with the key following.

Answer key: 1-D; 2-A; 3-B; 4-C; 5-G; 6-E; 7-F

## Tuesday

Read Matthew 6:24.

The quote in the *Flashlight* section highlights the hard lesson that Solomon learned about "the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good." Pray about how earthly things influence you. Ask a mature Christian about how to not get caught up in the earthly things that many teens are getting caught up in, such as materialism, poor choices of friendship, premarital sex, alcohol, drugs.

What "master" are you serving?

## Wednesday

Carefully read the *Punch Lines*. Contained in these verses you will find profound principles for enjoying a better life. Read the texts over and over until you have them deeply entrenched in your mind. Then apply the verses and use them today as an experiment in humbly walking with God.

## Thursday

Read Matthew 16:26.

Review the life of Solomon, then ask yourself: *From what aspect of Solomon's story do I need to learn the most?*

## Friday

Read Proverbs 16:18, 19.

Ellen White offers this commentary on Solomon's life: "Not only to the youth, but to those of mature years, . . . the life of Solomon is full of warning. We see and hear of unsteadiness in youth, the young wavering between right and wrong, and the current of evil passions proving too strong for them. In those of maturer years, we do not look for this unsteadiness and unfaithfulness; we expect the character to be established, the principles firmly rooted. But this is not always so. . . .

"From such examples we should learn that in watchfulness and prayer is the only safety for both young and old. . . . One may for many years have enjoyed a genuine Christian experience, but he is still exposed to Satan's attacks. In the battle with inward sin and outward temptation, even the wise and powerful Solomon was vanquished. His failure teaches us that, whatever a man's intellectual qualities may be, and however faithfully he may have served God in the past, he can never with safety trust in his own wisdom and integrity" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 82).

Questions to consider:

- What is the state of my character?
- Am I watchful and prayerful each day?
- How can I trust in God rather than in my own wisdom and integrity?

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 5.

*\*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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s](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.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 08 2020

## idol threats

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11:14–43; 12:1–24;  
2 Chronicles 9:29–12:16.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*),  
chapter 6.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

One of the most popular television shows in recent years is *American Idol*. It has garnered a cult-like following of millions of Americans who tune in to hear wannabe stars sing their way to success. Each week Americans vote for the singers they like best while others with the least number of votes get eliminated. The winners at the end of the season cruise into stardom with a practical guarantee of big contracts and instant fame. But what does that word “idol” mean? Is it some word that can be flippantly used on a TV show or does it carry a deeper, spiritual meaning?

The story of Rehoboam is a sobering reminder that idolatry—in any form—will not be tolerated by God. Simply put, an idol is anything that comes before God. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21, NIV). In this statement Jesus identifies the heart of idol worship—people’s hearts belong to whatever they value most. This lesson challenges students to reflect on their priorities as they learn how God dealt with Rehoboam’s idolatrous ways.

There are many other teaching opportunities in this lesson. For example, the story has a lot to teach us on the topic of leadership. At times, Rehoboam modeled stellar leadership, but he always seemed to relapse into seasons of dreadful failure. Ellen White points out that his failure in leadership had devastating results for a whole nation.

Another area you could explore in this lesson has to do with communication. This story offers many

examples (e.g., Rehoboam listening to his young counselors, the tragic stoning of Adoram, the message of Shemaiah, etc.) that provide insights into the value of honest communication.

Another teaching opportunity is offering a discussion related to the issues of creating healthy boundaries in relationships with people and things.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- See that idolatry is rampant in our world today. (*Know*)
- Understand that putting anything above God will produce disastrous results. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to sell out to God. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

- Idolatry
- Leadership
- Communication

### TEACHING

#### I. GETTING STARTED

##### Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss why they ranked the items in the way they did.

Ask the students to consider the list again and reflect on each item, asking themselves if it is primarily a high value according to the kingdom of earth or the kingdom of heaven. Circle the items that are important in our

worldly culture; *underline* the items that are highly prized in the kingdom of God.

*An alternate activity would be to play a game of Pictionary using the following words:*

Report card, clothes, sports, friends, celebrities, family

Keep a list of the words as they guess them. Next, explain that an idol is anything that we place above God. Then discuss how any of these things can become an idol. Have each student think of another modern-day “idol” not on the list and have them draw it for the whole group to guess.

### **Illustration**

*Share one or both of the following illustrations in your own words:*

“On one of his many journeys through the Himalayas the Indian evangelist Sundhar Singh discovered a Tibetan preacher whom the people treated with superstitious reverence. He proclaimed Christ without fear of reprisal, even though other preachers were violently persecuted. The preacher told Singh his story.

“He’d once been secretary to a Buddhist priest, but met a Christian from India. Eventually he declared himself a follower of Jesus. He first confessed his faith to his own master, the Buddhist priest.

“Within a few days the preacher was sentenced to death. In front of the temple walls men bound a wet yak around him and sewed it up tight. They left him out in the scorching sunshine, where the contracting skin would crush him to death.

“He did not die quickly enough, so red-hot skewers were thrust through the yak skin into his body. Later they tore off the skins and dragged him through the streets to a refuse dump outside town. After further abuse the preacher was dropped on a dunghill. His body showed no signs of life. The crowds left, and the vultures gathered.

“But he was still alive. Somehow he managed to crawl away and recover. Instead of fleeing for his life he marched right back into the village and began preaching about Christ! He could still testify about his faith and could speak of a great God who had come close. The people now listened in awe.

“God sometimes allows us to go through very difficult experiences to give real credibility to our witness. When we experience hardship, we have an opportunity to build a stronger faith. Rather than destroying faith, dif-

ficult life experiences make our faith believable to those who observe our steadfast allegiance to God “comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:4).

“We comfort because we are comforted. We comfort others in the difficult times of their lives because God has comforted us in our trying times. Open your heart to receive God’s comfort. You will need it to comfort someone else whom God brings into your life this week.”—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 153, 154.

## **II. TEACHING THE STORY**

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

There’s a delusion inside of everyone of us: “I am great and I made myself who I am.” This is the “I” disease that ransacked Lucifer in heaven. This obsession with self explains how sin began. Listen to Satan’s haughty claims: “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

This is the same attitude we find in King Rehoboam. When responding to the pleadings of his people to lessen the tax burdens that had been imposed by his father, King Solomon, Rehoboam foolishly replied, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:14, NIV). Because Rehoboam refused to worship the true God but chose instead to put his own interests above God’s, Rehoboam was humbled and the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

### **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.*

- Before Rehoboam responded to the request of the Israelites for lower taxes, he sought counsel. The old men advised him to lead with kindness and lessen the burdens. The young men advised him to exercise supreme authority and raise taxes. Ellen White writes: “Flattered by the prospect of exercising supreme authority,



Rehoboam determined to disregard the counsel of the older men of his realm, and to make the younger men his advisers” (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 89, 90). The result was devastating. Ten tribes of Israel rebelled, and Rehoboam reigned over only two tribes of Israel. What does this story teach us about peer pressure? How might the history of Israel have been radically different had Rehoboam followed the godly counsel of the older men?

- Review the role of Adoram (also called Adoniram) in 1 Kings 12:18. How do you feel when the messenger gets persecuted just for delivering a message? How does this story parallel the story of Jesus? Compare it to Isaiah 53:1–7.
- How might Rehoboam’s choices have been different had he followed the counsel of Exodus 20:3, 4 and Matthew 6:19–21? Which parts of these verses stand out to you the most and why?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Psalm 135:15–18; Colossians 3:5–11; 1 John 4:1–3.*

### **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. Herbert Lockyer offers this insightful commentary on Rehoboam’s story:  
What a different history of the Jews would have been written had Rehoboam not followed

the advice of reckless counselors. When he went to Shechem to be formally crowned as king in succession to Solomon, the people were willing to accept Rehoboam on one condition, namely that he should lighten the burdens imposed upon them by Solomon. This reasonable request . . . should have been acceded to without any hesitation. . . . But Rehoboam lost a golden opportunity of healing the sores of fears and of preserving the unity of God’s ancient people. . . .

At first pious (2 Chron. 12:1), Rehoboam fell into such iniquity that an Egyptian scourge came upon the king and the two tribes he ruled. Brief penitence stayed vengeance, but the rot had set in (2 Chron. 12:5, 8). So we leave Rehoboam, who went astray in a three-fold direction, ruining himself and the people he sought to govern. He lost the best part of his kingdom and reduced Israel as a whole to a subordinate rank among nations.\*

When facing important decisions, to whom do you go for advice? How do you decide when you get conflicting counsel? Had Rehoboam known the consequences of his decisions, how do you suppose his legacy would have been different?

2. When “Rehoboam went to Shechem” (2 Chronicles 10:1, NIV), this city, which was 30 miles north of Jerusalem, was a center for the northern tribes. As prophesied by Ahijah (1 Kings 11:31, 32), Jeroboam had already

## **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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*



### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Show . . . and Tell

Bringing tangible symbols into the classroom can often provide memorable metaphors for the students. For example, in this lesson you may wish to develop the theme of the perils of idolatry, or putting anything above God. To talk about it theoretically is good. To illustrate it with tangible symbols might prove to be more effective.

To do this, you could bring twenty-first-century “idols” to display as props. You could work your way down a long line of items (such as an iPod, a TV, a picture of some athlete, a plate of junk food, designer clothes, etc.) while engaging them in a conversation about how each one might be “worshiped” (i.e., placed above God), and how they could set healthy boundaries in their use. When they encounter these common items during the week, they could then well remember the discussion in Sabbath School and be more cognizant of the temptation of worshiping the “idol.”

been anointed for kingship over the 10 tribes of the north (1 Kings 11:26–40). Only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty (2 Chronicles 11:3, 12; cf. 1 Chronicles 4:24–43). These two tribes were henceforth known as the nation of Judah.

3. According to the *Life Application Bible*, the key verse in Rehoboam’s story is 2 Chronicles 12:1, which says: “After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD” (NIV). This triggered Shishak’s invasion (verse 2). This campaign of Shishak, energetic founder of the Twenty-Second Dynasty of Egypt, has been confirmed by his list of conquered Palestinian cities, engraved on the walls of the temple of Amon at Karnak. This list shows

that he plundered northern Israel (as far north as the Sea of Galilee) as well as Judah.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Ask the students to write out a detailed schedule of a typical day. Have some of them share their schedules. Discuss what takes up most of their days. Then ask them to what activities they wish to give priority. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most important) how would they prioritize the activities? Is there time for God in the schedule? If so, where? When? Gently remind them that any of these activities and priorities can become idols. Idols are, after all, anything that pulls our attention away from God.

#### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Rehoboam made some painfully stupid choices in his life. The consequences of his decisions tarnished his legacy and scarred the nation of Israel for all succeeding generations.

At the heart of Rehoboam’s problem was his sin of idolatry. Worshiping an idol is the last thing most people figure they would ever do. But idols come in a variety of forms. Sleeker, shinier, and more sophisticated idols have replaced the primitive statues; but the result is the same—a divided allegiance between the sacred and the secular.

This lesson offers an opportunity to have a frank discussion with the young people about how they can stay on the right track with God, despite all the idols that clamor for our attention. Take advantage of this chance to challenge them toward uncompromised devotion to God.

\* Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 285.



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 6.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 08 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 11:14–43; 12:1–24; 2 Chronicles 9:29–12:16.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 6.

## idol threats

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Photo by Bill Wolf



## flashlight

"The twelve tribes of Israel were divided, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin composing the lower or southern kingdom of Judah, under the rulership of Rehoboam; while the ten northern tribes formed and maintained a separate government, known as the kingdom of Israel, with Jeroboam as their ruler. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet concerning the rending of the kingdom. 'The cause was from the Lord' " (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 91).

"But as time passed, the king put his trust in the power of position and in the strongholds he had fortified. Little by little he gave way to inherited weakness, until he threw his influence wholly on the side of idolatry" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 93).

## keytext

"After Rehoboam's position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD."

(2 Chronicles 12:1, NIV)

# what do you think?

Rank the following items below in order of importance to the average teenager (1 is most important, 10 is least important).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good looks                     | <input type="checkbox"/> A loving family        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good grades                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musical abilities              | <input type="checkbox"/> Low stress             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A strong relationship with God | <input type="checkbox"/> Good health            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A good reputation              | <input type="checkbox"/> A Christlike character |

## did you know?

**R**ehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonite. Her name means "pleasant" or "sweetness," but her actions against the true God of Israel were abominable. She was one of Solomon's many wives who influenced Solomon toward idolatry. Because she was the first lady of the kingdom, Solomon erected in her honor a statue to her god, Moloch.

Moloch was a god to whom children were often sacrificed. The law given to Moses prohibited the Jews from sacrificing children to Moloch; nevertheless, King Solomon introduced Moloch into Israel. Moloch's shrine was located at a site outside Jerusalem named Gehenna.

Gehenna (first mentioned in the Bible in Joshua

15:8), in Jewish eschatology, is a fiery place where the wicked are punished on judgment day. Originally it referred to a garbage dump in a deep, narrow valley right outside the walls of Jerusalem where fires were kept burning to consume the refuse and keep down the stench. It is also the location where bodies of executed criminals, or individuals denied a proper burial, would be dumped. Gehenna is sometimes translated as "hell."

## INTO THE STORY

**"Rehoboam went to Shechem,** for all Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you. . . .'

"Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, 'Come back to me in three days.' The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, 'My father made y o u r yoke

heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.' "

"So all the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.

"King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day."

"When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mustered Judah and Benjamin—a hundred and eighty thousand able young men—to go to war against Israel and to regain the kingdom for Rehoboam.

"But this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: 'Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon king of Judah and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, "This is what the LORD says: Do not go up to fight against your fellow Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing." ' So they obeyed the words of the LORD and turned back from marching against Jeroboam."

"Because Rehoboam humbled himself, the LORD's anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed. . . .

"King Rehoboam established himself firmly in Jerusalem and continued as king. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name. His mother's name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the LORD."

