Adam and Eve: The Intended Ideal

Surveying the Source


Plotting the Course

The students will:

► Recognize the marriage ideal designed by God.
► Evaluate their personal relationships in light of the biblical ideals presented this week.
► Apply biblical principles in their own lives as they seek a potential marriage partner or carry out their marriage.

Preparing to Lead

Many marriages appear to be “made in heaven,” as evidenced by smiling brides and grooms, euphoric parents, and memorable ceremonies resplendent with the traditional trappings favored by various cultures. Yet many marriages end in divorce, some rather quickly. The lesson focus this week is on principle-based partner selection and marriage with an eye turned not only by the comeliness of your beloved (Song of Sol. 1:15, 16), but also to the marriage ideals designed by God.

Getting Started

A. After welcoming the students, discuss with them what they looked for, or are looking for, in a marriage partner. (Hypothetical responses are OK!) Write their responses on a flipchart or chalkboard. Evaluate as a group which responses speak to the principles presented in this week’s lesson, such as suitable helper, equal partner, not good to be alone, creating a new family unit independent from each other’s families, binding together in a lasting relationship, becoming one flesh, etc.

B. Have various couples from your church share their marriage vows with the class. The vows can be read, reenacted by the married couple, or role-played by your students (some of whom could be a child of the invited married couples).

Discuss with your class how these vows show the principles put forth in this week’s lesson, such as suitable helper, equal partner, not good to be alone, creating a new family unit independent from each other’s families, binding together in a lasting relationship, becoming one flesh, etc.

Delving Into the Word

A. Using a concordance if necessary, discuss the principles pertaining to God’s ideal for marriage in biblical passages where words such as marriage, wedding, husband, wife, wives, bride, or bridegroom are found. Or ask a pastor to sum-

Materials

flipchart or chalkboard, markers or chalk, Bibles, concordances, couples and their marriage vows arranged for in advance, paper, pens or pencils

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marize for the class what principles are covered in premarriage counseling with prospective brides and grooms. To kindle the spirit of when Adam and Eve first met, read, then role-play with volunteers, the scene in Genesis 2:21–24.

Encourage the actors to display how Adam, Eve, and God must have felt on this happy occasion. Feelings such as awe, amazement, joy, and godly pride come to mind. After the role-play, ask your class if there are any similarities between that moment and what takes place or is felt during a wedding ceremony.

B. Read to your class this quotation from page 46 of Patriarchs and Prophets: “God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honorable’ (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.”

Say: The ideal presented at the end of this quotation is sometimes not achieved. Indeed, there are biblical examples of marriages where problems arose because of infidelity to God’s ideal for marriage.

Discuss with your students the examples of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2–5), Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:7–20), Pilate’s wife (Matt. 27:19), or others that come to mind.

Discussing the Ideas

1. How has Satan corrupted the marriage ideal as evidenced in your culture?
2. How do the qualities you look for in a potential spouse compare or contrast to the people you date or would like to date?
3. Should you date non-Adventists or non-Christians if you’re not looking to marry yet? Explain your answer.
4. If you are in a bad marriage or someday find yourself in a bad marriage, what can you do to turn it into a godly marriage?
5. Given longer life expectancy, longer periods of time in school, and parents having children later in life, at what age should a person marry?
6. Is being an Adventist important for a good marriage or is being Christian good enough? Explain your answer.
7. What cultural traditions involving wedding receptions in your part of the world are appropriate and/or inappropriate for an Adventist reception? Explain your conclusions.
8. How should singles, divorced people, or widows react to God’s statement that it is not good to be alone?

Closing the Activity

Recite for your students this traditional marriage vow: Do you take [name] to be your lawfully wedded [husband/wife] to live together in marriage? Do you promise to love, comfort, honor, and obey [him/her]? For better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health? And forsaking all others, be faithful only to [him/her] until death do you part? Then have them do the reproducible activity on page 31.

When they have completed it, ask for volunteers to share what they wrote. Close with a prayer that God’s ideals for marriage and all other relationships may be manifested in the lives of your class.

Rick Blondo, Clarksville, Maryland, U.S.A.
Below, write your own wedding vows based on this week’s lesson and today’s class discussion.
Abraham and Sarah: Faith Tested and Tried

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Appreciate the honesty and openness of the scriptural record in allowing us to learn lessons from the errors committed by our heroes of faith.
► Appreciate how God is faithful even when we are not.
► Realize that the consequences of our lack of faith can last for centuries, even millennia.

Preparing to Lead
“Do no violence to the place where the righteous live; for though they fall seven times, they will rise again” (Prov. 24:15, 16, NRSV). We are familiar with our own propensity to fall not just seven times, but more like seventy times seven. And we are amazed at God’s willingness to pick us up and dust us off each time. It’s comforting to know that people like Paul, Peter, Samson, and David also fell “seventy times seven.” This is the context in which Abraham’s story becomes not only a story of enlightenment and amazement, but also a story of hope and reassurance—and yes, even a story of faith.

Getting Started
A. Ask each class member to imagine him- or herself as God’s public relations adviser responsible for His publicity and for portraying Him and His church in a favorable light. Would they advise God for or against allowing stories about David’s adultery, Abraham’s falsehood, Peter’s betrayal, and Paul’s persecution and murder of the saints to stand as part of the biblical record? Take a show of hands. Select one person to defend the “Yes” side and one to defend the “No” side.

B. Conduct a brief class discussion on the following problem: Suppose you were part of a childless couple consisting of a 90-year-old woman and a 100-year-old man. Imagine also that God sent someone to announce that the wife was about to give birth to a baby boy, and you were sure this person was God’s messenger. What would you think, say, or do?

After the first couple of responses, guide students toward looking at this question from a faith point of view.

Delving Into the Word
A. Below are two sets of Bible verses. The first set relates to the story of Sarah and Abraham. The second set does not. Or does it? You may give the first set to

July 14, 2007
Discussing the Ideas

1. Why do you think God allowed His Word to show Abraham and Sarah’s lack of faith?

2. What can we learn from Abraham and Sarah about the difference between justification, or being saved (the work of a moment), versus sanctification, the result of full character development (the work of a lifetime)?

3. Will Abraham and Sarah be in heaven because of works (after all, look at what happened on Mount Moriah!) or because of faith (which was obviously limited at certain points)? Explain your answer.

4. How do faith and works come together? How did they come together in Abraham and Sarah’s lives?

5. How does the initial weak faith of Abraham and Sarah illustrate Jesus’ statement that faith like a grain of mustard seed is enough to move mountains (Matt. 17:20)?

6. Was it fair that, after the obvious repentance by Abraham and Sarah, there were still such disastrous consequences for their family at that time and that there are continued disastrous consequences in the world today (Jews versus Arabs)?

7. Why do you think God was so patient with Abraham and Sarah? Do you think He has lost His patience in the way He deals with us today? Explain your answer.

Closing the Activity

Let students read 1 John 2:1, 2 and take a minute to meditate on what lessons the lives of Abraham and his family held for them and their families. In particular, ask them to focus on Abraham’s moments of weak faith, and also on the Moriah experience. Let them consider whether there is anything in their lives that they are unwilling to give to God or to give up for Him. If one or two wish to share part of their reflections, or to share any commitments resulting from the lesson, let them do so. Close with a prayer of faith and rededication.

