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a word about what’s ahead...

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

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

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

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

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

- **What Do You Think?**—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.

- **Did You Know?**—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.

- **Key Text**—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.

- **Punch Lines**—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.

- **Flashlight**—a brief snapshot of Ellen White’s input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—The Conflict of the Ages.*

- **Other Eyes**—a couple of quotes from various contemporary or historic sources that may open up a slightly different perspective on the central message of the lesson.

- **Making It Real**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Begin here if you are studying this lesson on your own prior to, or after, studying it in a Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God apply to you personally.

Welcome to Cornerstone Connections.

—The Editors

PS. Don’t forget to check out the reading plan.

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

6—The Way of Two Worlds [p. 3]
Both Creation and the fall of Lucifer begin the story of God’s uncompromising plan to be in relationship with humanity.

13—Law Meets Love [p. 7]
Adam and Eve break trust with their Creator and open the door of death and destruction that would ultimately cost Him His life.

20—Out of Control [p. 11]
The story of Cain and Abel provides the first recorded contrast between those who trust and obey, and those who rationalize and choose their own way.

27—A Very Long Walk With God [p. 15]
Enoch lives the story of how much God wants to be in relationship with us, and how a life of trusting togetherness will restore us to permanent companionship with Him.

February

3—Noah Way! [p. 19]
Noah also walks with God in a story very parallel with ours today. He lives a life of faithful diligence in preparing for the storm ahead.

10—Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door [p. 23]
The futility of trying to find a way to save ourselves is exemplified in the story of the Tower of Babel. Only a life of trusting obedience brings ultimate and lasting safety.

17—Long, Strange Trip [p. 27]
Abraham’s name is a synonym for, and his life an example of, the kind of faith that God looks for in His friends.

24—Boy Wonder [p. 31]
The story of the miraculous birth of Isaac is the story of how God keeps His promises even when the most enlightened human reasoning pronounces the situation hopeless and impossible.

March

3—No Laughing Matter [p. 35]
By choosing a life close to the evils of his age rather than one as far away as possible, Lot laid the groundwork for the destruction of his family.

10—Winsome . . . and Then Some [p. 39]
The story of God, the matchmaker, provides encouragement in this age of shaky relationships. Rebekah also portrays the virtue of going the second mile in service to others.

17—Identity Theft [p. 43]
Through the story of Jacob and Esau we can explore themes of identity, delayed gratification, and integrity—all very relevant themes for coping with life today.

24—Struggle by a Stream [p. 47]
The life of Jacob points out the unconditional acceptance of God. Persevering through his problems, Jacob was able to experience joy as he entrusted the broken pieces of his life to God.

31—Family Fiascoes [p. 51]
The effects of sin as well as the evidence of God’s healing grace are vividly portrayed in the story of Jacob and his family. Through it we are called to trust God with all our family challenges.
God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service* (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34).
Perhaps the most challenging question Christians have ever asked is why God permitted sin to corrupt His perfect world. With so much pain and suffering in the world, how do we explain God’s decision to others? Who below do you think would be the hardest person to explain it to? Why? (Rank them from one—hardest, to five—easiest.)

- An open-minded atheist who is looking for a logical answer to life’s biggest problems
- A 17-year-old girl who contracts the AIDS virus from a blood transfusion
- A father who discovers that a distant member of the family molested his 6-year-old boy
- An employee who gets falsely accused and then fired because of his race
- A disaster-relief volunteer faced daily with the trauma caused by natural disasters

What basic beliefs are needed to be able to understand this issue? What evidence or testimony would you give to explain why a God of love would permit such tragedies? Which person above do you think would benefit most from a deeper understanding of the purpose and plan of Creation?

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

(Isaiah 14:12-14; Revelation 12:7-9; Genesis 1:26, 27; 1:31–2:3, NIV)
You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you. . . . Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you” (Ezekiel 28:13-15, NIV).

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:3, 4, NIV).

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made....My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:14-16, NIV).

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10, NIV).

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NIV).
cornerstone connections

Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? section, you are challenged to rank types of people according to how difficult it would be to explain the reason for God’s allowing sin to continue in this world. With whom do you think it would be the most difficult to discuss this and why? What approach would you take to answering this question? What key points would be most effective in communicating with the type of person you selected?

Read John 10:10 and consider how Jesus described God’s plan and Satan’s plan for life on earth. How does this saying of Christ add to the discussion about God’s seeming nonresponse to Satan’s work on earth?

Imagine that Lucifer had rebelled against God and then suddenly disappeared from heaven with no explanation. How would the rumors about what might have happened to him affect the way the other citizens would relate to God?

Sunday

Read the selection of Scripture that tells the story of Lucifer’s fall in the Into the Story section. While the information about how sin began is limited, if you use the study questions in Out of the Story you will discover the basic elements of sin’s origin. What are some of the positive, beautiful truths about God’s character that you see in the way He deals with rebellion and the way He created humanity? What aspects of this whole story are still difficult to understand?

Monday

Read the Key Text from Revelation and try to imagine what this scene looked like. While some want to downplay the reality of Satan and his demonic forces, the presence of an evil adversary is actual and relevant. Notice in Did You Know? that the majority of people in America believe Satan is only a symbol for evil, not an actual person. However, the reality of an evil being is more widely believed in other parts of the world. What is the good news, if any, in the text, and how should believing in a literal devil impact the way we live in the world today?

Tuesday

Why do you think God’s style of government and His desire for a service of love seem so foreign to us? The quote in the Flashlight section unpacks the central issue of free will in our relationship with God. As you read and reflect on this quote think about someone you know who loves and serves God freely with devotion as opposed to doing these things from fear or obligation. How is their attitude toward God helpful to you as you relate to the Savior? What evidence do you see in their life that reveals to you that they follow God freely and willingly? Do you think this attitude is rare or common? Explain.