(1 Kings 12:1–4, 12–14; 2 Chronicles 10:16–19; 11:1–4; 12:12–14, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

Read all of the texts listed in Scripture Story at the beginning of this lesson, and write down the roles played by the following people:

Adoram \_\_\_\_\_

Shemaiah \_\_\_\_\_

Hadad \_\_\_\_\_

Jeroboam \_\_\_\_\_

Ahijah \_\_\_\_\_

Shishak \_\_\_\_\_

Maachah \_\_\_\_\_

What can we learn from each of these people in Rehoboam's story? With whom do you identify the most? Why?

After reading Rehoboam's story in the Bible, make a graph of his life, indicating those times when he was strong spiritually as well as those times when he experienced great spiritual failure. What can we learn from his experience that can help to strengthen our relationship with the Lord?

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## punch lines

**"No one can serve** two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (**Matthew 6:24, NIV**).

**"Why do the nations say,** 'Where is their God?' Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk, nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them" (**Psalms 115:2-8, NIV**).

**"They have provoked Me** to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation" (**Deuteronomy 32:21, NKJV**).

## further insight

**"Whatever shall draw away the heart from God must be given up . . . the love of money, the desire for wealth, is the golden chain that binds them to Satan . . . the life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is the idol of others. But these slavish bands must be broken. We cannot be half the Lord's and half the world's. We are not God's children unless we are such entirely."**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 44.



# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read Psalm 16:4.

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you were asked to prioritize what the average teen values the most. Are your personal values any different from what you perceive to be the values of the average teen? If so, in what way?

Review the list, then think about how we can turn any of these things into an idol. What is an idol? Consider the following definitions and then write your own.

**i-dol-a-try:** "Blind or excessive devotion to something" (*Online American Heritage Dictionary*).

**i-dol-a-try:** "Anything that comes before God."

My definition:

**i-dol-a-try:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Sunday

After reading the *Into the Story* section, give a title to each of the major portions of Scripture. Next write the primary lesson we can learn from that text.

1 Kings 12:1–4, 12–14

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Main lesson to be learned: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Chronicles 10:16–19; 11:1–4

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Main lesson to be learned: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Chronicles 12:12–14

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Main lesson to be learned: \_\_\_\_\_

## Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 12:1.

Memorize the *Key Text*. Connect the verse to your spiritual journey by reflecting on the following questions:

When have you felt "strong" in the Lord? What factors led to Rehoboam's collapse? In what ways are you vulnerable to these same temptations?

Rehoboam's spiritual compromise impacted "all Israel." Who might be negatively influenced in your life should you drift away from God?

Rehoboam's downfall came when he "abandoned the law of the LORD." What specific aspects of God's law do you struggle with the most? Why?

## Tuesday

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Note the final paragraph in the *Flashlight* section. Rehoboam's spiritual collapse happened "little by little." Identify and then list the "little" compromises that tempt you today. How might these temptations ultimately spell a person's spiritual demise?

## Wednesday

Read Matthew 6:24; Exodus 20:3, 4.

In today's reading we're reminded of the words of Jesus: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24, NIV). Write a modern translation of this verse, specifying what "masters" we're tempted to serve today.

Read the verses in Exodus and think about what they are saying. Write them out.

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill" (Acts 17:29, NIV).

## Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 3:2–5.

How do you know when something is a high priority to you? Check the top action below that you feel best indicates what someone's most treasured value or object is:

- \_\_\_\_ Spends heaps of money on it.
- \_\_\_\_ Invests a lot of time in it.
- \_\_\_\_ Thinks of it often.
- \_\_\_\_ Talks about it often.
- \_\_\_\_ Has dreams at night about it.

Is there any difference between treasuring something (or someone) and making it an idol? Explain.

## Friday

Read James 1:19.

Consider the words of Ellen White in commenting on Rehoboam's influence over the Israelites on page 94 of *Prophets and Kings*. Ask yourself: What kind of influence am I on my friends and family?

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 6.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s](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.





## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 15 2020

# Jeroboam sin-drome

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 12:16–14:20; 2 Chronicles 13.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 7.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Jeroboam is a classic case study of what happens when someone refuses to follow God's leading. Through the prophet Ahijah, God called Jeroboam to be the king of the 10 tribes of Israel. Rather than trusting God, however, Jeroboam felt compelled to take matters into his own hands. As Ellen White puts it: "Jeroboam's greatest fear was that at some future time the hearts of his subjects might be won over by the ruler occupying the throne of David. He reasoned that if the 10 tribes should be permitted to visit often the ancient seat of the Jewish monarchy, where the services of the temple were still conducted as in the years of Solomon's reign, many might feel inclined to renew their allegiance to the government centering at Jerusalem" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 99). This prompted Jeroboam to establish centers of idol worship in Bethel and Dan. This spiritually derailed Israel and led them down a path that resulted in great pain and destruction.

Such is the inevitable story of sin. Disobedience and compromise will always yield unwanted consequences. The Bible warns: "You may be sure that your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23, NIV). Sin would have few takers if the destructive consequences came immediately. Instead, as we see in the story of Jeroboam, sin woos and coddles us before it rapes us of joy and life.

Fortunately, no sin is beyond the boundary of God's grace. While we cannot escape the unsavory consequences of sinful choices, we can rejoice in the

infinite mercy of Jesus. Because of the cross, we can be absolutely secure in our salvation! "The Lord did not give Israel up without first doing all that could be done to lead them back to their allegiance to Him" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 108). God is no more inclined to abandon His relentless pursuit of every person still today.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn about the inevitable brokenness that comes from sin. (*Know*)
- Sense the unwillingness of God to give up on His children. (*Feel*)
- Receive the forgiveness for sin that comes from Calvary. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- God (loving, unfailing, personal)
- Responsibility
- Sin/evil/devil

## 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.

## Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

The 13-foot snake was the embodiment of evil. He had a scar over his left eye that prevented healthy shedding. Consequently, at least two times a year zookeepers would get the dreaded phone call from a manager in the reptile house, “The cobra shed his skin last week, but the eye cap didn’t come off.”

According to one zookeeper the task of helping the snake shed the rest of its skin requires a team of five people: three animal keepers, a curator, and a vet. The cobra slithered toward the team, spread its cape, and lifted itself up to full stature. The curator grasped it behind the venom glands.

One of the animal keepers was asked to wad up paper towels and stuff them in the cobra’s mouth. The cobra bit and chewed until the towels were yellow and dripping with venom. Full-grown elephants die from King cobra bites, so a man would never survive a bite with a full load of venom.

The trickiest part of any snake-handling procedure is in the release. More people are bitten while trying to let go of snakes than when grabbing or handling them. For you see, when it comes to snakes, they are easy to grab but hard to let go of.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

Sound familiar? Any snake in your life that was easy to grab but hard to let go of?

Let’s face it, snakes slither everywhere in our culture. Those who indulge in an alcoholic drink here or there are soon caught in the poisonous jaws of a snake that is not so easy to lick. Also, those who look at immoral material on the web or in movies, before they know it, they can’t seem to let go. Those who cheat on a chemistry quiz today then fudge on their time card at work tomorrow and in short order they are entangled by a snake of compromise that will destroy their character. All of these habits are easy to form but difficult to break. (Note to Teacher: If you have a personal experience that you feel would be appropriate to share with the students of a “snake in your life,” now would be a good time to do so. Your transparency can help the students feel it’s safe to be transparent as well. Of course, no one should feel as if they are required to share.)

Spare yourself the brutal task of breaking poten-

tially fatal habits by steering clear of the snakes. It’s just no fun to get bit. Jeroboam’s story reminds us of this spiritual truth.

### 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* all of the mistakes that people made.
- Who are the main actors in the story? Who are some of the actors in the Bible story that are not included in the *Into the Story* section?
- What aspects of the story are new to you?
- What part of the story do you relate to the most? Why?
- What lessons can we learn from Jeroboam?
- *Circle* the words or phrases that capture the essence of the story.
- If Jeroboam were alive today and attended your school, what kind of person do you think he would be?
- What were the strengths of Jeroboam? What were his weaknesses?
- What does the story of Jeroboam teach us about making decisions?
- What picture of God emerges from this story?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 7:24–27; 1 Timothy 6:18, 19; Ephesians 4:17–32; Ezekiel 33:10, 11; and Galatians 5:16–21.*

### 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. Second Kings 17:22, 23 (NIV) gives this sobering picture of Jeroboam’s legacy: “The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.” Indeed Jeroboam’s name lives on with an ugly blight against it, for it means “He made Israel to sin.” “The apostasy introduced during Jeroboam’s reign became more and more marked, until finally it resulted in the utter ruin of the kingdom of Israel” (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 107.) What does this teach us

about the long-term impact of the choices we make?

2. First Kings 13:2 (NIV) records this prophecy: “By the word of the LORD he cried out against the altar: ‘Altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: “A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.” ’ ”

Three hundred years later this prophecy was fulfilled when Josiah killed the pagan priests on their own altars. Read about it in 2 Kings 23:1–20. How do biblical prophecies such as this one affirm your faith? How can we understand such prophecies in light of our free will?

3. Jeroboam selected the cities of Dan and Bethel to be the alternate places of worship rather than Jerusalem. In the south he selected Bethel because of its sanctity in the history of Israel (see Judges 20:26–28; 1 Samuel 7:16). In the northern part of Palestine he selected Dan, which did not have the same sacred character as Bethel but was still regarded by many Israelites as a holy place. The result of Jeroboam’s choice to establish holy cities besides Jerusalem proved to be disastrous.

The unnamed man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13 trumpets a stern warning against Jeroboam for disobeying God. Ironically, the prophet had received orders from God not to eat or drink while on this mission (13:9). He died

because he listened to a man who claimed to have a message from God, rather than listening to God Himself. Both the story of Jeroboam and the unnamed prophet underscore the point that we must trust in God’s Word explicitly; we dare not listen to our own premonitions or to the interpretations of others.

Challenge the students to live uncompromisingly according to God’s Word. Discuss the story of the unnamed prophet. Does God seem to come down on him too harshly? Was God too lenient with Jeroboam when He quickly healed the king’s shriveled hand? How are we to understand God’s actions in this story?

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

A nice way to tie up this lesson is to return to the backpack of rocks that you may have used as an introduction. Remind the students that when we ask God to forgive us of our sins, God dumps the rocks into the deepest part of the ocean. He buries them there and will never drudge them up again.

God is eager to hear our confessions of sin. After all, God knows all of our faults better than we do. So close this lesson by encouraging the young people to ask God for forgiveness. God is faithful to *always* forgive and forget!

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

## Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

### Modes of Learning

“God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well” (Romans 12:6, NLT). Keep this text in mind when you’re teaching the lesson. There are many ways to learn, and everyone learns in different ways. We each have some stronger and some weaker learning styles. The temptation of teachers is to assume students all learn best in the style in which they themselves do. These modes of learning or types of intelligence are not mutually exclusive, but keeping in mind certain categories can help you see ways that personalities differ. The following chart offers a brief overview of some of the styles to keep in mind when teaching.<sup>3</sup>

Learning Style	Learns by:
Linguistic	Reciting, hearing, and reading
Logical-mathematical	Patterns, numbers, right and wrong answers
Musical	Sounds, rhythms, singing
Visual-spatial	Drawing, visualizing, designing
Tactile-kinesthetic	Handling, touching, moving

## RABBI 101

### Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The story of Jeroboam is a treasure that teaches us that great lives can be destroyed by small decisions. We are reminded in the story that God will not be mocked. When He says that He will allow no other gods besides Himself, God means business! To choose otherwise is to put your soul in great peril.

The story of the prophet from Judah underscores this important point that God is serious about our full devotion. To follow any voice other than God’s is to invite hardship and heartache. God has our best interests at heart and we can fully trust Him.

Sin destroys. Obedience to God results in life—true, abundant life! Invite your young people to experience this rich and rewarding life with God.



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 7.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 15 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 12:16–14:20; 2 Chronicles 13.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 7.

## Jeroboam sin-drome

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### flashlight

“Placed on the throne by the ten tribes of Israel who had rebelled against the house of David, Jeroboam, the former servant of Solomon, was in a position to bring about wise reforms in both civil and religious affairs. Under the rulership of Solomon he had shown aptitude and sound judgment; and the knowledge he had gained during years of faithful service fitted him to rule with discretion. But Jeroboam failed to make God his trust”

(*Prophets and Kings*, p. 99).

### keytext

“Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.”

(1 Kings 13:33, 34, NIV)



# what do you think?

Mark each statement T (true) or F (false).

- \_\_\_ What may be a sin for you may or may not be a sin for me.
- \_\_\_ Sin is nothing more than a bad choice.
- \_\_\_ Some sins are worse than others.
- \_\_\_ There are always bad consequences to sin.
- \_\_\_ If we ask forgiveness for our sins, God forgets them forever.
- \_\_\_ If my sin doesn't harm anyone, it's not really a sin.
- \_\_\_ God despises sin, but always loves the sinner.
- \_\_\_ Sin is separation from God.
- \_\_\_ Sin is too often ignored in churches today.

## did you know?

**F**irst Kings 13:33 records: "Anyone who wanted to become a priest [Jeroboam] consecrated for the high places" (NIV). This was a grave sin before God. Under penalty of death, God had forbidden

anyone outside of the tribe of Levi to be a priest (see Numbers 3:10). Levites were guaranteed a salary from the tithe. This allowed them to focus completely on their duties as priests, without having to moonlight in order to survive. In the case of Jeroboam's priests, they were paid by the king. Thus they had to mix priestly and secular duties; before long they were corrupted by bribes and sold out to the political interests of the king.

## INTO THE STORY

"Jeroboam thought to himself, 'The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.'

"After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other."

"By the word of the LORD a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. . . . That same

day the man of God gave a sign: 'This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.'

"When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, 'Seize him!' But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD.

"Then the king said to the man of God, 'Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored.' So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored. . . .

"Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. Their father asked them, 'Which way did he go?' And his sons showed him. . . . He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, 'Are you the man of God who came from Judah?'

" 'I am,' he replied.

"So the prophet said to him, 'Come home with me and eat.'

"The man of God said, 'I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. I have been told by the word of the LORD: "You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came." '

"The old prophet answered, 'I too am a prophet. . . .' (But he was lying to him.) So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.