Frank A. Campbell, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
The texts on the left are taken directly from the Abraham story. Those on the right are not. However, if you read these texts and reflect on them carefully, you will find that each text in the left column relates in some direct or indirect way to at least one text in the right column. Draw an arrow from the first text on the left side to a related text on the right side. Do the same for each text in the left column, until you have a “perfect match” for each text.

A. Genesis 16:1, 2
   James 2:20, 26
B. Genesis 12:10–13; 18:15
   Genesis 3:6
C. Genesis 22:11, 12
   Exodus 20:16
D. Genesis 21:9–12
   Proverbs 24:16
E. Hebrews 11:11
   Ephesians 5:25
Isaac and Rebekah: Rearing Rivals

Surveying the Source
Genesis 20; 26:6–16, 26–33; 27–28:5.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Explore the ethical dilemmas that the biblical heroes faced.
► Propose alternative behavior patterns to lying.
► Link their own need for God’s grace with the examples of the patriarchs.

Preparing to Lead
“Isaac was in danger of incurring the divine displeasure and of debarring his younger son from the position to which God had called him. She had in vain tried the effect of reasoning with Isaac, and she determined to resort to stratagem” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 180).

“It was not the possession of his father’s wealth that he craved; the spiritual birthright was the object of his longing. To commune with God as did righteous Abraham, to offer the sacrifice of atonement for his family, to be the progenitor of the chosen people, and of the promised Messiah, and to inherit the immortal possessions embraced in the blessings of the covenant” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 178).

Getting Started
A. Ask the class to think of their families as they consider silently the answers to the following questions: ● Who decides on the temperature of the house? ● Who owns the television remote control? ● Whom did you go to for permission to borrow the car? ● Did your parents have a democratic marriage? ● Have you ever lied to a family member to surprise them?

B. Divide your class into thirds and ask each third to read one of the following stories: Genesis 20, Genesis 26, and Genesis 27–28:5. While they are reading, ask them to focus on the perspective of just one of the people in the story. After they have read the stories, interview class volunteers to tell the story they read from their new first-person perspective.

Delving Into the Word
A. Imagine the following two court cases: (1) Abimelech versus the family of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 20, 26), and (2) Isaac and Esau versus Rebekah and Jacob (Genesis 27–28:5). Divide your class into four groups of “lawyers” representing both sides in these two cases. Ask each group to list reasons why their clients were in the right. Then ask the entire class to answer these questions: ● Who was the most righteous person in each story and why? ● Did Abraham and Isaac have to lie about their wives? ● What are alternative solutions to the problems that
Abraham, Isaac, and Rebekah were trying to solve?

B. Distribute the letters in the

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. Was Rebekah’s lie to Isaac influenced by Isaac’s lie to Abimelech? If so, why should the first be an excuse for the second lie?

2. What were the long-term effects of Abraham’s lie to Abimelech? What do these effects teach us about the consequence of lying?

3. What types of sins might run in families, and why? How can you break such an inheritance?

4. In each of the stories we studied this week, what could have been an alternative to lying?

5. Why did Jacob want to give Esau his birthright in a private ceremony without inviting his wife or other son?

6. Could Rebekah take the curse from Jacob? Explain your answer. Was Jacob excused for “following orders”?

7. Did God protect Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after they lied? Why are there times when God protects us when we sin, and why are there times when He does not?

8. Did these families recover from these lies? What happened to them?

**Closing the Activity**

*Say:* In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White doesn’t comment on the lies of Abraham and Isaac to Abimelech, but she does write about Abraham’s lie to Pharaoh. Here is what she wrote: “Pharaoh saw in this stranger a man whom the God of heaven honored, and he feared to have in his kingdom one who was so evidently under divine favor” (p. 131).

Discuss why God would bless a liar.

Ask class volunteers to read these texts: Genesis 35:9–15 and Romans 3:23, 24. Then discuss the following questions:

● What do these texts tell us about how God treated these patriarchs? ● What do they tell us about how God treats us?

Jennifer Morgan, St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada
Read Genesis 20; 26:6–16. Then read the following letter, keeping in mind what advice you might give the writer.

Dear Abba,

I am writing from the home of a good friend of my husband’s. My husband has asked me to tell this friend that my husband and I are brother and sister. I’ve always trusted my husband’s judgment, but I’m not sure that telling this lie is a good idea. Will it have long-term effects on our marriage if I disobey my husband? What will be the effects if I obey him? I am a very traditional wife, raised to be submissive to my husband as my lord and master. What should I do?

Sincerely,

Anonymous Wife of a Biblical Patriarch

Read Genesis 27–28:5. Then read the following letter, keeping in mind what advice you might give the writer.

Dear Abba,

My father is about to break a command he received from God. My mother has a plan that will trick my father into keeping God’s commandment. What should I do? If I am obedient to my mother, I deceive my father. If I disobey my mother, I stand by and watch my father make a vow that cannot be broken and that will destroy my family’s covenant with God.

Sincerely,

Jacob
Jacob and Rachel: Labor of Love

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course

The students will:
► Be able to articulate the role grace plays in this lesson.
► Be able to discuss the differences between the relationships among Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and Laban in addition to the relationship God had with each one.
► Understand why such stories are in the Bible.

Preparing to Lead
What can we learn from this portion of Jacob’s life? Is it an inspirational love story or a sordid soap opera? What does this story teach us about God our Father and Jesus our Savior? Patriarchs and Prophets says that “God did not forsake Jacob. His mercy was still extended to His erring, distrustful servant. The Lord compassionately revealed just what Jacob needed—a Savior” (p. 183). The truth of this statement will become evident as we study the lesson.

Getting Started

A. Have the students take the pop quiz (see page 34). Then review the story in Genesis 29–33, giving the answers to the quiz. (Quiz answers are: 1. T; 2. T; 3. T; 4. T; 5. T.) Say: Let’s start with a multiple-choice question. Who are the heroes in this story? (A) Jacob, (B) Rachel, (C) Laban, (D) Leah, (E) None of the above. I think the answer is E—none of the above. Do you agree? (Discuss any of their answers.) Are there any of these people that come close to being heroes? Share with your neighbor how you relate to each of these characters.

After about five minutes, have the students share examples. Try to elicit opinions about each of the four characters.

B. Have the students take the pop quiz (see page 34). Then review the story in Genesis 29–33, giving the answers to the quiz. (Quiz answers are: 1. T; 2. T; 3. T; 4. T; 5. T.)