"While they were sitting

at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, ‘This is what the LORD says: “You have defied the word of the LORD. . . . Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.” ’ ”

(1 Kings 12:26-30; 13:1, 3-6, 11-22, NIV)

## OUT OF THE STORY

Ellen White refers to three stories in her chapter entitled “Jeroboam.” She writes: “In the rent altar, in the palsied arm, and in the terrible fate of the one who dared disobey an express command of Jehovah, Jeroboam should have discerned the swift displeasure of an offended God, and these judgments should have warned him not to persist in wrongdoing” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 107).

Consider these three stories and write the primary lesson we learn from each one.

1. The rent altar \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. The palsied arm \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. The unnamed prophet who disobeyed God and ate with the false prophet \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## punch lines

**“Do not be deceived:** God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (**Galatians 6:7, 8, NIV**).

**“I will give them** an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (**Ezekiel 11:19, NIV**).

**“But if we walk** in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (**1 John 1:7, NIV**).

**“If anyone,** then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them” (**James 4:17, 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.” (**Luke 13:34, NIV**).

## further insight

**“You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness.”**

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read James 4:17.

Compare your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section with the answers given by a friend. Discuss any differences you may have.

Write your definition of sin: \_\_\_\_\_

List three sins that teenagers consider to be OK:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Sunday

Read 1 Kings 12:26–30, 13:1–6, 11–22.

Review the section *Into the Story* and reflect on the following questions.

- In 1 Kings 12:26–30 Jeroboam had been assured by the prophet Ahijah that God was going to make him king of the ten tribes of Israel. Still, Jeroboam was very insecure about his kingdom. Thus he set up centers of worship in Bethel and Dan to discourage his people from visiting Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah. Do you think Jeroboam's legacy would be different had he freely allowed his people to visit Jerusalem? In what way? In what area of your life are you tempted to feel spiritually insecure?

- What does the story in 1 Kings 13:1–6 about the shriveled hand tell us about the character of God? Think about the courage of the unnamed prophet. What does his story teach us about speaking truth to power? In what area of your life is God calling you to uncompromising commitment?

- How might the story in 1 Kings 13:11–22 apply to our lives today? Do you feel any sympathy toward the prophet from Judah? Why or why not? How would you respond to someone who claims this story exposes a very harsh and unreasonable side of God?

## Monday

Read Galatians 6:7, 8.

Wayne E. Oates observes: "Marketplace thought about the presence of God is one of sentimental familiarity. Country-western songs speak of 'having a little talk with Jesus' almost as if the Lord were a chum with whom one has a chitchat. . . . In stark contrast, however, is the persistent biblical wisdom that God's presence comes to us when we know it not. At the least, our awareness of the presence is an afterthought." How does this statement sync with this week's *Key Text*? Might Jeroboam's chummy, "sentimental familiarity" with God have influenced his disastrous choice to allow anyone to serve as a priest? What does this teach about reverence for our holy God today?

## Tuesday

Read Hebrews 4.

Marinate your mind on Ellen White's statement: "[Jeroboam] was in a position to bring about wise reforms in both civil and religious affairs. . . . But Jeroboam failed to make God his trust" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 99).

Read Psalm 91. Write your own psalm that expresses the need and desire to put your trust in God. (You can use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.)

## Wednesday

Read Psalm 51.

One of the *Punch Lines* offers this promise from God: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19, NIV). Compare this promise to that of Ezekiel 36:26 where God says: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (NIV). After reading today's Bible passage from Psalm 51, pray to God, asking Him to give you a new, undivided heart.

## Thursday

Read 1 John 1:7.

What is God trying to teach me through the story of Jeroboam?

How does this lesson inform the way I'm called to live this week?

What are the specific benefits to me when I sell out to God?

## Friday

Read Luke 13:34.

Prayerfully consider the comments of Ellen White as she concludes her chapter on Jeroboam.

"Yet the Lord did not give Israel up without first doing all that could be done to lead them back to their allegiance to Him. Through long, dark years when ruler after ruler stood up in bold defiance of Heaven and led Israel deeper and still deeper into idolatry, God sent message after message to His backslidden people. Through His prophets He gave them every opportunity to stay the tide of apostasy and to return to Him. . . . Even in the darkest hours some would remain true to their divine Ruler and in the midst of idolatry would live blameless in the sight of a holy God. These faithful ones were numbered among the goodly remnant through whom the eternal purpose of Jehovah was finally to be fulfilled" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 108).

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 7.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlhF1rB09s](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.



## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 22 2020

# crossroads

**Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 14–16; 1 Kings 15:8–16:34.  
**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 8.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

Again and again in the Bible we find this description of an Israelite king: “He did evil in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kings 22:52; 2 Kings 8:18; 15:18; etc., NIV). Therefore it’s refreshing to find that rare exception when a king such as Asa is remembered as one who “did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God” (2 Chronicles 14:2, NIV). In ancient Israel, full devotion to God was a rare virtue.

Full devotion is still a rare virtue today. In many respects ours is a culture of compromise. Nevertheless, Jesus still calls us to be sold out, signed up, and fully committed to building the kingdom of God on earth. Ellen White spoke of the need for fully devoted men (and no doubt, women are called to this high ideal as well) when she wrote: “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall” (*Education*, p. 57).

In many respects Asa was a committed follower of God. He obeyed God during the first 10 years of his reign. He abolished much of the idolatry in Judah. He deposed Maacah, his idolatrous grandmother. And by fully relinquishing the battle to God, he scored a great victory in crushing Cush’s army. In comparison to the evil exploits of Ahab and Jezebel, Asa offers some redemptive qualities to focus on in this lesson.

Asa’s legacy, however, is not free from failure. He made alliances with foreign nations and evil people. Then he responded with rage when Hanani confronted him with his sin. In spite of such blunders, he is still remembered in a positive way. Second Chronicles 15:17 offers this summary: “Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa’s heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life” (NIV).

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn about some of the lesser-known characters in Israel’s history. (*Know*)
- Discover the rich lessons to be learned from God’s people in the past. (*Feel*)
- Be challenged to fully commit to Jesus Christ. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- Secularism/worldliness
- Violence
- Reverence

## TEACHING

### I. GETTING STARTED

#### Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. You can build on this exercise by doing the following activity.



## Illustration

*You may want to bring a candle that relights and share this illustration in your own words:*

Many people approach spiritual life like an assignment to keep blowing out candles that are designed to reignite and keep burning. Some people think, *If I can just blow out pride and gluttony and lust and so on, then maybe I'll at least look like a Christian.* That's a sure recipe for failure. Soon you will feel defeated and exhausted.

So what's the answer? The key is not to blow harder; rather, it is to remain in the presence of Jesus. For sin and Jesus cannot coexist in the same heart. Your battle is to always remain in the presence of God in order to let His life be willed through you.

It's like the father who tells of watching his 3-year-old daughter fight the temptation of the cookie jar. The girl doesn't notice that her father is watching from a distance. So she climbs a shelf in the pantry and stretches to snatch a snack. Now she knows the cookie jar is off-limits. Her spirit wants to resist temptation but her flesh craves a sugar hit. Just as she grabs a cookie, Dad clears his throat. Instantly she drops the cookie and scoots away.

Think about it: one moment the kid could not resist temptation but in an instant she models the resolution of a saint. What made the difference? Simple—it was the presence of her father.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

Our battles with temptation work the same way. In our own strength, the flesh always wins. But when we live in the presence of our heavenly Father, we are then positioned to allow God to fight the battle for us.

Thomas Kelly put it this way: "Don't grit your teeth and clench your fists and say, 'I will! I will!' Relax. Take hands off. Submit yourself to God. Learn to live in the passive voice . . . and let life be willed through you."<sup>1</sup>

King Asa discovered this spiritual principle when he won an epic battle against the formidable Cushites. Rather than fighting in his strength, however, he "called to the LORD his God and said, 'LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. LORD, you

are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you' " (2 Chronicles 14:11, NIV). In doing this, Asa discovered that "the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chronicles 20:15, 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.*

- Who are the main actors in the story?
- *Underline* the parts of the story that are key to understanding it.
- What new thing about God do you learn through the story of Asa? Ahab? Jezebel?
- Chart the spiritual ups and downs of Asa's life. Why do you think Asa wandered from God after such a promising start as king? What safeguards can we put into our lives so that we don't repeat Asa's mistakes?
- Compare the stories of Asa, Ahab, and Jezebel. What lessons can we learn from each?
- Which of the disciples most reminds you of Asa? Why? Which of the disciples most reminds you of Ahab? Why?
- How does Asa's story inform our approach to a secular culture today?
- How are we to reconcile the violent wars in Israel's history with "holy wars" that are being fought today?
- What can we learn about reverence from this lesson?
- How does Asa's life illustrate the following spiritual principles?
  - God will not only reinforce good, but confront evil.
  - Full commitment to God will yield favorable results.
  - How well a plan works is not necessarily an indication of God's approval.

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:* Joshua 24:15; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Timothy 1:8; Matthew 16:24–26; Mark 8:34–38; 1 John 2:15–17; 1 Peter 1:6, 7.

### 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. During Asa's reign in Judah, there was no



real peace between Judah and Israel. Second Chronicles 14:1 does record that “Asa his son succeeded him as king, and in his days the country was at peace for ten years” (NIV). This decade of peace is not mentioned in 1 Kings 15:16. On the contrary, it says “there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns” (NIV). This does not mean that there was continual combat and fighting throughout Asa’s reign of 41 years (see 2 Chronicles 16:13 and 1 Kings 15:10); rather, there was continual tension between the 10 tribes of Israel in the north, and the two tribes in Asa’s kingdom in the south.

2. Who were the Cushites that God defeated through Asa? Cush (from the Hebrew word meaning “unknown”) was a son of Ham and the ancestor of five primary people groups: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca (Genesis 10:6-8; 1 Chronicles 1:8). The land of the Cushites was known to the ancients as Ethiopia and referred to the land south of Egypt. Later, it was called Nubia, now referred to as Sudan.
3. Chapters 14 and 15 of 2 Chronicles really need to be read together, as they show the two aspects of Asa’s reform in Judah. First, in chapter 14, we find the outward prosperity of Asa’s reforms. In chapter 15 we find the inward and religious account of Asa’s reforms.

“There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign” (2 Chronicles 15:17–19, NIV).

4. Second Chronicles 15:16 records that Asa deposed his grandmother, the queen mother, “because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah” (NIV). Wikipedia.com offers this background on Asherah poles:

—An Asherah is a secret tree or pole . . . to honor the Ugaritic mother-goddess Asherah.

—Asherah poles are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, the Books of Kings, the second Book of Chronicles, and the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah. . . .

The Hebrew Bible suggests that the poles were made of wood. In the sixth chapter of the Book of Judges, God [told] Gideon to cut down an Asherah pole that was next to an altar to Baal. The wood was to be used for a burnt offering.

The Hebrew Bible states that God hated Asherah poles (Deuteronomy 16:21, NIV).

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

On a poster board, compile a list of what your students say are their priorities. Have them call out everything that comes to mind. They may suggest things such as school, money, friends, church, food,

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

## Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

### History as Story

"Don't know much about history," the old song goes. Indeed, for some students history can be seen as a sure cure for insomnia.

If you're finding that your students' eyes are glazing over as you slog through these lessons that cover the history of the ancient kings of Israel, don't despair. Although history can be a difficult subject to teach, it helps if you present these lessons in the form of a story. For example, perhaps you (or a volunteer actor) can dress up as King Asa and come tell the story as a first-person narrative. Maybe you can invite a rabbi from the local Jewish synagogue to come and share the history of the Jewish people in story form. Another option is to find a movie that depicts life in ancient Israel during the time of these kings. The point is, students should be much more receptive to learning these lessons from history if they are shared as interesting stories, rather than historical facts to be memorized.

and so on. Write them down. Then discuss how faith fits in. If someone's highest priority was to be a fully committed follower of Christ, how would the priorities listed on the board be affected? If a

## RABBI 101

person's desire was to leave Asa's legacy ("Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life" [2 Chronicles 15:17, NIV]), what would that life look like on a day-to-day basis in the world today? How would this desire impact a person's priorities?

Faith is not about trying harder to be good; rather it is about living in the presence of Jesus. In this personal friendship with Jesus, full commitment to Him flourishes. Close with time for prayer, giving your group time with God in silent prayer.

## Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Asa was a man of God. One commentary describes him like this: "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days. The first ten years of his life were occupied in abolishing idolatry and in religious reforms. Acknowledging God in all his ways, Asa was divinely directed."<sup>2</sup>

Asa was not perfect. But he called upon the Lord for help, and God raced to his rescue. Consequently, like David, Asa is remembered as a great king with a heart for God.

We, too, can do extraordinary things by God's power. All it takes is a personal relationship with Jesus and the courage to trust in His providence.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Kelly, "Holy Obedience," as quoted from [www.quaker.org/pamphlets/wpl1939a.html](http://www.quaker.org/pamphlets/wpl1939a.html).

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Lockyer, *All the Kings and Queens of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p. 118.



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 8.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 22 2020

**Scripture Story:** 2 Chronicles 14–16; 1 Kings 15:8–16:34.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 8.

## crossroads

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Photo Getty Images



## flashlight

“Alas, how had the glory of Israel departed! Never before had the chosen people of God fallen so low in apostasy. Of ‘the prophets of Baal’ there were ‘four hundred and fifty,’ besides four hundred ‘prophets of the groves.’ 1 Kings 18:19. Nothing short of the miracle-working power of God could preserve the nation from utter destruction. Israel had voluntarily separated herself from Jehovah, yet the Lord in compassion still yearned after those who had been led into sin, and He was about to send to them one of the mightiest of His prophets, through whom many were to be led back to allegiance to the God of their fathers” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 116).

## keytext

“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.”

(2 Chronicles 16:9, NIV)

# what do you think?

Rank the following spiritual battles from the easiest (1) to the hardest (10):

- \_\_\_ Keeping pure thoughts
- \_\_\_ Refraining from gossip
- \_\_\_ Being honest in schoolwork
- \_\_\_ Speaking only words of kindness
- \_\_\_ Managing anger
- \_\_\_ Spending adequate time with God
- \_\_\_ Refraining from drinking alcohol
- \_\_\_ Helping the undeserving
- \_\_\_ Setting appropriate relationship boundaries
- \_\_\_ Believing in God through hard times

## did you know?

**I**n an attempt to keep the different characters in the story straight, note the role each person played and the Hebrew meaning behind their name.

**Asa** (King of Judah)—“Physician” or “Doctor” or “Deity.”

**Omri** (Made king of Israel instead of Zimri who had slain Elah)—“Bundle of corn” or “Impetuous” or “Jehovah apportions.”

**Ahab** (Son of Omri, and his successor as the seventh king of Israel)—“Father’s brother” or “Uncle.”

**Jezebel** (Wife of Ahab and queen of Israel)—“Condemned” or “The woman who was a she-devil.”

**Hanani** (The prophet who rebuked Asa for bribing Ben-Hadad)—“Jehovah is gracious” or “He hath shewed me mercy.”

**Baasha** (King of Israel)—“Boldness” or “Offensive” or “He who lays waste.”

**Ben-Hadad** (King of Aram, or Syria, who was bribed by Asa to break his alliance with King Baasha)—“Son of the god Hadah.”

**Abijah** (The father of Asa)—“Jehovah is my Father” or “Father of the sea.”

## INTO THE STORY

“Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. . . . He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands.”

“The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. He went out to meet Asa and said to him, ‘Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law.

But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them.’ ”

“Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the LORD’s temple and of his own palace and sent it to

Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. ‘Let there be a treaty between me and you,’ he said, ‘as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me.’

“Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. . . . When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work. . . .

“At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: ‘Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. . . . For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.’

“Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people.”

“Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him.”

“There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife.”

(2 Chronicles 14:2, 4; 15:1–4; 16:2–5, 7, 9, 10 ; 1 Kings 16:30; 21:25, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

If you were to teach the story of Asa to kindergartners, what would you tell them is the main lesson we can learn from it?

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What does the story of Asa teach us about being fully devoted to God?

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What do the examples of Ahab and Jezebel teach us about secularism and worldliness?

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Asa made some big mistakes in his life and yet the Bible says: "Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life" (2 Chronicles 15:17, NIV). How do you explain this verse? If Asa allowed some idol worship to continue, and then he was involved in a shady deal with Ben-Hadad, how is it that he was "fully committed to the Lord all his life"? What comparisons might you make between King David and Asa? Are there any other characters in the Bible whose stories are similar to Asa's?

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## punch lines

**"Then Jesus said to his disciples,** 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' " (Matthew 16:24, NIV).

**"This is to my Father's glory,** that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8, NIV).

**"With many other words** he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation' " (Acts 2:40, NIV).

**"The fool says in his heart,** 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good' " (Psalm 14:1, NIV).

**"Jesus Christ is the same** yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8, NIV).

## further insight

**"The true Christian will make God first and last and best in everything. No ambitious motives will chill his love for God; steadily, perseveringly, will he cause honor to redound to his heavenly Father."**—Ellen G. White,

*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 68, 69.



# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read Romans 7:15.

Review the *What Do You Think?* section. Then summarize today's Bible passage in your own words.

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## Sunday

Read Matthew 16:24.

Review the story of Asa in the *Into* and *Out of the Story* sections of the lesson. How does his story intersect with the following teachings of Jesus?

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"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14, NIV).

"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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matthew 7:24–27, NIV).

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30, NIV).

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## Monday

Read 2 Chronicles 16:9.

Review the *Key Text* for this week and reflect on the following questions:

In what specific ways does God "strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him"?

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What does it mean for me to commit my heart fully to God?

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What were the consequences for Asa because he had done foolish things? What are some of the consequences I have experienced because of my foolish decisions?

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## Tuesday

Read Acts 2:40.

After pursuing other gods, Israel plummeted into apostasy. In the *Flashlight* section, Ellen White writes: "Nothing short of the miracle-working power of God could preserve the nation from utter destruction."

What modern-day idols (things as well as unhealthy or inappropriate relationships) steal our devotion from God? How do these idols lead to destruction? How is God at work today to give us grace and power to stay focused on Him and avoid destruction?

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## Wednesday

Choose your favorite text from the *Punch Lines* and rewrite it in your own words.

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## Thursday

Read 2 Chronicles 16:7–10.

The prophet Hanani spoke a strong word of rebuke against Asa. Asa was not receptive

to this reprimand. Instead of humbly searching his soul and confessing his sin, he "was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people" (2 Chronicles 16:10, NIV).

How do you receive constructive criticism? Do you appreciate it when God sends a word of reproof to you through a friend or family member? Why or why not?

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How might Asa's legacy be different had he humbly received Hanani's reproof? What can you learn from Asa's reaction to criticism?

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## Friday

Read 2 Chronicles 15:17.

The story of King Asa reminds us that God is still looking for followers who are "fully committed." In what way might the followers of Christ today be involved, but not committed. Ask yourself these questions:

Am I involved or committed?

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What would it mean for me to totally sell out to God?

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What is God's dream for my life that can be realized only by radical commitment?

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## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 8.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s](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.



## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 29 2020

# never alone

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 17:1-16.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings (or Royalty in Ruins)*, chapters 9; 10 first part.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Elijah's ministry starts with his confrontation of King Ahab. Elijah suddenly appears in the Bible, makes a speech, and then disappears from sight, while Ahab is left to think on the rainless years ahead of him. Perhaps this startling beginning is what makes him one of the most well-known prophets in the Bible. Or perhaps it is the fact that he was taken up to heaven at the end of his ministry among the people of Israel without ever having to face death.

However, the story of Elijah is incredible, not just in that God provided for him in so many wonderful ways but that Elijah obeyed God even when it might have cost him his life. At only one point in his life did Elijah give way to the fears inside and run away from the work that God had given him.

Elijah was a normal human being with the same nature that we have (see James 5:17), but he chose to go against the flow of the idol-worshiping people around him and stand up for what he believed in. He nearly got killed for it. Several times he was chased down and hunted, but each time God kept an eye out and took care of him. People often wonder why God chooses to protect some people and yet allows others to be harmed. In a way, this lesson brings up this discussion once again. It isn't always this way. Sometimes the people who were working to spread God's message were killed, as were the other prophets in the time of Elijah (see 1 Kings 19:10), but Elijah was protected.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that while bad things happen, God will never leave them. (*Know*)
- Experience the freedom that a life with full trust in God gives. (*Feel*)
- Recommit themselves to God's safe care. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- Courage
- Conviction
- Gift of Prophecy

## TEACHING

### I. GETTING STARTED

#### Activity

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

#### Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

During the terrible days of the Blitz, a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as quickly as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for his son to follow. Terrified, yet hearing his father's voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, "I can't see you!"

The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, “But I can see you. Jump!” The boy jumped, because he trusted his father. The Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

There are times in your life when you have a glitch that comes, you don’t know where to turn, and the only ways out don’t seem that easy. So it was with Elijah, over and over again, but he trusted in God to get him out of the situation, relying on His way out. Even when God tells us to “jump,” and it seems easier to do it our own way, His idea to step out in faith for Him is better in the end.

### **Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

- Have there been times in your life when you felt that God was really protecting you?
- What are some times when God helped you, but it wasn’t your idea of a way out? What did you do?
- If you feel comfortable enough, share with the rest of the class your own experience(s) of a time when God has really looked out for you.
- Why do you think Elijah was taken to heaven? Explain.
- Elijah is one of the most well-known prophets in the Bible. Throughout the ministry of John the Baptist and later in Jesus’ ministry as well, people questioned whether or not one of them was Elijah. Why do you think this is so?

With the students, explore the different times of Elijah’s life and ministry, discussing the possible differences in emotions in each situation. Think of the incredible awe and happiness he must have felt on Mount Carmel (read the story in 1 Kings 18), and the terror he felt when King Ahab pursued him. Make Elijah real to the students, highlighting his high and low moments, the moments that stay in people’s memories when they think of him. Then ask the students the

following questions in your own words:

What strikes you most about the story of Elijah? Is it his obedience? God’s watch care over him?

How can you relate his story to your life now?

Do miraculous things (e.g., the resurrection of the widow of Zarapheth’s son [read 1 Kings 17:17–24], the ravens feeding Elijah, or the fire that came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice) happen nowadays? Or is it something that is just reserved to the Bible times?

### **Sharing Context and Background**

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

- Elijah’s ministry is set in Israel during the Omride dynasty (ninth century B.C.), a period marked by relative peace and prosperity. Elijah is presented as the powerful champion of Yahweh against the royal house’s worship of Baal.
- The face of the historical Elijah himself, however, lies hidden behind a veil of miraculous moments. Even the prophet’s name (“Yahweh is my God”) has been seen by some as a name that is reflective of his zeal. He is regularly called “the Tishbite,” but the word is of uncertain meaning.
- Elijah displays many of the traits characteristic of prophetic figures throughout Israel’s history. He is a miracle worker whose word of power can produce weal or woe (1 Kings 17:1, 16; 2 Kings 1:10, 12; 2:8). He is a powerful intercessor for individuals or the whole people (1 Kings 17:20–22; 18:42–45). He confronts the king with condemnation for religious infidelity and for social injustice (1 Kings 17:1; 18:18; 21:20–22; 2 Kings 1:16).
- Allusions to the stories of the Exodus pervade 1 Kings 17–19 and establish a parallel between the ministries of Elijah and Moses. The geographical framework of the three chapters recalls Moses’ wanderings: each prophet begins his journey with a flight eastward to escape a king’s wrath; each finds safety with a family. Each returns to his country to face and challenge the king and to awaken faith among the Israelites. Each leaves the country again on a journey to Sinai/Horeb, where he experiences



### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Take Time

The top-notch teacher will give the Holy Spirit time to help them prepare the lesson. A hurried survey of the lesson on Friday night may give enough knowledge to be able to talk to your students for 30 or 40 minutes. But is it enough time for you to truly perceive the message that just may make a difference in the life of one or more of your young people?

Well-known author Bruce Wilkinson recommends putting down the teacher's guide, picking up a pad of paper, and just thinking. "Record your thoughts on paper about the possible timeless truths. Spread your meditations throughout the week before you teach. Don't expect to have the greatest insights the first time. Plan at least three times during the week to meditate and you'll get more insights than the same amount of time focused at one sitting."<sup>1</sup>

RABBI 101

a meeting with God. Each then departs for Israel via Transjordan.

- Elijah's mysterious assumption to heaven in a whirlwind occurs once the Jordan has been crossed. In 1 Kings 19, Elijah had made an earlier, solitary pilgrimage to Horeb, whence

he returned with new tasks including the commissioning of his successor. This time the journey is Elisha's. He accompanies his master on the outward road to the place of power where Elijah is translated. This is the moment of supernatural encounter from which Elisha returns transformed and empowered.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Divide the students into groups of two or four and ask them to discuss together the possible reasoning behind God's choice to take Enoch and Elijah to heaven. Have each group pick a person to discuss and give them the following Bible verses for helpful tips on the matter. Then discuss with the whole class the ideas that the students came up with.

Enoch: (Genesis 5:18–24; Hebrews 11:5)

Elijah: (2 Kings 2)

#### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Just because God doesn't necessarily provide for you in the same miraculous ways as He did for Elijah, doesn't mean that God isn't with you. Turning your life over to Him means that He will never leave you; your life is in His hands. Bad things happen in life, some-

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

times things go wrong, but trusting in God will get you out on the right end.

In giving God his life, and in obeying Him even if the situation was dangerous, Elijah was entrusting himself to God's care. He did doubt, at one point in his life, whether God was really going to protect him, even asking for God Himself to kill him. But God showed Elijah that even then, when Elijah's faith failed him, He would not leave him.

Turning our lives over to God so that He may use us as tools to spread His message as Elijah did may be dangerous and frightening at times, but as long as we stay close to Him, we can know that He will never, ever leave us.

<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, Bruce. *The Seven Laws of the Learner: How to Teach Almost Anything to Practically Anyone!* (Sisters, Oreg.: Multnomah Press, 1992).



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 9; 10 first part.





# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 29 2020

## never alone

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 17:1–16.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 9; 10 first part.

Photo by Audrey Goforth



### flashlight

“The word of faith and power was upon his [Elijah’s] lips, and his whole life was devoted to the work of reform. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to rebuke sin and press back the tide of evil. And while he came to the people as a reprover of sin, his message offered the balm of Gilead to the sin-sick souls of all who desired to be healed” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 119).

### keytext

“ ‘It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.’ So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. . . . The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.”

(1 Kings 17:4–6, NASB)

# what do you think?

God sometimes refers to Himself as a father, or a mother, and Jesus even refers to Himself as a brother. If you were in a hard, difficult, or even life-threatening situation in your life, who would you want to be there with you? Rank them in order of importance from 1 being the highest to 5 being the lowest.

- \_\_\_ Mother
- \_\_\_ Father
- \_\_\_ Sister
- \_\_\_ Brother
- \_\_\_ Best friend

## did you know?

**T**he Old Testament is not the only place where we see Elijah. In fact, he appears to Peter and John at the Transfiguration on the Mount of Olives, talking with Jesus. Elijah was not alone, though; with him appeared Moses. Jesus told His two accompanying disciples not to tell anyone about the incident until after His death.

This incident is told in three of the four Gospel accounts with very little variation in the retelling, showing that it was a very important incident in Jesus' life and ministry. God obviously cared a lot about Elijah, and at the end of his ministry, God took Elijah away from this earth so that he could live with Him.

## INTO THE STORY

**"Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.' The word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.'**

**"So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook. "It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain**

in the land.

**"Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.'**

**"So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, 'Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink.'**

**"As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, 'Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand.'**

**"But she said, 'As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.'**

**"Then Elijah said to her, 'Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. For thus says the LORD God of Israel, "The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth."'**

**"So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah."**

(1 Kings 17:1-16, NASB)

# OUT OF THE STORY

How has God provided for you in your life?

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Have you ever had a time when He worked something out for you, or when you felt Him just when you needed Him?