Say: Is this story an inspirational love story or a soap opera? I think it is both. Do you agree? (Discuss any of their answers.) Share with your neighbor how you would characterize the relationships among the four characters: Jacob, Rachel, Leah and Laban. (Have on the board ahead of time all of the possible relationships—for example, Jacob/Laban; Jacob/Rachel; Leah/Rachel; etc.) If it is a love story, who is it between? I believe that the greatest love story here is between the Lord and each of the four.
Delving Into the Word

A. Say: At first glance, most would say that at least Rachel would be a hero. After all, she was Joseph’s mother (Gen. 30:23, 24). Ask the class to cite more examples of Rachel as a hero. Ask them to cite examples of her negatives (Gen. 30:15). Say: Does Jacob rate in the hero category? He was willing to work for 14 years because of his devotion to Rachel. I believe Jacob’s negatives almost outnumber his positives. Ask the class to make and compare a plus and minus list for Jacob.

Ask if any of the women in the class would want to be married to Jacob. Why or why not?

Say: Leah is the most interesting character to me. She appears to be the most trapped person in the story. Some have suggested that she is the most heroic person and even go so far as to believe that she surpasses Rachel in Jacob’s eyes. (The following Web site takes a novel approach to Leah as the hero: www.1timothy4-13.com/files/proverbs/art18.htm.) Note where Leah is buried (Gen. 49:29–31). Point out that Leah gave birth to Judah, the line through which Jesus comes.

Say: Laban would be the most obvious villain. Can anyone in the class cite anything redeeming about him? (Big plus, he took Jacob in.)

B. Compare and contrast the love stories of Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24) with Jacob and Rachel. Talk about how each couple met and what kind of family life each couple had.

Discuss: •Do you think it’s significant how much prayer seemed to be involved at the well when Rebekah was chosen for Isaac compared to the total absence of any mention of divine direction between Jacob and Rachel when they met at the well? •Why do you think the story of Jacob and his wives is in the Bible?

Say: At every turn, someone is deceiving and tricking someone they are supposed to love for their own gain. The story sounds like a script from the American TV program, Desperate Housewives! The most redeeming thing about this story is that they all need to be redeemed!

Discussing the Ideas

1. What are the characteristics of a dysfunctional couple? Which of these characteristics do you see in this story?
2. What evidence do you see that, in the end, Leah wins Jacob’s heart?
3. Why do you think Jacob was so passive when he accepts Leah and takes the servant girls without protest?
4. How do you harmonize Jacob’s sensitivity in Genesis 29:20 with his mean spirit in verse 30?
5. What was Jacob’s biggest mistake?
6. Which character in the story can you relate to most? Why?
7. Describe the role of grace in this story.

Closing the Activity

Conclude the lesson with a discussion of the only true love story, the love story between the Lord and each of the four characters.

Discuss the following: •What kind of amazing grace can use the scheming Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and Laban? •Do you think that if God’s grace was sufficient for them that there is hope for us? (See 2 Corinthians 12:9.) •Consider in your mind the things about your own family and church that are like this family.

End with a personal testimony of God’s grace in your family or have a prearranged person ready to share.

Victor Brown, College Place, Washington, U.S.A.
Pop Quiz – True or False

_____ 1. Esau had his stew and Rachel her mandrakes.

_____ 2. Jacob loved Leah.

_____ 3. The story of Jacob, if made into a movie, would be rated “R.”

_____ 4. Laban showed more kindness than ill toward Jacob.
Moses and Zipporah: Relating with Relations

Surveying the Source

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Explore how each person’s uniqueness can strengthen relationships.
► Consider the biblical wisdom that helps them have respectful and satisfying relationships with those who are different than themselves.
► Apply fresh biblical insights to a family relationship with someone who may be quite different than themselves.

Preparing to Lead
Think about a happily married couple you know well and how different they are from each other. How does each one respond to the differences that the other spouse brings to their relationship, such as different cultures, different family and faith experiences, different ways of responding to those around them, different ways of doing tasks, different skills, different ways of being in a relationship, etc.? How do you think the ways in which they approach their differences have strengthened their relationship? Use these insights to guide you as you prepare to teach this lesson.

Getting Started
A. Differences can be strengths. Randomly assign each person one object from your collection of paired objects. Let each class member find the person holding the partner to their item: for example, if they have a cell phone, they need to find the person with the charger.

Invite each pair to explore the way in which the two items they are holding are more useful together than apart, and one way in which human relationships are stronger when each person is different. Then have each couple share their insights with the entire class.

B. Blending our differences. Invite class members to work in pairs. Give each person two minutes to talk about how their family celebrates the children’s birthdays. The listening partner writes down what the speaker’s family did.

Then invite the pairs to look at the ways in which their families celebrate birthdays. What was similar, and what was different? If the pair had to find a way to celebrate a child’s birthday together, how would they honor both sets of family traditions, values, and ideas? Have all the pairs return to the group, and discuss the responses to this activity.

Materials
pairs of objects (the pairs must be different objects that work together to be useful: such as a cell phone and a charger; a nut and a nutcracker; a can and a can opener; a dustpan and brush; a needle and thread; a screw and a screw driver); pens, paper; concordances; flipchart or chalkboard
**Delving Into the Word**

A. *Say:* Moses and Zipporah found a way to have a relationship in which each of them respected the other’s culture and spiritual background. Review their story in Exodus 2–4; 18:1–27; and Numbers 12:1–4. Then list all the factors you can think of which helped their relationship to be successful. Next, think about the relational wisdom scattered throughout the New Testament in the following verses: ● 1 Corinthians 13 ● Rom. 12:9–21 ● Matthew 5–7 ● Eph. 5:21–33 ● 1 Thess. 5:15–18 ● Heb. 13:1–5 ● 1 John 4:7–21. Which of these principles did Moses and Zipporah live out in their relationship? (Write these texts on a chalkboard or flipchart for the class to refer to while they are considering the question.)

*B. Divide into three groups and give each group one of the following passages: ● Exod. 2:11–3:1 ● Exod. 4:18–26 ● Exod. 18:1–27.*

*Say:* As you study your passage, notice how respect is being shown in the relationship between Zipporah and Moses or between Moses and Jethro. Note any ideas that emerge from the study and discussion.

*Discuss:* ● What issues in their lives might have been barriers to the development of respect? ● What enabled these respectful relationships to develop in spite of the challenges they faced?

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. What principles from Moses and Zipporah’s relationship can help us with our family relationships today?
2. Often we are attracted to someone because they are different than us. But after a while, these differences annoy us, and we wish the person was more like us! How can we rediscover the beauty of the other person’s ways of doing things?
3. How might looking at other people through God’s eyes affect the quality of our relationships?
4. If your brother or sister wanted to marry someone from a different culture, what would you be most concerned about, and why? What would you find most difficult to accept? How would you support them?
5. It is often easier to show respect to a complete stranger than to a family member. What difference would it make to our families if we could find the maturity, love, and respect to honor our in-laws, siblings, and extended family members?
6. What one thing will you do next week to show respect and love to a family member whom you often have difficulty relating to?

**Closing the Activity**

Give each person a copy of the reproducible sheet on page 35. Assign each “problem” characteristic in the left column to a different pair of class members and encourage them to redescribe the characteristic in positive terms in the right column. An example has been given to help them get started.

*Karen Holford, Hertfordshire, England*
### From Problem to Possibility!