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What were some other times in Elijah's life where God provided for him?

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How did it strengthen Elijah's faith in God when God helped him out?

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It took courage for the widow to feed Elijah when she barely had enough food for herself and her son. How can we exhibit that courage in our lives?

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Read 1 Kings 19. How did God show Elijah that He would always be there for him?

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Does God still do things like that in modern times? If so, what instances do you know of?

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## punch lines

**"Do not fear,** for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (**Isaiah 41:10, NASB**).

**"Where can I go** from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me" (**Psalms 139:7-10, NASB**).

**"Then the woman** said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth' " (**1 Kings 17:24, NASB**).

**"It is he who will go** as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the LORD" (**Luke 1:17, NASB**).

**"Elijah was a man** with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months" (**James 5:17, NASB**).

## further insight

**"And to all who, in time of trial and want, give sympathy and assistance to others more needy, God has promised great blessing. He has not changed. His power is no less now than in the days of Elijah."**

—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 131, 132.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read Isaiah 41:10.

When you are frightened or in a bad situation it is comforting to have a close person like a family member to offer a hug or a kind word. In the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson you thought about who you would really want to be there with you in a dangerous or scary situation.

How does it make you feel to know that God will never ever leave you, even if there is no one else there for you?

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## Sunday

Read James 5:17.

All through Elijah's life God provided for and looked out for him. Even when Elijah ran away from his work, God was still with him. At the end of his life, God decided to take Elijah to his real home: heaven. God cared for him so much that He wanted him to live with Him eternally in heaven, and not die here on earth. How would you feel about having that kind of relationship with God? Write your thoughts in a letter to God. (You can use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide if you need additional space.)

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## Monday

Read 1 Kings 17:4-6.

Read this week's *Key Text*. Can you imagine how much courage it took to walk up to the king of Israel and tell him that there would be no rain until he, the king, gave up being sinful, along with the entire nation that he ruled? But Elijah did! God told him what to do, and he obeyed. God kept Elijah safe from Ahab and later He answered Elijah's prayer for rain. He never let Elijah down. Thank God for

the times when He has helped you out, even if it wasn't so dramatic as Elijah's experiences. Write your thanks as a prayer.

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## Tuesday

Read Luke 1:17.

The *Flashlight* section for this week really shows what an incredible kind of person Elijah was. He had God's message to tell, and he was going to tell it! Years later another prophet was compared to him. Some even thought that he *was* Elijah. John the Baptist preached in the wilderness, turning people back to God. He preached with such zeal and enthusiasm that people began wondering if he was Elijah. How do you think that kind of zeal and enthusiasm would be met today? Do you know anyone who exhibits that much passion for God and His kingdom?

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## Wednesday

Read Psalm 139.

Psalm 139 gives us a background glimpse of what David is talking about. God takes care of people. He knows everything about us down to the last hair on our heads. Doesn't it feel comforting to know that we have a God who loves us so much? Look through the Psalms and find other examples of God's love and care for us.

Psalm \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm \_\_\_\_\_

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## Thursday

Read Isaiah 41:10.

If there was one point in your lifetime when you were especially in need of help, when was it? Did someone come and give you the help you needed or were you left to fend for yourself? Being in a situation that proves difficult and dealing with it alone isn't easy. What did you do in that difficult situation? Did you call on God? Did He answer your call?

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## Friday

Read Philippians 4:6, 7.

One of the most difficult things for people in their lives is the hard times where they have to completely rely on God for help. Naturally, as humans, we like to try to take things into our own hands and try to do it our way. God repeatedly told the children of Israel to put their faith in Him. Many times they did and were blessed, but often they tried to do things their own way and ended up in a lot of trouble. When are some times when God did come through for you? Was it in a way that you expected? Or was it in a way that worked out well but wasn't exactly what you had in mind? Why do you think it happened that way?

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## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 9; 10 first part

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlhF1rB09s](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.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 07 2020

## faith on the mountaintop

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:1-40.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 10 last part; 11.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

After years of famine, during which Elijah was miraculously cared for by the Lord, the time had come for a showdown. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest. At stake was the worship and loyalty of the nation of Israel. Elijah risked everything on his faith that God would bring fire from heaven to honor his sacrifice—and that the false god Baal would do nothing.

Elijah's courage in this story seems extreme to the point of foolishness—taunting the pagan prophets, soaking the Lord's sacrifice with water to emphasize his total dependence on God. Such extreme faith seems far removed from the everyday reality of most youth, yet day-to-day faith experiences with God now will lay the foundation for the kind of courageous faith young people will need to take a stand for what's right in more difficult situations. It might be helpful, though, to help the students understand that this story is not suggesting that Elijah's stance of taunting be used for our interactions with non-Christians or non-Adventists. A study of Scripture and Ellen White can help us investigate the nature of this circumstance more thoroughly. As stated, the point that you want to stress for your students is that of Elijah's courage.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that trusting God through hard times gave Elijah the strength to take a courageous step of faith. (*Know*)

- Believe that they can trust God to be there for them when they do what is right. (*Feel*)
- Commit to taking a stand for what they believe is right. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

- Peer pressure
- Faith
- Courage

### 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.*

In groups of two or three, ask students to share an example of a time they faced a situation such as that described in *What Do You Think?*—a situation in which someone they knew was doing something wrong. Have them discuss how a Christian teenager might respond in that situation.

##### Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

In 1989 Chinese students staged a seven-week-long protest in Tiananmen Square that drew the world's attention. As people around the world watched the story unfold on the news, one image, reprinted over and over in different media outlets, caught every eye. Nearly 20 years later, it still remains one of the



most striking and memorable images of that time.

The picture shows a line of Army tanks rolling into the square. Standing in front of the lead tank, boldly facing it down, is a single young man. The unknown protestor, whose real name is still unknown to this day, forced the line of tanks to halt simply by standing in front of them. As tanks tried to drive around him, he continued to step in front of them, finally climbing up onto the front of one tank to speak to the driver until he was pulled back into the crowd by onlookers.

The picture of “Tank Man” became so popular because it showed something we all admire: one person who has the courage to stand alone in the face of danger and oppression, even at the risk of his own life. How many of us would have that kind of courage?

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

We all admire courage. We respect the person who takes a brave and difficult stand. But could we be that person? Most of us find it much easier to go along with the crowd than to take a difficult stand.

There are times in the Christian life when, in order to be true to God, we’ll have to say and do things that are unpopular. We’ll have to be willing to stand out, maybe even face hardship and persecution. The only way to get through that is by faith. The kind of faith that grows stronger as we build a loving, trusting relationship with God day by day.

That’s the kind of faith Elijah had. That’s the faith that gave him courage, that enabled him to stand alone on Mount Carmel facing all those prophets of Baal and say, “Come on! Let’s see whose God is the true God!”

### **Out of the Story for Teachers**

*Read the Into the Story section aloud with your students.*

- Assign different students to read the words spoken by Elijah, the prophets of Baal, and the people. Read the narrative portions yourself. After reading through the passage in this way, ask: What does Elijah say to the prophets of Baal? Why do you think he speaks in this way? What do his words convey?
- What do the prophets of Baal say? Why do

you think the Bible writer doesn’t record any response from them to Elijah? Were they speechless? Why?

- What about the people of Israel? How did they respond to the fire from heaven? How do you think they would have responded if the prophets of Baal had somehow managed to make fire appear on *their* altar?
- Ask: How many jars of water had soaked the sacrifice by the time Elijah was finished? What was the point of doing this? Why does the Bible writer record that not only the sacrifice and the wood, but the altar stones and the water, were consumed? What point is this making about the God of heaven?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Ephesians 6:10–17; Romans 8:31–39; Hebrews 11:1–6, 32–40*

### **Sharing Context and Background**

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

Faith like Elijah’s doesn’t happen overnight. Sometimes we imagine standing up for our faith in a difficult situation, or facing persecution at the end of time, and think, “*I could never do that! I don’t have the courage!*”

Christian writer Corrie Ten Boom had that same fear as a child. She told her father she feared she wouldn’t be brave enough to face persecution if that time ever came. Her father asked her, “When we go on a train trip, when do I give you your ticket? Three weeks before?”

“No, Papa,” she replied, “you give it to me right before we get on the train.”

“That’s how it is with God,” he told her. “He gives us courage to face trials when we need it, not before.”

As an older woman Corrie found herself hiding Jews in her home during the Holocaust, eventually ending up in a German concentration camp. The courage she thought she would never have was there when she needed it.

Corrie Ten Boom, and the prophet Elijah, and many other people of faith throughout history have learned that putting your faith in God day by day builds the kind of trusting relationship that allows us to be courageous



### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Role-playing

Doing a role play, as suggested in this week's *Getting Started* section, can be a great way to bring a story or issue to life for your class. However, some students may be too shy or self-conscious to participate in a role play. Don't force anyone to participate if they don't want to, but encourage everyone to take part. If you have a very large class, you might have a group of three students perform a role play for another group of three, rather than in front of the whole group—this may make it less threatening.

RABBI 101

in the face of danger. Before he ever faced down the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah lived through three years of famine, trusting God to provide his food every day. By the end of that time, he had practice trusting God. He knew God would come through.

Sure, you may not have to face a firing squad for your faith today. But maybe you can have the courage and faith to be friendly to an unpopular new student at school or to walk away when someone tells a racist joke instead of laughing along with the crowd. As we exercise our faith in small things, God gives us greater faith and courage.

## III. CLOSING

### Activity

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

Think back to the situations we discussed at the beginning of this week's lesson—times when others are doing wrong and we need to take a stand for what's right. On a note card, write the following sentence, filling in the blanks:

"I promise that when others are \_\_\_\_\_, with God's help I will \_\_\_\_\_." Fold the card and keep

it in your Bible as a private commitment between you and the Lord. Remember, He doesn't expect you to do it in your own strength—He gives you the faith and courage to do the right thing even when it's difficult.

### Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Elijah's confrontation on Mount Carmel was dramatic, exciting, larger-than-life. Yet we face the same challenge in many smaller ways. Will we stand up for what's right when others are doing wrong? Can we trust God to take care of us even if we risk rejection, misunderstanding, and danger?

Taking a small stand for the right today may lead to bigger things tomorrow. Someday you may have the opportunity to stand on your own "Mount Carmel"

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.

and declare your faith in God to the whole world. But it begins today with simple trust and faith in God. Trust Him to help you do the right thing, to make the right

choices and live with the consequences. Place your life in His hands, and He'll give you all the courage you'll ever need.



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 10 last part; 11.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 07 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:1–40.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 10 last part; 11.

## faith on the mountaintop

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Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.



### flashlight

“God cannot use men who, in time of peril, when the strength, courage, and influence of all are needed, are afraid to take a firm stand for the right. He calls for men who will do faithful battle against wrong, warring against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 142).

### keytext

“Elijah stepped forward and prayed: ‘LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.’ ”

(1 Kings 18:36, NIV)

# what do you think?

When I see others in my life doing something I think is wrong,

I usually

- ☐ Ignore it.
- ☐ Join in.
- ☐ Tell them what they're doing is wrong.
- ☐ Keep quiet unless they ask me what I think, then say I think it's wrong.
- ☐ In a kind, caring way provide positive advice and point them to a better way that is possible through Jesus.

If I'm doing something wrong, I appreciate it when others in my life

- ☐ Don't bother me about it; mind their own business.
- ☐ Respectfully tell me where they think I'm making a mistake.
- ☐ Talk to others and leave me alone.

## did you know?

**T**he name "Baal" means "lord." It is used to refer to a number of different pagan gods that were worshiped by the Israelites and the people who lived around them. King Ahab's wife, Jezebel, made the worship of Baal popular among the Israelites.

Pagan gods were believed to control such things as weather, crops, and so on. By declaring that the God of heaven had stopped the rain for three years, Elijah was challenging the belief that Baal would bring rain and good crops. His "showdown" on Mount Carmel demonstrated that God alone controlled every aspect of life and that He alone was worthy of Israel's worship.

## INTO THE STORY

**"Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.' So they took the bull given them and prepared it.**

**"Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. 'Baal, answer us!' they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.**

**"At noon Elijah began to taunt them. 'Shout louder!' he said. 'Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.'**

**So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.**  
Midday

passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

"Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come here to me.' They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones. . . . With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it. . . . He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, 'Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.'

" 'Do it again,' he said, and they did it again.

" 'Do it a third time,' he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

"At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: 'LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.'

"Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

"When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!'

(1 Kings 18:25–39, NIV)



# OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Elijah thought of the idea of staging a challenge between Baal and the true God?

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What did he hope to accomplish by doing this?

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Why do you think Elijah made fun of the prophets of Baal? How might they have responded when he did this?

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What was the point of soaking the sacrifice with water?

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How did Elijah have enough faith to trust that the sacrifice would burn?

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What was God's purpose in offering this spectacular display of His power?

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How do you think the people watching felt when they saw the sacrifice consumed? How do you think the prophets of Baal felt?

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## punch lines

**"Without faith** it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6, NIV).

**"Finally, be strong** in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:10–12, NIV).

**"Truly I tell you,** if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20, NIV).

**"And he will go on** before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17, NIV).

## further insight

**"Where there is not only a belief in God's word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul."**—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read Hebrews 11:6.

Elijah had the courage to speak out when he believed the people of Israel were doing wrong. God gave Elijah a job to do, and Elijah had the courage and faith to follow through with it.

What does it mean to you to say that “without faith it is impossible to please God”? If you felt you had to speak out against something you thought was wrong, would it take a lot of faith to do that? Would you trust God to come through for you as He did for Elijah in this story?

Think about a situation in your life in which you believe God is calling you to trust Him. If you had greater faith, what could you do in this situation?

## Sunday

Read Matthew 17:20.

Imagine yourself watching in the crowd on Mount Carmel as Elijah faces off against the prophets of Baal. As an ordinary Israelite, you may be torn between Baal worship and faith in the true God. After three years of drought and famine, you're prepared to worship any god who can bring rain.