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<tr>
<th><strong>PROBLEM DESCRIPTIONS</strong></th>
<th><strong>POSITIVE DESCRIPTIONS</strong></th>
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<td>Is lazy</td>
<td>values relaxation</td>
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<td>works at a different speed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>balances activity and rest</td>
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<td>Spends too much money</td>
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<td>Is mean with money</td>
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<td>Is often late</td>
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<td>Is a perfectionist</td>
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### Life-Application Response

Write down a negative character trait that you might have applied to a family member who you’ve found hard to appreciate in the past.

Take a look at the person and their character quality through God’s eyes. When He looks through eyes of love and understanding, what does He see in the person?

How might you re-describe their negative trait in positive terms, and how might this help you to show them love and respect in the future?
Teachr's Guide

A. Discuss: ● Do we keep putting ourselves in a position that we know will cause us to fail? ● Would we ever be like Samson?

Say: If my problem is motivation (hold up remote control), do I say, “I think I’ll overcome my desire to be lazy,” then pick up the television remote control and stretch out on the couch? Have I put myself in a position to give in to temptation?

Take time to discuss this matter.

Then hold up a bag of cookies. Say: Does a person who has problems with overeating sit next to an open bag of cookies, and on their own, refrain from eating them?

Take time to discuss their thoughts.

B. Display the footwear you’ve selected. Then adapt the following statement according to the footwear you have:

I want the right footwear for certain activities. I wouldn’t think of wearing cleats when I go snorkeling. I don’t want to wear ski boots while hiking in the backcountry. And flippers on the golf course are just silly. If the right shoes are important to me, what about the right people for God?

Discuss: ● Why would God select someone like Samson as a leader? ● What qualities for leadership was God looking for? ● What type of shoes do you think God is looking for you to fill?

Delving Into the Word

A. Say: God has something in mind for each one of us. He has set boundaries for us that really are there to set us free from wrong life choices.

Samson believed he could do no wrong. Why shouldn’t we depend on being right when we just do what we feel like doing? (Have students discuss possi-
I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good” (Mere Christianity, p. 196).

God wants all of each of us. Not just the part we are willing to give. What will you choose to give Him?

Although dedicated to God, Samson wanted to live for himself. C. S. Lewis describes such a conflict this way: “The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, ‘Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good” (Mere Christianity, p. 196).

God wants all of each of us. All. Not just the part we are willing to give. What will you choose to give Him?

Judy Shull, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A.
**SAMSON**  
**Compare and Contrast**

In the chart below, list examples of Samson’s physical strength and spiritual weakness. What do these examples tell us about the choices Samson made?

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<tr>
<th>Examples of Samson’s Physical Strength</th>
<th>Examples of Samson’s Spiritual Weakness</th>
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Lesson 6 Copyright 2007 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Boaz and Ruth: Firm Foundations

Surveying the Source
Ruth 1–4.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Identify qualities in the relationships between Ruth and Naomi and Ruth and Boaz that can serve as models for Christlike relationships today.
► Compare and contrast the “kinsman-redeemer” concept found in the Old Testament with parallels found in the New Testament.
► Be able to name the character traits of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz that are the same or similar to the character traits of Jesus Christ.
► Find hope in the reoccurring themes of God’s provision for us regardless of economic, emotional, or social turmoil.

Preparing to Lead
Ruth was a Gentile from a country where people held pagan beliefs. She had not received God’s covenant blessing that was given to Israel. Her first husband, Mahlon, was an Ephrathite from Bethlehem in Judah. He worshiped the God of Israel. Ruth was married to Mahlon for 10 years before her mother-in-law, Naomi, and sister-in-law, Ophra, and she became widows. The Book of Ruth is a reverential love story between a mother-in-law and her sons’ widows as well as a story of redemption that reminds us that a “kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity” (Gospel Workers, p. 122).

Delving Into the Word
A. Share an experience when you were a “foreigner” outside your home community and either felt out of place or were made to feel special.
   Hand out and explain the activity sheet on page 37.
B. Divide the class into small groups with men working with other men and women working with other women. Tell the men to make a list of the ideal qualities they feel a wife should have. Tell the women to make a list of the ideal qualities a husband should have. Give the groups four minutes to make their list.
   Have each group select a spokesperson to share their list with the other members of the class.
   Hand out and explain the activity sheet on page 37.

Materials
pencils, pens, Bibles, chalkboard or flipchart, chalk or felt-tip pens
like to work on obtaining with God’s help. Have a general prayer to close the lesson study and affirm the members of the class.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Under a similar Ruth and Orpah-like choice, which are you more likely to do, and why? (a) follow God to a foreign country and be ostracized by friends and family; (b) make a last-minute decision to stay in your comfort zone.

2. Boaz went into his field to acknowledge and ask God’s blessing on those who worked there. In turn, his workers asked God’s blessing on him. Is this typical in your workplace? If not, how would affirming one another in this way change your work environment?

3. Boaz instructed his field manager to have Ruth stay in his field and harvest near the other women. What implication do these instructions have for us today?

4. When Ruth dined with Boaz and his other harvesters, she became full yet had enough food left over to share with Naomi. Why is this fact important?

5. By taking Ruth as his wife, Boaz received both reward and responsibility. Describe both.

6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of someone else arranging a marriage?

7. Ruth 4:17 states that Ruth and Boaz’s child, Obed, was “born to Naomi.” Why is this detail important?

8. A few people living God’s way can make a powerful difference in a community. Name one person living God’s way in your community who is making a difference. Can you add your name?

Closing the Activity

Give time for each student to reflect on the lesson and the notes they jotted down on the activity sheet given to them at the beginning of class. Have them fill in the one or two traits of character they would like to work on obtaining with God’s help. Have a general prayer to close the lesson study and affirm the members of the class.

Carol Kilcher, Burleson, Texas, U.S.A.
Instructions: During the lesson, jot down notes listing the character traits of the main characters in the book of Ruth. At the end of the lesson, fill in two or three traits of character you would like to work on obtaining with God’s help.

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I’d like to work on obtaining the following traits in my character:

►

►

►
Elkanah and Hannah: Fulfilling a Vow

Surveying the Source
Gen. 9:16; Deut. 23:2; 1 Sam. 1:1–2:26; Ps. 89:34; Eccles. 5:4.

Plotting the Course

The students will:
► Realize the importance of not making a vow/oath/promise unless they intend to keep it.
► Learn that there is a possibility in some cases that it is better to break a vow/oath/promise than to keep it.
► Understand the principles that govern when to honor a vow/oath/promise and when to break it.

Preparing to Lead

The Bible portrays real people facing real-life challenges. Amazingly, it doesn't spend as much time as we might expect telling us whether their decisions were good or bad or somewhere in between. It just tells what happened. In the story of Hannah and Elkanah, we look admirably upon a vow that was carried out however inconvenient and painful it might have been to do so. But should every vow/oath/promise be carried out? Or are there times when a greater principle is at stake than merely living up to one’s word?