All the odds seem to be stacked in Baal's favor. Yet after hours of noisy worship, the priests of Baal have accomplished nothing. Your attention swings to the lone prophet of God, Elijah. His sacrifice is soaked with water, making it abundantly clear that he can't light it himself. He relies completely on the invisible God of your fathers.

Write three words that describe what you might feel at that moment:

## Monday

Read 1 Kings 18:36.

According to the *Key Text*, what did Elijah hope the demonstration on Mount Carmel would prove? \_\_\_\_\_

Was this goal accomplished? \_\_\_\_\_ Find

a text in the *Into the Story* section that supports your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

## Tuesday

Read Ephesians 6:10–18.

What do you think it means to “take a firm stand for the right” as the passage from *Prophets and Kings* says that Christians should do?

Sometimes we face situations in which others are doing wrong and we need to have the courage and faith to speak out. In which of the following situations would you feel that, as a Christian, you should point out that what's happening is wrong?

\_\_\_\_\_ Your classmates are making fun of a disabled student behind his back.

\_\_\_\_\_ You are shopping with your friend when you notice she quietly shoplifts a small item.

\_\_\_\_\_ You are at a friend's house with no adults around when someone brings in a case of beer and several of your friends start to drink.

\_\_\_\_\_ A friend brings an Ouija board to your house and asks that you help him ask it to contact his uncle who died last year.

\_\_\_\_\_ You notice someone cheating off your paper during a test.

How likely would you be to speak out in these situations? What different ways are there of handling these situations?

## Wednesday

Read Luke 1:17.

The Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section talk about what it means to be a person of courage and faith, to take a stand for what is right. Elijah was such a powerful biblical example of this kind of faith and courage that centuries later, in the time of Jesus, people still looked to him as the ideal man of courageous faith. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, was said to have come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (NIV), and some people even believed that Jesus Himself was Elijah reborn! That's the kind of impact a person of courage and faith can make on the world.

As you look around you today, who do you see setting an example of courageous faith?

## Thursday

Read James 1:12.

Look back at the situations presented in Tuesday's lesson. Are any of them similar to situations you have faced? How do you react when others are doing things you believe are wrong?

What's one situation you're facing now in which you feel God is calling you to stand up for what is right? \_\_\_\_\_

What could you do to stand up for God in this situation? \_\_\_\_\_

## Friday

Read 1 Peter 5:6, 7.

Elijah's faith was strong on Mount Carmel because he had a lifetime of experience in trusting God. He had just lived through three years of famine, depending totally on God's power to provide even the most basic, everyday needs for him. Sometimes we read stories like that of Elijah on Mount Carmel and think, *I could never have that kind of faith!* But faith is like muscle—it gets stronger by being used.

In your prayer time today talk to God about the things you're worried about. Place them trustingly in His hands and ask Him to help your faith grow so that you will be ready when bigger tests come.

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 10 last part; 11.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s](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.



## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 14 2020

## doubt in the valley

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 18:41-46; 19:1-18.

Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 12; 13.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

## I. SYNOPSIS

After Elijah's stunning victory for the Lord on Mount Carmel, the wicked Queen Jezebel threatened his life. Facing down the prophets of Baal didn't daunt Elijah, but running for his life seemed to plunge him into despair. Elijah, believing he was the only true worshiper of God left in Israel, became so discouraged he wished he could die. God sent an angel to minister to him, then spoke to Elijah with His own "still, small voice" to assure Elijah that he was not alone.

This story about Elijah emphasizes the fact that all God's followers will face times of discouragement and despair as well as "mountaintop" experiences such as the triumph on Mount Carmel. When the angel steps in and guides Elijah to take care of his physical needs of rest and food, it reveals how the physical and emotional aspects of our lives affect each other.

God's Word gives a great deal of helpful guidance to help believers get through the "down" times that are a part of the Christian experience. Young Christians need to know that times of discouragement are not proof that their faith is false or that they are "bad Christians," but rather opportunities to grow spiritually.

## II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that lows as well as highs are part of the Christian life. (*Know*)
- Believe that God still cares and is helping them even when they are feeling down. (*Feel*)

- Develop strategies to help strengthen their faith during times of discouragement. (*Respond*)

## III. EXPLORE

- Fatigue
- Depression
- Emotions

## 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 students about their strategies for dealing with discouragement. List positive suggestions on a flip chart or whiteboard at the front of the room, starting with the ones in the lesson and adding others the group suggests.

Ask: Have you used any of these strategies when you've been feeling bad? Did you think of them as "strategies" at the time?

Say: We react in lots of ways when we're feeling bad, but we don't always *think* about how we react. What do you think is actually more effective in helping you feel better?

**Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

Do you like riding on roller coasters? Some people

love the thrill, while others hate the terror and stay as far away from roller coasters as they can.

Many people describe the ups and downs of emotions as a roller coaster ride. The highs and lows are steeper for some people than for others, but everyone experiences both—ups and downs. Unlike a roller coaster, no one experiences excitement as they begin the downward plunge into discouragement and despair. Yet that downward ride is one everyone has to take at some point. The question is: How will you handle it?

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Everyone experiences down times and bad feelings—even Christians. Some people suggest that the Christian life is all happiness and sunshine without any problems, but all mature Christians know that's not true. Even a faithful prophet such as Elijah knew discouragement so seriously he even considered suicide! Discouragement is not the mark of an unsuccessful Christian—it's the mark of a growing one. Growing in faith involves not only learning to trust God through the valleys as well as the mountaintops, but also reaching out to others when we need help. For those of you interested in resources dealing with depression and/or suicide, go to [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net). Remember, no matter how helpless or hopeless you may feel, there is help, hope, healing, and freedom in 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 process it with them.*

Looking back at Elijah's experiences in this story and over the last few weeks, try drawing a "life map" of Elijah's faith journey. Draw it on the whiteboard or flip chart in front of your room using students' suggestions. The "map" can be a simple timeline of Elijah's experiences, but instead of drawing a straight horizontal line, draw high points and low points along the line (like a roller coaster) to indicate the ups and downs in Elijah's spiritual journey (see "Rabbi 101" below for more on creating life maps). Use pictures, symbols, or Bible references to indicate specific points in Elijah's life.

Then invite students to draw their own life maps, indicating high and low points in their lives, especially as they relate to their spiritual experience. High points might include things such as giving their heart to Jesus, baptism, attending summer camp or a youth rally, sharing Jesus with a friend, having a prayer answered, while the low points will indicate experiences that led to doubt, discouragement, and sadness. Assure students they can keep their maps private. As they finish, use some of the Bible verses from the *Punch Lines* section of the student lesson to remind them that God is with them in every stage of their life journey—in the low points as well as the high points.

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Matthew 11:28–30; Isaiah 43:1, 2; John 16:33.*

### **Sharing Context and Background**

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

This lesson focuses on the ups and downs that are a natural part of the Christian experience. Young people need to learn that faith is not based on feelings; holding on to their faith even when they feel sad and discouraged is an important part of growing in Jesus.

In discussing this topic, it's important not to ignore the very real subtopic of clinical depression. Sad feelings and discouragement are part of everyone's life, but in some people these can become extreme, leading to a serious depression. Many teenagers suffer from depression, which may be triggered by life events such as loss of a loved one, violence or abuse, family breakup, and so on. Depression can also occur even when there's no apparent life cause, probably as a result of a chemical imbalance in the brain.

This week's lesson suggests a number of strategies that are useful for dealing with spiritual lows and discouragement: prayer, faith, relying on God's promises, exercise, rest, keeping a positive attitude, serving others, and so on. While these strategies may also be useful to a person suffering from serious depression, they are usually not enough. Professional help in the form of counseling or therapy, and in some cases medication, may be part of God's plan for helping young people with depression. Just telling someone who is clinically depressed to "cheer up and trust God!" is not helpful.



To help make this distinction clear in the minds of your students, it might be helpful to review some of the warning signs that distinguish depression from a bad mood or “down” feelings. Young people who experience several of these signs for more than two weeks at a time should seek help for depression:

- Feeling sad or discouraged most of the time, especially for “no reason”
- Lack of energy or feeling tired all the time
- Inability to enjoy activities they usually enjoy
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Irritability and anxiety
- Inability to concentrate
- Significant weight gain or loss
- Change in sleep patterns
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Aches and pains with no physical cause
- Pessimism; indifference toward the future
- Thoughts of death or suicide

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Hand out index cards and pencils. Say: “When Elijah was most discouraged, God spoke to him with a ‘still, small voice’ or a ‘gentle voice.’ As you think about the things we’ve discussed and the Bible texts we’ve read today, imagine what God’s gentle voice might be saying to you right now. It could be a Bible



#### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

##### Drawing a Life Map

Drawing a life map is a good way to explore the life of a historical or biblical character; it’s also a good way for students to reflect on their own spiritual journey. It’s similar to drawing a timeline of events, but instead of a straight line moving forward through time, you can use a life map to illustrate ups and downs, twists and turning points. Visual symbols can be used to illustrate important events. For tips and examples, check out the links below or Google the phrase “life map.”

The following site has good tips, though no visual images. It suggests using only pictures, never words, on a life map, but this is just a guideline and need not be followed rigidly; adapt the idea to your own needs: [www.educationworld.com/a\\_tsl/archives/05-1/lesson023.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_tsl/archives/05-1/lesson023.shtml).

This one contains links to some sample life maps to give you an idea of how it looks: [www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=74](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=74).

verse or just a sentence of encouragement. Write down what you believe God’s message to you is when you are discouraged and need help. Keep it in your Bible to read when you need it most.”

### 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*



## Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Elijah was on the mountaintop when God sent fire down from heaven. He was uplifted and filled with the Holy Spirit, just like a Christian who has recently been baptized or given their heart to Jesus. But soon Elijah had to face fear and danger, and he experienced such a severe discouragement that he wanted to die.

Maybe you've felt like that at times. Maybe you've been down, discouraged, or even depressed. Ups and downs are part of every life, even the Christian life. *Especially* the Christian life. God wants our faith

to grow as we learn to trust Him through bad times as well as good. We can trust God to send "fire from heaven" when we need it on the mountaintop. We can also trust Him to speak to us with the "still small voice" of hope and faith when we need encouragement. When you are down, trust God to lift you up.



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 12; 13.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 14 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:41–46; 19:1–18.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 12; 13.

## doubt in the valley

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Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.



### flashlight

“For the disheartened there is a sure remedy—faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day. Are you tempted to give way to feelings of anxious foreboding or utter despondency? In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. . . . Never will He change the covenant He has made with those who love Him” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 164).

### keytext

“The LORD said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.’ ”

(1 Kings 19:11, NIV)

# what do you think?

Which of the following things help you when you're feeling down or discouraged?

- ☐ Talking to a friend
- ☐ Spending time alone
- ☐ Listening to music
- ☐ Prayer
- ☐ Talking to a parent, counselor, pastor, or other caring adult
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Doing something for someone else
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## did you know?

**S**piritual highs are often followed by spiritual lows. Just ask anyone who has ever returned from the excitement of a youth retreat or rally to deal with the problems of everyday life. When you're surrounded by other Christians, singing and praising the Lord, it's easy to feel happy, excited, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Three weeks later when you're coping with parents, homework, and peer pressure you may find yourself crashing into discouragement or despair.

The Bible doesn't promise that God's people will never know unhappiness or discouragement. After his triumphant showdown against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah collapsed into discouragement and despair. But God didn't abandon him—and He won't abandon you when times get tough.

some bread  
baked over hot coals,  
and a jar of water. He ate and  
drank and then lay down again.

"The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.' So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. . . .

"And the word of the LORD came to him: 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

"He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.'

"The LORD said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.'

"Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave."

(1 Kings 19:1-13, NIV)

## INTO THE STORY

"Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, 'May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.'

"Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, LORD,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

"All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around, and there by his head was

# OUT OF THE STORY

Elijah had just won a stunning victory for God. What happened right afterwards to make him feel discouraged?

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Do you think Elijah was sincere in wishing he could die? Why or why not?

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What was the angel's advice to Elijah immediately after he said he wanted to die? Why do you think this was good advice?

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Carefully read Elijah's reply to the Lord's question: "What are you doing here?" What do Elijah's words tell you about how he was feeling at that point?

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Why didn't Elijah hear God's voice in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire? What is the significance of God's voice being a "gentle whisper" at this point in Elijah's story?

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How can you best hear God's voice speaking to you?

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## punch lines

**"In this world** you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV).

**"Be strong and take heart,** all you who hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:24, NIV).

**"Even youths grow tired** and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:30, 31, NIV).

**"Do not fear,** for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you" (Isaiah 43:1, 2, NIV).

**"Come to me,** all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

## further insight

**"It is not always the most learned presentation of God's truth that convicts and converts the soul. . . . It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart."**

—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 169.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read 1 Kings 19:1–13.

What does Elijah say after sitting down under the broom tree?

How do you think Elijah felt at that moment?

When have you felt most discouraged in your life? Do you think you've ever felt as bad as Elijah did under the broom tree?

List the specific things God says or does for Elijah to help him through this experience:

Look back at the *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson. What helps you most when you are feeling down? What do you think God might say to you at such a time?

## Sunday

Read Matthew 11:28.

Look through the *Out of the Story* questions and think about your answers. Elijah had just won a huge victory for the Lord. Yet when Queen Jezebel threatened his life, he wanted to lie down and die.

Spiritual highs are often followed by spiritual lows. We need both—the highs and the lows, the mountaintops and the valleys—to grow spiritually. Elijah learned through this experience that God wouldn't leave him alone, that God's still small voice was still speaking to him.

## Monday

Read Isaiah 40:30, 31.

God told Elijah to stand on the mountaintop and get ready for the Lord's presence. Elijah had already experienced an amazing miracle on Mount Carmel, yet just a few weeks later he needs to stand on another mountaintop and meet God again in order to have his faith renewed.

When we experience “down” times in the Christian life, what are some ways we can stand in God's presence again? List some things that help you to hear God's “still, small voice.”

## Tuesday

Read 1 John 5:14.

In the *Flashlight* section, Ellen White has some specific suggestions for Christians who are discouraged: faith, prayer, and work.