Getting Started

A. Emphasize the need to follow through on our vows/oaths/promises to both God and others. In chapter 7 of his book In Our Time, Ernest Hemingway provides a vignette that illustrates our frequent failure to keep our vows. Read it to the class: “While the bombardment was knocking the trench to pieces at Fossalta, he lay very flat and sweated and prayed oh Jesus Christ get me out of here. Dear Jesus please get me out. Christ, please, please, please, Christ. If you’ll only keep me from getting killed, I’ll do anything you say. I believe in you and I’ll tell everyone in the world that you are the only one that matters. Please, please, dear Jesus. The shelling moved further up the line. We went to work on the trench and in the morning the sun came up and the day was hot and muggy and cheerful and quiet. The next night back at Mestre, he did not tell the girl he went upstairs with at the Villa Rossa about Jesus. And he never told anybody.”

B. Emphasize the need to evaluate the legitimacy of our vows, meaning that in some cases we should not honor them because they were rash and ill-conceived—two wrongs don’t make a right. Matthew 14:1–11 provides a prime example (see also The Desire of Ages, pages 220–222).
Delving Into the Word

A. Assign various class members to read biblical rules governing the making and honoring of vows/oaths/promises. The rules are found in such verses as:
● Eccles. 5:4, 5 ● Num. 30:1–16 ● Deut. 23:21–23.

Discuss the importance of following through when we declare what we will do—whether said to God or to our fellow humans. Note the positive example of Hannah. Discuss the second thoughts she may have had about giving up her son at such an early age.

B. Read and discuss the following statement from Ellen G. White, who contends that sometimes breaking a vow/oath/promise is a lesser wrong than following through on a declaration that is rash and ill-advised: “If an engagement [i.e., the promise to marry] has been entered into without a full understanding of the character of the one with whom you intend to unite, do not think that the engagement makes it a positive necessity for you to take upon yourself the marriage vow and link yourself for life to one whom you cannot love and respect. Be very careful how you enter into conditional engagements; but better, far better, break the engagement before marriage than separate afterward, as many do” (The Adventist Home, p. 48).

Pass out and read/discuss the reproducible activity (p. 38).

Discussing the Ideas

1. In today’s world, how would we judge Hannah’s bargain with God—in which she agrees to send her child off at an early age to live with someone other than his biological parents? What might have made such a bargain different in her day?

2. In what situations might bargaining with God be spiritually unacceptable?

3. Given our current scientific understandings, how do we relate to the idea that the Lord closed Hannah’s womb? If God caused infertility then, might He cause it today? If so, should we pursue science to aid in conception? Why or why not?

4. In what ways do you find affinity with Hannah’s dilemma? In what ways is the story hard to relate to?

5. What insights into the effects of polygamy do we gain in the description of the relationship between Peninnah and Hannah?

6. Does a parent have the right to make a vow on behalf of a child—such as Hannah’s promise that Samuel’s hair would never be cut? Explain your answer.

7. If we allow that it is preferable to default on a rash promise rather than to follow through, how can we ensure that we’re not just using such logic as a loophole to escape having to meet our moral/spiritual obligations?

8. In Matthew 5:33–37, Jesus seems uncomfortable with vows and oaths altogether. In what context might His advice particularly apply?

Closing the Activity

Invite the class to reminisce about vows/oaths/promises they have made, including ones they have broken. In retrospect, do they feel they did the right thing? Why or why not? What lessons, if any, did they learn from the experience?

How was their action similar to/different from the example set by Hannah and Elkanah? In what ways has their experience made them more judicious in their declarations?

James Coffin, Longwood, Florida, U.S.A.
Read the following vignette from *A Different Church for a Different World*, by James Coffin (Signs Publishing Company, 2006; edited to fit the teaching guide’s activity format).

**Learning When to Break the Rules**

The other day when I came out of the men’s room at a restaurant, I saw a girl of five or six doing an animated dance in front of the women’s room, suggesting that she urgently needed to get inside.

Since the men’s room was a single-stall and the main door was lockable, I said to her, “If you really need to go, you can use this rest room.” Before I could get to the part about how she could lock the door so it didn’t really matter that it bore the label “Men,” she exclaimed, “I can’t do that! That’s for men!”

My immediate thought was to explain to her that in dire circumstances some rules can be broken. Then I thought better of it. I could only imagine what some passerby would conclude when seeing a middle-aged man trying to convince a five- or six-year-old girl to go into the men’s rest room. So I walked on, hoping that whoever was in the women’s room would exit quickly. Which she did.

How many adults view life just like that child did? They know what the rule book says. But they don’t know how to determine the relative importance of competing values.

Recently I read a story by a former police officer. One Friday night a young man in his late teens was booked into jail on a minor charge. But when he phoned his parents to bail him out, they refused. So the boy asked the officer to speak to them. The woman explained that because they were Seventh-day Adventists, they didn’t do business between sundown Friday and sundown Saturday. Since posting bail involved the handling of money, they wouldn’t be able to help their son for nearly another 24 hours.

If they had said that the boy needed to learn a lesson and that a night in jail might give him a wake-up call, the officer would have understood. But leave a vulnerable teenager in jail with hardened criminals just because you don’t do business on your holy day? Hadn’t they read what Jesus said about helping an animal that’s in a predicament on Sabbath? Unfortunately, the parents knew the rules. Nothing more.

What our church needs are people who not only know the rules, but who understand the principles on which the rules are based, and who know how to decide when it’s morally responsible to break the rules.

In Mark 2:23–28 we read an interesting story in which Jesus seemingly commends King David for having broken the rules. When Jesus and His disciples were being criticized for “harvesting” grain on Sabbath, Jesus said, in effect, “Hey, wait just a minute. Haven’t you heard what David did when facing extreme circumstances? He ate bread that only priests were supposed to eat. And not just that, but others ate it, too.” Jesus seems to recognize that, in some cases at least, human need takes precedence over religious ritual. Circumstances make a difference. Things that might be wrong in one context may be the best available option in other circumstances.

Based on that principle, might there be situations in which breaking a vow/oath/promise would be better than following through on it? Read the following texts, and discuss whether the vow described should or should not have been carried out. In each case, what principles would determine what course of action would have been appropriate?  ●Genesis 28:20–22 ●Numbers 21:1–3 ●Judges 11:30–40 ●Judges 21:1–23 ●1 Samuel 1:1–11 ●Matthew 14:1–11.

Lesson 8

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The Jobs: Living With Losses

Surveying the Source

Job 1:1–2:10; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; James 1:13.

Plotting the Course

The students will:
► Discuss the different responses people have to suffering.
► Explore the biblical viewpoint of suffering and how one can gain a deeper understanding of it.
► Discuss how one may give support to an individual who is suffering.

Preparing to Lead

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world” (C. S. Lewis).

Getting Started

A. Begin with a debate on the suffering of the Jews in the Holocaust, in response to either of the following statements:
● The suffering of the Jews is clearly a result of the poor mistakes/actions of their ancestors, i.e., Ishmael versus Isaac. (In other words, God was responding to their history.)
● The Jewish people are generally “blessed” (look at how wealthy most Jews are) and the Holocaust was God’s way of testing them to see if they would stay true to Him.
B. Show the class the hard-boiled egg, the boiled carrot, and the coffee beans. Ask the class which one they think endures boiling water the best. Explain that the egg was once soft inside, but through boiling has turned hard. The carrot was once hard but through boiling has turned soft. The coffee beans gave the boiling water a sweet taste.

Delving Into the Word

A. Divide the class into pairs or small groups and have them read the Bible texts and match them with the correct statements in the reproducible activity (see p. 39). Allow some time for each group to discuss the statements and whether they feel that they give hope or not to someone who is going through a difficult time.
B. Consider each of the following reasons people give as to why suffering occurs in our lives:
● God is refining you and making you stronger through this hardship.

Materials

a hard-boiled egg, a cooked carrot, coffee beans
they will turn to Him for strength and will claim the wonderful promises of the Bible.

Have class member pray together in pairs and make a personal commitment to God that when they experience hardship, they will turn to Him for strength and will claim the wonderful promises of the Bible.

Discussing the Ideas

1. Think about a time in your life where you’ve felt really close to God. Was hardship a part of this time?
2. Do you think God protects from suffering those who love and obey Him? Explain your response.
3. How hard is it to praise God in hard times?
4. Why should we praise Him when life is difficult?
5. What practical things can you do to encourage someone who is going through a difficult time?
6. Think of different Bible characters who have gone through hardship. Which of them can you most relate to, and why?
7. As a Christian, do you expect to suffer for Christ? How do you feel about this?

Closing the Activity

Nina Atcheson, Scarborough, Queensland, Australia
In small groups or pairs, look up the Bible texts and match them with the correct statements.

1. Psalm 16:8
2. Psalm 46:1, 2
3. Psalm 118:6–8
4. Proverbs 16:32
5. 1 Corinthians 10:13
6. Philippians 4:4–6
7. Philippians 4:13, 19
8. Hebrews 11:1
9. 1 Peter 5:7

_____ God is bigger than all of my problems, and He supplies all of my needs.

_____ In the hard times, God is in complete control of my life. No one can harm me.

_____ God is my strength and is in control of all my circumstances, so I can face life confidently.

_____ God won’t allow me to be tempted beyond what I can bear in His strength.

_____ I can rejoice, pray, and give thanks, even under trials.

_____ I shouldn’t let my emotions control me. I should control them.

_____ I can bring everything to God that troubles me, because He cares about me.

_____ God does not forsake me when I’m discouraged, because He’s always before me.

_____ Faith is the substance of my religious experience.
David and Bathsheba: Adultery and After

Surveying the Source
2 Samuel 11, 12.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Recognize the steps that lead to a fall into temptation as well as the steps that lead to restoration.
► Explain why God allows us to suffer the consequences of our choices even while He restores us in grace.
► Identify with and practice David’s pleas for restoration.

Preparing to Lead
David is referred to more often in the Bible than any other man. His story is one of a shepherd boy become warrior king, a man after God’s own heart, a great-great-grandfather of Jesus. Yet the story of David and Bathsheba is as sordid as they come. It is full of lust, betrayal, deceit, and murder. If David’s story had ended with the account of this great sin, it would have been tragic, but not much of a surprise. We know many stories of great people falling far. But what catches us by surprise is that though God allows this couple to suffer the terrible consequences of their sin, He also offers amazing redemption.

2 Samuel 11, 12.

Getting Started
A. On a chalkboard or whiteboard, draw a number of large hearts with the caption “Couples Most/Least Likely to Succeed.” Ask your class to suggest couples from the Bible to write in the hearts—one couple per heart (example: Jacob + Leah). Draw a (+) or (-) sign above each heart, depending on whether the class deems this couple most or least likely to do well at the outset of their relationship. Save the discussion of David and Bathsheba till last. Ask the following questions: ● Was the beginning of this couple’s relationship very auspicious? ● Why or why not? ● What were some of the most important aspects of their relationship in the long run?
B. Write the word daily on the board. Ask your class for definitions and connotations of the word, and then ask them to give examples of how one might “dally” with temptation. Discuss how David and Bathsheba skirted the edges of trouble before they actually succumbed to sin. Compare their situation with Adam and Eve’s Fall. Ask: ● How did Eve make the first steps toward sin? ● How can we guard against making these first steps? ● What can we do when temptation stands full blown before us, like it did before Adam?
Delving Into the Word

A. On a chalkboard or whiteboard, draw seven steps going down to “Sin” at the bottom. Discuss examples of David’s dependence on God in his early days (see 1 Samuel 17, 26; 2 Samuel 5:17–25; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 717, 718). Then ask your class to study 2 Samuel 11 and 12, and chart the steps of David’s fall. For example: David asked God for guidance in everything. David became self-sufficient. David kept looking where he shouldn’t have looked. David took what wasn’t his. David tried deception to cover his sin. David had Uriah murdered.

Then ask your class to examine the following texts and chart the steps of David’s return to God: 2 Samuel 12, Psalm 32, Psalm 51. Examples for labeling each step are: David listened to the prophet Nathan. David repented of his sin. David accepted the consequences of his sin. David remained humble and submissive to God under great humiliation (2 Sam. 16:5–13). David asked for a pure heart and a willing spirit. David offered praise to God. David offered to teach God’s ways to transgressors.

B. Hand out the reproducible chart (see page 40). Explain that the story of the human race has four elements: 1. Paradise, 2. Paradise Lost through the Fall, 3. Redemption, and 4. Restoration. The story begins in the Garden of Eden, and continues in the following way: After Adam and Eve fell, Christ died so we might be redeemed. Eventually He will restore those who follow Him to the Garden of Eden and the New Earth. As a class, examine the story of David and Bathsheba, and record the themes of the story on the chart. Both David and Bathsheba were well married. Uriah was a God-fearing, brave man, one of the famous “Thirty” of David’s army, and David had many wives. But David coveted what wasn’t his. What were the consequences (2 Sam. 12:11–14)? List these on the chart. Eventually, four sons of David died or were killed (2 Sam. 12:6). Can your class name them (2 Sam. 12:14; 13:28; 18:14; 1 Kings 2:23)? How did God redeem David (2 Sam. 12:13)? How did God bring restoration to David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:24, 25; 1 Kings 1:28–31)?

Discussing the Ideas

1. What are the first steps that often lead to our succumbing to temptation?
2. What are the best ways of avoiding the first slide into sin?
3. What can save us at any point in the downward progression toward sin?
4. How did David respond to the terrible consequences of his sin in his later years? How did his attitude show his true conversion?
5. David had a problem disciplining his sons because of his own guilt. How might guilt affect the way we relate to others, and what can we do about it?
6. What do you think was Bathsheba’s role in David’s sin? How was she involved in the redemption and restoration following their sin?

Closing the Activity

Read Psalm 51 in several versions including The Message, if possible. Ask each class member to focus on one analogy of restoration (such as wash me) and rewrite the verse, expanding on the theme in personal terms. Some may wish to share their thoughts and writings. Close with a prayer that reflects the sentiments of these verses.