Faith involves trusting God and knowing that He is still with us, even when we don't feel like it. Our faith is not based on how we feel, but on the Bible's promises that God is faithful and cares for us no matter what.

Prayer is our contact with God. Just as God spoke to Elijah through a gentle voice, He speaks to us in times of prayer. Prayer isn't just talking to God; it involves listening to Him too.

Work takes us outside of our own problems and helps us focus on the needs of others. Doing something kind for someone else can help lift our spirits when we're down. Can you think of something you can do for someone else that might help you to feel better too?

## Wednesday

The promises in God's Word can be great for encouraging us when we get discouraged. Look through the texts in the *Punch Lines* and find the one that's most encouraging to you. Copy it on a card or a piece of poster paper. You can even decorate it with pictures or designs. Then put it somewhere it will catch your eye and encourage you next time you're feeling discouraged.

## Thursday

Read Psalm 31:24.

It's time to put together some of the things we've learned this week into a “prescription” you can use when discouragement hits. Fill in the blanks to write your unique prescription below. It

will also be helpful for you to share this with a supporting friend or two, which will strengthen your resolve to implement it. (Go to [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net) to find resources for choosing a support/accountability partner.)

Next time I feel discouraged, I will talk to \_\_\_\_\_.

I will listen to \_\_\_\_\_.

I will think about and repeat this Bible verse: \_\_\_\_\_.

I will pray, asking God for \_\_\_\_\_.

I will do three things that I enjoy and that are good for me: \_\_\_\_\_.

I will do the following for someone else: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Friday

Read John 16:33.

Ups and downs are natural in the Christian life. But sometimes we can figure out what triggers the down times and start looking to God for encouragement before we get too far “down.”

Elijah's discouragement was triggered by fear of Queen Jezebel and her threats against his life. Fear is one emotion that can often send us spiraling into negative feelings. Others include anger, envy, loneliness, and grief.

What kinds of situations trigger you to start feeling down and discouraged? Try applying some of those remedies you made in yesterday's lesson as soon as negative feelings start. God has the power to get you through the bad times and bring you back to the “mountaintop” again!

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 12; 13.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s](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.





## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 21 2020

# who's counting?

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:20–22; 19:14–18;  
Revelation 18:2, 4, 5.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*),  
chapter 14.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

Elijah's life often seems like a roller-coaster ride through supernatural victory to human despair. As a prophet acting as the mouthpiece for heaven, Elijah had moments of unmistakable fame and power mixed with seasons of loneliness and uncertainty. This week's lesson is about how Elijah negotiated through the emotional ups and downs and came to understand the value of remaining loyal to God's cause and faithful to His Word. Through Elijah's faithfulness it appeared to him that he was alone in his allegiance to God. This theme is repeated throughout the story and continues to recur in the lives of young people today. Taking a stand for Christ is often a challenge to live so differently from their peers that they distinctly stand out. But as difficult as it is to make that choice, it is equally daunting to remain confident in their relationship with God when they feel isolated and alone. Elijah's story portrays how God attends to us during times of depression and ultimately finds a way to speak hope and clarity into our lives.

There are many angles from which this lesson can be helpful to youth. One approach is to invite the students to describe the ways that they identify with Elijah's journey, as well as ways they do not. Many have yet to experience a moment such as Mount Carmel but have experienced the insight that came to Elijah in the cave. Another track that might be helpful is to discuss the way God always has people who are allied with His kingdom and live as lights to a dark

world. Another approach to this lesson is to focus on the way Elijah's story warns us about counting or trying to determine who is faithful to God by outward appearances. Given that we see so little of what is really happening in the hearts of people, we might be surprised at how many people are faithful to God.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Discover how to negotiate through despair and uncertainty by faithfulness to God's will. (*Know*)
- Embrace the truth that even though they might feel lonely at times, those who are faithful are not alone. (*Feel*)
- Decide to listen for God's voice in His Word when they feel alone or discouraged. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- The Remnant
- Depression
- Conviction

## 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 each student give a defense, from the Bible if possible, for the position they chose on each of the issues.

## Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Some people have a difficult time understanding how it could be that the majority could be misled. Surely, when you put more heads together the outcome should be greater clarity. Right?

An interesting thing happened several years ago at a college sporting event. During the NCAA Cross Country Championship Race the runners came across a dilemma. At one point they had to make a choice about which direction to run. They came to a stage in the race where the way was not marked well and they had to choose to continue down one street or take another way. Both directions looked reasonable.

The crowded pack of runners followed those who were running out in front. The front-runners made their choice and everyone followed them, all except Mike Delcavo and a handful of others. Mike knew the other runners had taken the wrong road and urged the rest to follow him. Many of them laughed and scorned, but a few followed him. Mike finished the race with the four others. Out of 128 runners 123 of them took the wrong way (from Daniel Schaeffer, *Defining Moments*, [Discovery House Publishers, 2007]).

What life lessons do you see in this story?

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

It is true that at times in our lives loneliness will feel like emptiness and standing firm and faithful to God will seem inconceivable, even absurd. But as Mike Delcavo and his running mates discovered, the majority is not always right and what most people think is not always the most informed opinion. Elijah's life as a servant of God is marked by moments of tension between amazing acts of faith and seasons of distress and even despair. Take a look at a moment in his journey and see if you can relate!

### 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.*

- Read the story and note what insights are new to you.
- As you read through the story, what words,

phrases, or themes are repeated?

- Underline what you think are the pivotal parts of this story.
- What do you think is the message God is trying to convey through this story?
- What emotions do you see displayed in Elijah's experience?
- What does God's care of Elijah in his depression say to you in similar circumstances?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a lesson to learn?
- Is there an action to take?
- Is there a decision to make?
- What are similarities between Elijah's experience and our lives today?
- Some have suggested that the people who hear God's voice often appear peculiar to the world they live in. What are some other biblical characters who were clearly listening to a different voice from the one the world was listening to? (Examples: Noah, Moses, Esther, David—taking on a giant, Daniel and his three friends, etc.)

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story:* Matthew 7:13, 14; Jeremiah 23:3; Daniel 1; 3; and 6.

### Sharing Context and Background

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

When we read this story it is difficult to recapture the intensity and the danger that surrounded Elijah. He was a wanted man, and the courage and faith so brilliantly displayed on Mount Carmel stands in stark contrast to the cowardly response to Jezebel's threat. Clearly, prophets—mighty though they may be—are human. Consider a few touch points that might benefit your study:

What does Israel's "no answer" to Elijah's appeal mean? (1 Kings 18:21)

The word "halt" or "waver" actually means "to limp" or "hobble" as though you had a broken leg. One leg of their faith was healthy (they worshiped the God Jehovah), but the other leg was broken (they also worshiped Baal). This is what led to the showdown at Mount Carmel—it is one or the other—not both! God is clear: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3, NIV). Is it possible that one of the rea-

sons we feel like our walk with God limps is because we are trying to be loyal to more than just Him?

Why did Elijah feel alone? (1 Kings 18:22; 19:10, 14)

After a do-or-die, stand-or-fall, appeal to Israel to choose God or Baal, their answer is: no answer, which in fact is an answer of sorts. What other moments in the Bible can you think of in which one or a few might have felt alone in their faithfulness to God? We often think Elijah's mantra, "I am the only one," is a petulant whine. But leadership is often a lonely experience, initially. When a volunteer is needed, it is common for people to look around the room and see if anyone is responding. You might ask the class if they have ever had to stand up first and alone. Did others follow?

How is it possible that people who experience such sensational events of God's power (fire from heaven—fed by birds) can slip so quickly into doubt and depression?

Contrast the silence of Baal on Mount Carmel with the silence of God in the cave. It is because God spoke so mightily that Elijah did not expect events to turn the way they did. This is what confused Elijah. So what do we do when God's voice is not so profound? It is notable that God's voice, though not explosive, is audible and real, unlike the silence of Baal on Mount Carmel. Or perhaps another question to ask is: "What do we do when God speaks unmistakably on one day and seems nonexistent the next?"

Finally, draw the students' attention to this week's *Flashlight* quote: "Among earth's inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not

### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Metaphors

If I were to say, "Be careful about working with Bob! He is a snake," what images of Bob would you see? What qualities of a snake immediately come to mind? Sneaky. Subtle. Dangerous. Deceptive. Some might say "slimy," but snakes are actually dry and scaly. Nevertheless, how powerful are metaphors to capture an idea? A metaphor is the use of a word or phrase to describe somebody or something that is not meant literally, but makes a vivid, pictorial, or experiential comparison. Try it with this week's lesson: "If you had to describe Elijah's experience with a type of weather, a car, or plant/tree of any sort, which would capture Elijah's story? Why?"

bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. . . . Then let no man attempt to number Israel today, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world" (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 188, 189).

How does this quote affect our approach to the

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

people we see that may or may not seem faithful to God?

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Have students, in groups of two or three, look up John 10:14–16 and Matthew 7:13, 14 and read them out loud. Ask them to discuss and prepare to report their response to the following questions: Do these two verses contradict each other? How would you reconcile the two ideas Jesus shares here with His disciples?

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:14–16, NIV).

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14, NIV).

#### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

It is difficult to imagine Elijah’s journey mirroring ours. It is possible that we may never experience Mount Carmel or the feeling of being completely alone. But if there is anything to take from Elijah’s roller-coaster ride of life it is that God calls us to listen for His voice, in the fire and in the silence. Also, as we seek and serve God we can be certain that we are not the only one, no matter what we face. Somewhere around the world, maybe even as close as the person sitting next to us or as far away as the young people sitting on the opposite side of the globe, someone is struggling with God in a similar way. Sometimes it seems unbearable to be the first person to stand up for what is right, volunteer to help, or be counted among God’s people. But we need Elijahs today who will be the first to take a stand. It may seem lonely at first, but the promise is sure that soon it will be clear that we are not alone, and furthermore, that we are not crazy for choosing to be on God’s side.



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 14.





# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 21 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:20–22; 19:14–18; Revelation 18:2, 4, 5.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 14.

## who's counting?

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Photo by Alden Ho



### flashlight

“Among earth’s inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. . . . Then let no man attempt to number Israel today, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world” (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 188, 189).

### keytext

“[Elijah] replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant. . . . I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’ The LORD said to him, . . . ‘I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.’ ”

(1 Kings 19:14, 15, 18, NIV)



# what do you think?

## Either/Or

Think through the following questions and prepare to defend the side you take.

1. Since it is so difficult to know a person's heart, do you believe a majority of people will be saved, or a minority of people will be saved?
2. Do you think we will be surprised by who is saved (since man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart), or will we not be surprised by who is saved because our lifestyle tends to convey our deepest values (by their fruit you will know them)?
3. Do you think it is easier to be faithful (obedient) to God in adversity or is it easier to be faithful to God when positive things are happening?

# did you know?

**I**n an informal survey given to college students, 8 out of 10 young adults reported that they grew closer to God in trials and adversity as opposed to seasons of ease and prosperity. If a similar survey were given to church members and your friends, do you think the numbers would be similar? Why or why not?

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## INTO THE STORY

**“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’**

**“But the people said nothing.**

**“Then Elijah said to them, ‘I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.’ ”**

**“He went into a cave and spent the night.**

**“And the word of the LORD came to him: ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’**

**“He replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only**

**one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’**

**“The LORD said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.’**

**“Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.**

**“Then a voice said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’**

**“He replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’**

**“The LORD said to him, ‘Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.’ ”**

**(1 Kings 18:21, 22; 19:9–18, NIV)**

# OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story and note what insights are new to you.

As you read through the story, what words, phrases, or themes are repeated?

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What do you think is the message God is trying to convey through this story?

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What emotions do you see displayed in Elijah's experience?

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Is there a promise to claim?

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Is there a lesson to learn?

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Is there an action to take?

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Is there a decision to make?

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What are similarities between Elijah's experience and our lives today?

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Some have suggested that the people who hear God's voice often appear peculiar to the world they live in. Who are some other biblical characters who were clearly listening to a different voice from the one the world was listening to? (Examples: Noah, Moses, Esther, David—taking on a giant, Daniel and his three friends, etc.)

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## punch lines

**"I am the good shepherd;** I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" **(John 10:14–16, NIV).**

**"Enter through the narrow gate.** For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" **(Matthew 7:13, 14, NIV).**

**"Though you have not seen him,** you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" **(1 Peter 1:8, NIV).**

**"Help, LORD,** for no one is faithful anymore; those who are loyal have vanished from the human race" **(Psalm 12:1, NIV).**

**"Here is a call** for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus" **(Revelation 14:12, NRSV).**

## further insight

**"Patience under trials will keep us from saying and doing those things which will injure our own souls and injure those with whom we associate. Let your trials be what they will, nothing can seriously injure you if you exercise patience, if you are calm and unexcited when in trying positions."**

—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 70.

# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read Matthew 7:13.

The *What Do You Think?* exercise invites you to take a side and explain your response. Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it" (Matthew 7:13, NIV). Do you think today's reading is difficult to explain or easy to explain? Why?

List a few examples of what the easy road looks like in your everyday life as well as what the narrow way looks like.

Easy Road: \_\_\_\_\_

Narrow Road: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sunday

Read Revelation 14:12.

Read the *Into the Story* verses about Elijah's struggle and answer the questions listed in the *Out of the Story* section. How would you explain Elijah's state of mind? What are some other stories in Scripture that portray similar themes as the one in this week's lesson?

In what area of your life might you look "peculiar" to those around you if you were to obey God fully?

## Monday

Read 1 Kings 19:14, 15, 18.

The *Key Text* for this week combines Elijah's despair and God's encouragement. As you read today's passage, think of someone you know who feels alone because of their faith in God. Take time today to pray

for them and perhaps write a note or convey the message to them that they are not alone. What are some other Bible passages that you can use in your note of encouragement? Use a concordance and look up the word "alone" to begin your search for those additional verses.

Why do you think God spoke to Elijah in a gentle whisper rather than through a powerful earthquake? What does this tell us about how we seek to hear God in our own life?

## Tuesday

Read Psalm 12:1.