Cheryl Woolsey Des Jarlais, Ronan, Montana, U.S.A.
### Tragedy & Grace

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<th>Paradise</th>
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Materials
pop culture magazine such as People or Us, paper and pens

Ahab and Jezebel:
Abuse of Authority

Surveying the Source
1 Kings 16:21–22:40; 2 Chronicles 18.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
- Discuss how people in the Bible and people today can use power to manipulate others, and how the “God factor” makes a difference in good leadership.
- Explore how the story of Ahab and Jezebel demonstrates abuse of authority, and look at what happens when people in power do not involve God in their decisions.
- Examine different strategies that can be used to make good decisions.

Preparing to Lead
Ahab had a chance to lead with integrity, to lead with God as his guide. But he chose another route. He chose to marry a wife whose father was devoted to idolatry and who herself worshiped Baal. To please his wife Jezebel, Ahab erected a temple for Baal and hired pagan priests to work in the temple.

For a person who had power, Ahab didn’t use his power to make his country a better place for the people living there. He allowed Jezebel to kill some of God’s prophets and forcing others of them to hide in the wilderness. By tapping into God’s power, Elijah played an important part in saving these prophets.

Getting Started
A. Bring a pop culture magazine such as People or Us to class. Ask someone to find one or two stories which demonstrate an abuse of power. These stories may be about a personal relationship or a business relationship. Discuss the decisions that the people in the stories may have made to lead up to such an abuse of power. Discuss how God can use that situation to show His power.
B. Talk to the class about this scenario: Two students are roommates. One is popular and one is not. The popular student sees his roommate getting good grades and asks him for help. The smarter roommate begins tutoring him, but only for favors such as an invitation to a party or an introduction to a girl. How is this relationship unhealthy? What can each student do to improve the relationship and change it from a manipulative one to a healthy one which God can be a part of?

Delving Into the Word
A. Briefly describe Ahab and Jezebel’s relationship to each other; to the people they ruled over; and to God (read selections from 1 Kings 16:30–33; 18:7–13; 21:5–14). Discuss how they would have related to others if God has been their...
power and success. Close with a prayer that class members will desire to develop godly attributes in order to benefit others rather than hurt them.

**Discussing the Ideas**

1. What does it mean to be unequally yoked? (See 2 Corinthians 6:14.) How were Ahab and Jezebel unequally yoked?

2. Identify two or three good leaders of today and the not-so-distant past. How are they using, or how did they use, their power? Who are/were they trying to help, and why?

3. In any relationship, why is it important not to abuse your power or your place in that relationship? What about in the following relationships: parent/child; friend/friend; student/teacher; worker/worker?

4. What are some of the consequences of trying to manipulate someone else? Is there ever a situation when manipulating someone is a good thing? Explain your answer.

5. What advice could you give to a friend who is in a relationship where she or he is being taken advantage of and manipulated? What Bible verses or stories could you share with this person to help her or him get out of this relationship or try to improve it?

6. Hand out the reproducible activity (see page 41). Have individual class members read each line of the “poem.” Then discuss how Ahab and Jezebel might have viewed the second half of each phrase.

**Closing the Activity**

Have each member of the class list attributes God wants us to have. Ask them to consider silently how these attributes are different from “the world’s” view of

Ahab could have seen this miracle and yet still harden his heart to God’s leading. Ask the class to think of other illustrations from world history where such a blatant abuse of power existed (Hitler, Mussolini, etc.). Then contrast these with others who used their leadership for good (Mother Theresa, Gandhi, etc.).

Stephanie Yamniuk, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
ENRICHING THOUGHTS

The highest aim in life – To know God and do His will
The most enriching good habit – Complimenting others
The most destructive habit – Worry
The greatest joy – Giving
The greatest loss – Loss of self-respect
The most satisfying work – Helping others
The most endangered species – Dedicated leaders
Our greatest natural resource – Our youth
The ugliest look – A frown
The greatest “shot in the arm” – Encouragement
The greatest problem to overcome – Fear
The most effective sleeping pill – Peace of mind
The most crippling disease – Excuses
The surest way to limit God – Unbelief
The most powerful force in life – Love
The most dangerous piranha – A gossiper
The Greatest Life-Giver – The Creator
The world’s most incredible computer – The brain
The worst thing to be without – Hope
The deadliest weapon – The tongue
The two most power-filled words – “I Can”
The greatest asset – Faith
The most worthless emotion – Self-pity
The most beautiful attire – A Smile
The most prized possession – Self-esteem
The most powerful form of communication – Prayer
The most contagious spirit – Enthusiasm
The most urgent need – Salvation
The greatest attribute of Jesus – Obedience
The Greatest of All – God
Lesson 12

Hosea and Gomer: Forgiving the Unfaithful

Surveying the Source
Ps. 86:5; 103:2, 3; Hosea 13: 14:1, 4–7; Matt. 6:14; 18:21, 22; 21:31, 32; Eph. 4:31, 32; 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 John 1:9.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Identify the essential elements to living a life of peace and happiness through forgiveness.
► Explore the transforming power of love and forgiveness as demonstrated in the book of Hosea.
► Reflect and acknowledge their response to Jesus’ command to forgive one another.

Preparing to Lead
Hosea’s story highlights one of the most difficult and life-changing facets of life, namely, forgiveness. The art of forgiveness is possibly a life skill and choice that every person makes regardless of age. People consciously choose to use or misuse it on a daily basis. Hosea’s dilemma includes a divine mandate which serves as an example to Israel of God’s unfailing love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. This story explores the significant ramifications of following God’s word and living a life of forgiveness and love toward others.

Getting Started
A. Divide the class into two groups to read and discuss the forgiveness case scenario (see page 42). Have one group list all the assumed positive benefits Mitchell would experience if he harnessed a forgiving attitude toward those who killed his wife. Have the other group list the assumed negative effects Mitchell would experience if he harbors an unforgiving attitude toward his wife’s killers. Then have both groups share their perspectives.
B. On a flipchart or whiteboard, write the word FORGIVENESS horizontally. Have the class brainstorm stories from the Bible that include an ingredient of forgiveness and write their titles around the edge of the page or board. Next, have them brainstorm words that fit the beginning of each letter in the word forgiveness.

Delving Into the Word
A. Ask individuals to take turns reading the following texts: ●Matt. 6:14, 15 ●Num. 14:19 ●Isa. 1:18 ●Col. 1:21–23 ●Ps. 86:5 ●Ps. 103:2, 3 ●Luke 17:4. Then ask and discuss each of the following questions based on the texts that were just read: ●Do I have to forgive those who have hurt me? ●What motivates God’s forgiveness? ●What does it really mean to be forgiven? ●Is there a limit to the number of forgiveness encounters? ●Is God’s forgiveness limited?

Materials
Bibles, paper, pens, flip-chart or whiteboard, one index card for each class member
B. Divide the class into small groups, and assign a story to each group to read and to answer the story’s corresponding questions. After each group has completed their assignment, reconvene as a class, and have each group share their story and the answers to their questions.

Story One—Hos. 1:1–3:5 (a) What did Hosea’s family symbolize (1:2–2:1)? (b) What commands did God give Hosea (3:1)?

Story Two—Hos. 4:1–5:15 (a) What charge did God bring against Israel (4:12)? (b) Describe the ultimate purpose of God’s judgment on His people (5:15).

Story Three—Hos. 7:1–10; 15 (a) List Israel’s crimes against God (7:16). (b) How did they show that they had forgotten Him (8:14)? (c) Why did God hold out the possibility of repentance and blessing (10:12)?

Story Four—Hos. 11:1–14:9 (a) How did God show that He was torn between love and justice (11:8–11)? (b) What final challenge did Hosea give to the people (14:9)?

Discussing the Ideas

1. How do you tend to deal with a loved one who has wronged you in some way?
2. How is God’s faithfulness to us an example of the way we should treat others?
3. What are the idols in your life from which you should turn away?
4. What does God want us to learn from Israel’s example of disobeying to the point of needing to be punished?
5. In what ways did Hosea show compassion and loyalty?
6. Why is justice an important part of being a Christian?

Closing the Activity

Finish the last half of the activity sheet. Tell the class: Search your heart to identify people who have hurt you and whom you have hurt in response. Write the initials only of these people. Then, beside their initials, write what you are going to do this week to help yourself forgive these people.

Close with a prayer that God will help your class to learn how to forgive the people listed on the index cards.

Jean-Pierre Martinez, Sydney, Australia
Forgiveness—A Case Scenario

In March of 1998, in Jonesboro, Arkansas, U.S.A., two school boys with guns stormed into a school and killed four students and one teacher named Shannon Wright. Shannon was the 32-year-old wife of Mitchell Wright.

On August 12 of the same year, *The New York Times* had this to say about the two boys:

“Circuit Court Judge Ralph Wilson remands Mitchell Johnson, 14, and Andrew Golden, 12, to state juvenile detention center for school shooting spree in Jonesboro, Arkansas, that killed [a] teacher and four little girls; Johnson pleads guilty and Golden not guilty during adjudication hearing; Wilson convicts Golden in shootings, and orders that boys remain in custody of Youth Services Division until their 21st birthdays; Arkansas has no holding center for adults who are sentenced as youths in juvenile court, so Johnson and Golden are expected to be held in juvenile detention center only until their 18th birthdays, and then released; Wilson says ‘punishment will not fit the crime’; Gov. Mike Huckabee says he will build or modify prison to house boys until they are 21.”


Now It’s Your Turn

Search your own heart to identify people, who in your opinion, have hurt you or whom you in turn have hurt. Write their initials below.

Beside their name, write what you are going to do this week and what should have been done some time ago. Be specific.
Yahweh and Israel: Fulfillment Beyond Failure

Surveying the Source
Exod. 3:6–14; 6:6–8; Josh. 24:1–18; Jer. 5:19, 22; Ezek. 16:26–29, 34; Hos. 9:1; John 20:21; Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 John 1:12.

Plotting the Course
The students will:
► Compare ways in which God’s people turned away from Him to how we do the same.
► Make a decision to begin or to continue a meaningful and joyful relationship with God and others.
► Examine practical ways of bridging relationships with God and others.

Preparing to Lead
Synchrony is a term referring to the different adjustments parents of an infant make. Parents usually readjust their schedule in ways that enable them to spend as much time as possible with the baby, and they rearrange furniture and modify their speech when interacting with the baby. They do all this because they love their baby. Over a short period of time, synchrony creates bonding. Such bonding produces mutual benefit—the parents receive satisfaction as caregivers, and the infant develops trust. God, our heavenly Parent, loves us so much that He goes through synchrony. He has made every provision that He can for our well-being and salvation. We can trust Him to take care of us rather than look to other sources of help.

Getting Started
A. Divide the class into groups. Provide paper and a pen to a scribe in each group. Have the groups list at least five things they do when forming a relationship with somebody. After five minutes, have the scribes present their list. Assign one person to combine all the lists on the flip-chart/whiteboard. Then discuss how the procedures for forming human relationships and for forming a meaningful relationship with God are similar. Circle the items on the combined list which apply to forming a relationship with God. Add other suggestions to the combined list that pertain to establishing a relationship with Him.

B. Review the story of Hosea in Hosea 1–3. Discuss how God used this enacted parable to help Israel understand His unconditional love toward them, regardless of their unfaithfulness. Distribute paper and pens to class members. Have them list things they go after that show unfaithful to God. Discuss why God pursues us even when we are unfaithful. Then, to signify their desire to remain faithful to Him, have them tear up their paper and drop the shredded pieces into a wastebasket to be disposed of later. Or if you or the church has a small shredder, have each class member shred their paper in it.
Delving Into the Word

A. Write these Bible references and the associated characters on a whiteboard/flipchart: Exodus 3:6–14; 6:6–8—Moses; Joshua 24:1–18—Joshua. Divide the class into two groups, and assign each group one of these references. Have the groups read their verses in a round-robin style.

Choose one of the members in each group to be the Bible character, and have the other members interview the person with these questions: ●How did you feel when you became a mediator between God and the Israelites? ●Was it easy or difficult? ●Why? ●What do you think was God’s purpose in using you this way? ●What did you learn about God?

Then have each group discuss God’s love toward people who forgot Him for a while.

B. Have the class divide into pairs. Provide a sheet of paper and a pen for each pair. Make sure each pair has at least one Bible. Tell the group they are going on a Bible treasure hunt. Say: God’s joy fills our hearts when we accept His forgiveness. Several references to such joy are found in the Bible.

Then have them find some of these verses and write down the reference only. After five minutes, find out which pair found the most verses. Then ask each pair to read one verse they found while you write the reference on the whiteboard/flipchart. Some examples are: ●Neh. 8:10 ●Ps. 4:7 ●Ps. 51:12 ●Isa. 51:11 ●John 16:20.

Ask the group to share personal experiences of feeling the joy of the Lord. Discuss why it’s important to share such joy with others.

On an additional sheet of paper, have members write their name, putting one letter under the other—making an acrostic of what they are thankful to God for. Have them share the acrostic with others around them.

Discussing the Ideas

1. How are we similar to the children of Israel in our relationship with God?
2. Why do most of us find it difficult to maintain a growing spiritual condition?
3. What are the factors that hinder our spiritual life the most?
4. How can we experience God’s presence in our lives when we feel rather low spiritually?
5. What are the key principles of God’s relationship with His children? How can we practice these with our fellow human beings?
6. Why should we generally be a happy people? What is the source of this happiness?
7. In what specific ways can we be “bridge builders” for God in sharing His love to others?

Closing the Activity

Tell the class how in this lesson we have learned that being close to God brings us much joy. All through our lives, we have experienced times of separation from and times of closeness to God.

Distribute copies of “My Spiritual Journey” (see page 43) and have the members trace the ups and downs of their lives.

Ask: What are the reasons for you now? Can this state of being be improved? If so, how? What might the impact of your spiritual condition be on others?

Give them a few minutes to meditate on these questions.

Prema Gaikwad, Silang, Cavite, Philippines
MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

In the chart below, trace your life’s spiritual journey which might show several ups and downs. Each asterisk at the top of the graph represents 5 years of life.

Paraphrase the following statements of Paul:

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13, 14, NIV).

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4, NIV).