As you read the *Flashlight* quote from *Prophets and Kings*, notice the simple reminder that when you think very few are even paying attention to God, many have given their undying allegiance to Him around the world. How might this encouragement inspire you and your church to renewed faithfulness?

The next time you hear numbers of people baptized or added to the church, remember the many who are not counted or even known.

## Wednesday

Read through the *Punch Lines* carefully and underline or highlight the key phrases in each verse. How do these verses relate to the story of Elijah's struggle?

As a young person in the church, which passage is the most helpful to you? If you were to choose one passage to apply to your life this week, which one would you choose? Why?

## Thursday

Read Matthew 10:32.

In what area of your life do you need to make a decisive stand for God? Write out your commitment below:

## Friday

Read 1 Peter 1:7, 8.

Take time this week to listen for God to speak to you. It may be that He speaks in thunderous ways, but more likely you will hear His voice in the silence. Journal below what you have "heard" Him impress on your heart this week.

**this week's reading\***  
*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 14.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlhF1rB09s](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.



## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 28 2020

# life sentence

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 15.

## PREPARING TO TEACH

### I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson focuses on the story of Jehoshaphat's reign, a king who sought to do what was right in God's eyes. During Jehoshaphat's 25-year reign he continued to lead God's people faithfully in the way his father, Asa, led. Jehoshaphat took over the throne during a time of war so his reformation began with reforming the military and fortifying the borders. He also started a religious reformation and stood firm against the idolatry that seemed to hamstring God's people in every generation. Jehoshaphat started a traveling school headed up by 16 well-trained teachers who taught the law of God from place to place (2 Chronicles 17:7–9). The result of his leadership was internal peace and security (2 Chronicles 17:12; 20:30).

If Jehoshaphat had a weakness, it was connected to his struggle for diplomacy. He made a habit of forming alliances with people less devoted to God than he was. First, with Ahab, then with Ahab's son, Ahaziah, and finally with Ahab's other son Jehoram. In his zeal to do the right thing he sometimes misjudged the evil intents of others, and God firmly corrected this tendency over the years (1 Kings 22:44; 2 Chronicles 18:1). Most of what people remember about the kings of Israel are often summed up in a sentence. The *Life Sentence* that captures Jehoshaphat's time on earth states: "In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD" (1 Kings 22:43, NIV). History categorizes the kings of Israel into two groups, good and bad. Invite the students to consider what their life sentence

will be as they study the story of a great king of Israel.

### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Survey the key stories of a great king's life. (*Know*)
- Wrestle with the tension between strengths and weaknesses, success and failure. (*Feel*)
- Choose to live an uncompromising life. (*Respond*)

### III. EXPLORE

- Spiritual disciplines
- Learning from failure/mistakes

## 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.*

Invite the students to share and explain their first choice and the item they chose last in the ranking exercise. Ask what elements they would add to this list to make it more comprehensive.

#### Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Timothy is a successful businessman who always leaves the table a little bit hungry. He can afford to eat to the full, but an unexpected epiphany made

such an impact on him that he was never the same. Walking home late in the evening from work, he happened upon a man sitting on his sidewalk rummaging through a pile of garbage. The beggar scraped off maggots from rotten pieces of food and shoved the pieces of garbage in his mouth with dirty hands. Timothy, shocked by the desperation of that man, vowed never to take food for granted. Timothy is not perfect, but he started a soup kitchen in his community and volunteers regularly to inspire others to contribute. Some people are driven by personal experiences that deeply affect them. Examine any great leader for the events and stories that make them so passionate. They are often stories that clearly mark what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad.

Consider one moment in Jehoshaphat's experience that made an indelible impact on him as a leader. When his enemy in battle, the king of Moab, saw that he was losing the battle, he took his firstborn son, who would have become the next king, to the top of the city wall and offered him as a sacrifice as a last ditch attempt for victory (2 Kings 3:26, 27, NIV). Witnessing such an act must have made an everlasting impression on Jehoshaphat's mind. Such immorality, he decided, could be met only with passionate, deliberate obedience to God's Word.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Do you ever wonder what is at the heart of great heroes of faith? What makes them brave? Passionate? Wise? Committed? Some of the good things Jehoshaphat did may have come from a keen experience of right, but perhaps many of his decisions were the result of knowing what was wrong. As you survey the life of Jehoshaphat, you may notice a moment of weakness or a chink in the armor of his character. But the overwhelming impact of his leadership was good, right, and true. Check out this story, but also scan through the various events of his reign and note the depth of his devotion 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 process it with them.*

- What do you think is the key verse in this week's story?
- What are the leadership qualities you see in Jehoshaphat that are most noble?
- What might be one of Jehoshaphat's weaknesses as a leader?
- How do you think his name, the Lord judges, fits Jehoshaphat as a king?
- Jehoshaphat faced an army that far outnumbered him, but he trusted the Lord. What stance does God want us to take when we face challenges beyond our ability?

### **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. Jehoshaphat made his share of mistakes, but the overriding theme of his life is summed up as being devoted to God and His commands. His story includes at least four full chapters in 2 Chronicles, so covering his life might be time-consuming.

One way to maximize time and get the entire class involved would be to use a teaching strategy known as "jigsaw." Divide your students into groups and give one or more of the "snapshots" below to each group. Have each group read and then discuss together what they learn from their passage or passages.

Then let each group report to everyone, or form other groups made up of at least one person from each of the original groups. Each person can explain to their new group what they learned in their original group. This way, everyone will get to "see" all the "snapshots" as well as to participate.

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 2 Chronicles 17:1–6   | General summary  |
| 2 Chronicles 17:7–10  | Teachers are sent out to instruct the people about God |
| 2 Chronicles 17:11–19 | Wealth and security                                    |
| 2 Chronicles 18:1–34  | Debacle with Ahab against Ramoth Gilead                |
| 2 Chronicles 19:1, 2  | Jehu's rebuke and affirmation                          |
| 2 Chronicles 19:4–11  | Judges organized for civil order                       |
| 2 Chronicles 20:16–29 | Battle victory won through singing                     |

2. This week's story highlights Jehoshaphat's leadership and his unwavering dependence



on God. Notice the first step the faithful king takes is: “Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 20:3, NIV). What does the word “resolve” mean? To set your mind with unshakable focus. Another aspect of Jehoshaphat’s leadership is the way the people rallied around his example. Some have said, “If you want to know if you are a leader, see if anyone is following.” The Bible says: “Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him” (2 Chronicles 20:4, NIV).

Jehoshaphat is also a great leader because of his humility. The king admits to God, “We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chronicles 20:12, NIV). And finally, Jehoshaphat acts on his convictions and “appointed men to sing to the LORD” (2 Chronicles 20:21, NIV). This is just another war God wins by singing! As a result, the enemies, in their confusion, “destroy one another” (2 Chronicles 20:23, NIV). The victory is one of many moments in Scripture where God intervenes when human efforts could not prevail, and God’s involvement and glory are unmistakable.

3. Unfortunately, the faithful heritage of Asa and Jehoshaphat was only a brief season of brightness for God’s people. Jehoram chose not to follow the same path as his father and grandfather (2 Chronicles 21:12, 13).



### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Less Is More

One teaching strategy that really stirs up the brain is the activity of synthesis—the work of blending and unifying many ideas into one new thought. One way to get students to synthesize is to challenge them by limiting the amount of words they can use or by keeping their statements to one sentence. For example, “If you had to sum up your life story in one sentence, how would you characterize your life?” This activity calls for students to distill vast amounts of information into one meaningful statement. It often helps to give them time to write out their “life sentence” and share it with others.

## III. CLOSING

### Activity

Invite each student to respond to the following question:

If you were to become a leader of a country and you had to enforce five main rules, what would those rules say? Debrief by allowing the students to share their list of five rules. Jehoshaphat’s life had many ups and downs, but ultimately, the faithful king lived by a few basic principles/rules that he never compromised. What were they?

## 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 convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

## Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Everyone has the chance to live in such a way that they can one day earn a positive “life sentence.” What is so impressive about Jehoshaphat is the way he remained devoted to God, even when his failures and mistakes were evident to all. And when things were going well, he continued to innovate and create new efforts to better life for Israel. His humility and

courage form a brief statement of truth: “In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kings 22:43, NIV). So, what are the non-negotiable principles by which you will choose to live your life? About which values will you say today, “I will not compromise”? Take a moment to reflect and pray about your devotion to God.



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 15.



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 28 2020

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 15.

## life sentence

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## flashlight

“If the teachings of God’s Word were made the controlling influence in the life of every man and woman, if mind and heart were brought under its restraining power, the evils that now exist in national and in social life would find no place” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 192).

## keytext

“In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.”

(1 Kings 22:43, NIV)

# what do you think?

Which do you think are characteristics of God's inspired leadership? Rank the following according to how crucial they are for good government—mark (1) for most crucial and (6) for least crucial.

- \_\_\_ Civil peace and security
- \_\_\_ Spiritual teaching and wisdom
- \_\_\_ Military strength and protection
- \_\_\_ Charismatic leadership
- \_\_\_ Clear sense of right and wrong
- \_\_\_ Abundance of wealth

Explain your reasons for ranking these the way you did.

## did you know?

**T**he path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom. Strengthened and enlightened by the Master Worker, they will be enabled to stand firm against unholy influences and to discern right from wrong, good from evil. They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction of wrong principles into His cause."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 31.

## INTO THE STORY

**"After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.**

Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, " 'A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar' (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

"Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said:

" 'LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over

all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, "If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us." ' "

" 'But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.' "

"All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

"Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

"He said: 'Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's." ' "

(2 Chronicles 20:1–15, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

In verse 1 of 2 Chronicles 20 the Bible sets the stage for this week's story of Jehoshaphat with "After this . . ." Survey the following snapshots of his reign and note the various aspects of Jehoshaphat's leadership.

- 2 Chronicles 17:1–6 General summary
- 2 Chronicles 17:7–10 Jehoshaphat sends out teachers to instruct the people about God
- 2 Chronicles 17:11–19 Wealth and security
- 2 Chronicles 18:1–34 Debacle with Ahab against Ramoth Gilead
- 2 Chronicles 19:1–2 Jehu's rebuke and affirmation
- 2 Chronicles 19:4–11 Organized judges for civil order
- 2 Chronicles 20:16–29 Battle victory through singing

What do you think is the key verse in this week's story?

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What other people in Scripture does Jehoshaphat remind you of? Why?

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What leadership qualities do you see in Jehoshaphat that are most noble?

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What might be one of Jehoshaphat's weaknesses as a leader?

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## punch lines

**"Guard my life,** for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God" (**Psalm 86:2, NIV**).

**"Many are the woes** of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him" (**Psalm 32:10, NIV**).

**"As for other matters,** brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more" (**1 Thessalonians 4:1, NIV**).

**"You must distinguish** between what is sacred and what is common, between what is ceremonially unclean and what is clean. And you must teach the Israelites all the decrees that the LORD has given them through Moses" (**Leviticus 10:10, 11, NLT**).

**"And you will find** happiness by worshiping him. God will answer your prayers, and you will keep the promises you made to him" (**Job 22:26, 27, CEV**).

## further insight

**"Position does not give holiness of character. It is by honoring God and obeying his commands that a man is made truly great."**—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 30, 31.



# connectingtolife

## Sabbath

Read 2 Chronicles 20:12.

The ranking exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this lesson challenges you to identify the leadership qualities you think are most important as well as least important. We often think leaders always have a clear sense of what to do in times of crisis; but note what Jehoshaphat said to God as the enemies of Israel were approaching in today's Bible verse. How would you describe this act as an attribute of a good leader?

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## Sunday

Read John 20:30, 31 and 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The *Into the Story* section contains a portion of a battle that demonstrates the God-inspired leadership of Jehoshaphat. Answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section, including the snapshots of Jehoshaphat's reign. How would you compare Jehoshaphat's leadership style with other leaders in the Bible? According to our Bible readings for today, all stories of Scripture have the power to speak to us. As you learn more about this great king, what message do you think God has for you in this passage?

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## Monday

Read 1 Kings 22:43.

King Jehoshaphat's great qualities are summed up in one sentence in today's Bible verse and this week's *Key Text*; in the following sentence the Bible admits a shortcoming that also marked his life. Read this passage in a few different translations, if available, and think about what close friends might say about you, in a sentence. In the space given below, write a sentence about the life of someone you admire:

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## Tuesday

Read Psalm 86:2.

While there are many things that influence your outlook and your behavior, there are a few basic ideas that influence most of your decisions. Read the quote from *Prophets and Kings* about the controlling influences in your life. To what degree do you think the evil in the world would diminish if people allowed God's will to become the "controlling influence" in their lives? What laws or principles of God's way of life would make the most significant change for the better?

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## Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* listed in this week's lesson and identify the verse that speaks to you the most. In what way is this passage most relevant to your life today?

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Think of a friend or someone you know that has the ability to influence others but does not often seize those moments for good. Say a prayer today for that person and pray for an opportunity to encourage their leadership potential. Sometimes a little positive encouragement can awaken a more earnest desire to make a positive impact on the world around us. Sometimes affirming words can remind people of previous commitments they had made that need to be renewed.

## Thursday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

It may be that the great things that are ultimately remembered about your life are built on the practical things you do from day to day. Make a list of three "great" things you want to do today that will have eternal significance. Perhaps it is an act of generosity or a secret deed of kindness. Maybe you could extend grace for those who are struggling or forgiveness for someone who has wronged

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you. Make your list specific enough so that you can know that you have done a "great thing" today. It will also be helpful for you to share this with a supporting friend or two, which will strengthen your resolve to implement it. (Go to [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net) to find resources for choosing a support/accountability partner.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Friday

Read Leviticus 10:10, 11.

Take time to reflect on Jehoshaphat's storied journey of devotion, mistakes, and uncompromising faithfulness to God's plan for Israel. His story holds up a high standard of loyalty to God and courageous leadership for Israel. But his life has mistakes and moments that exposed his flaws as well. Ruminant on how we can be great leaders and people of influence for God even though we are not always perfect. Write down a few thoughts you have on the tension between greatness and making mistakes, as it appears in your life. (You can use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.)

## this week's reading\*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 15.

\**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 [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s](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.