Wednesday

Read the verses in Punch Lines. Highlight or note key phrases in each verse that you think a friend of yours might need to understand. Choose one of the verses that spoke to you personally and paraphrase it. (Try not to use any of the major words used in the text.) Be ready to explain how evil came to be and how God continued with His plan for humanity because of His deep love for them. Is there someone in particular you know who is confused about the origin of sin and the creation of the world? Pray about how you might effectively be a witness to them with the insights gained in this study.

Thursday

If you have it available, read Patriarchs and Prophets,* chapters 1 and 2, with your Bible open to glimpse a powerful picture of what happened in heaven and what eventually happened on earth at the creation of the world. As Ellen White comments on specific aspects of the fall of Lucifer and on the week of Creation, specifically note the insights that are new to you.

Friday

A popular T-shirt among some Christians reads “Can’t Help Being Awesome—Genesis 1:26, 27” and refers to the stated truth that we are created in the image of God. How does this truth encourage and elevate your own sense of value and worth? Can we become so focused on the wonderful work of creation that we lose sight of the Creator? Read Isaiah 14:13, 14 and Ezekiel 28:17 and note the cause of Satan’s fall. How do you see the same kind of self-absorbed focus in the world today? What will you do this week to be aware of the great controversy between good and evil and freely worship God out of a heart full of adoration?

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

Insight

At www.InsightMagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community.

Insight has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 1 and 2.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’”

(Genesis 3:8, 9, NIV)

“Then Christ bade the angelic host to be in accord with the plan that His Father had accepted, and rejoice that, through His death, fallen man could be reconciled to God. Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed outmeasured even the anguish and sacrifice of the Prince of life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 65).
what do you think?

Agree or Disagree (A/D)

____ The real sin in the garden was not so much listening to the serpent's lie as it was distrusting what God had already said.

____ The plan of salvation enables us to be closer to God than Adam and Eve were before the Fall.

____ The fact that Christ died to pay the debt of sin is evidence that God's law of love is unbending.

INTO THE STORY

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?'

"The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."'

"'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

"He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

"And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'

"The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

"Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"

"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.' So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.'

(Genesis 3:1-13, 21-24, NIV)
punch lines

“Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right” (Romans 5:18, 19, Message).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23, NIV).

“The time of judgment for the world has come, when the prince of this world will be cast out. And when I am lifted up on the cross, I will draw everyone to myself” (John 12:31, 32, NLT).

“The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God’s wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17, NLT).

“Saving grace makes a man as willing to leave his lusts as a slave is willing to leave his galley, or a prisoner his dungeon, or a thief his bolts, or a beggar his rags.”—Thomas Brooks, 17th-century nonconformist preacher; served as chaplain in the Civil War.

“It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen.”—Ellen G. White, 19th-century inspired writer and church cofounder.
Sabbath
The What Do You Think? exercise offers a few questions that you are to agree or disagree with and asks you to state why. Consider the following passage from Scripture: “Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right” (Romans 5:18, 19, Message). What is the most meaningful part of the verse to you? Why?

Sunday
The story of the temptation and the Fall is in the Into the Story section. Which phrases or verses are the most critical to the meaning of the story? Why do you think God asked Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” What if Adam and Eve had never come out of hiding when God called to them? What kind of emotions do you think Adam and Eve were experiencing as they hid in the bushes from God?

Who do you know who might be staying away from God’s grace because they feel ashamed or alone in their sin? What can you do to help restore them? A letter? A phone call? A prayer?

Monday
Read Romans 5:8 and make a connection to what Paul says about redemption and what occurred in the Garden of Eden. When has God touched your heart “while” you were far away from Him?

Wednesday
Read the verses and find the texts in the Punch Lines section and identify the phrase or sentence that comforts you the most. Which phrase or verse causes you to think about your relationship with God right now? Do you know someone who needs to experience the matchless love of Christ this week? Say a prayer for them. Write out two to three encouraging verses from this section and find a way to share them.

Thursday
If you have it available, read chapters 3 and 4 of Patriarchs and Prophets and make a list of all the words that convey the emotions of God in these two chapters. What are some comments Ellen White makes that are timeless and relate to your life today? Whom do you know who has truly accepted God’s free gift of salvation? Ask them to share how they have learned to rest in God’s grace and what specific ways they remind themselves of God’s redeeming love.

Friday
If you were to answer the question “Where are you?” that God asked Adam and Eve, what would be your answer today? Write out a prayer of response to God’s offering you the same salvation He offered Adam and Eve in the garden.

What are some aspects of God’s character that you are absolutely certain about—no doubt, whatsoever? What are some aspects you wonder about?

Think of a time in your life when you unknowingly believed a lie about someone else. How did you feel after you found out that it was not true? Reflect on Adam and Eve’s experience after disobeying God in the garden and make a list of what emotions you think overpowered them.

Insight
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this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 3 and 4.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“Notwithstanding that Cain had by his crimes merited the sentence of death, a merciful Creator still spared his life, and granted him opportunity for repentance. But Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against the divine authority, and to become the head of a line of bold, abandoned sinners” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 78).

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**Scripture Story:** Genesis 4:1-16.

**Commentary:** Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 5.

 호출

 "Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.’" (Genesis 4:6, 7, TEV)
what do you think?

Rank in order from hardest (1) to easiest (5).

In which scenario would it be hardest to admit guilt and make a turnaround:

_____ Cheating on an exam.
_____ Perusing explicit material on the Web.
_____ Admitting to someone that you were critical of them behind their back.
_____ Lying to a friend.
_____ Owning up to a peer that the reason you are unkind to them is because you envy them.

INTO THE STORY

“Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, ‘With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.’ Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the first-born of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.’

“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

“The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.’

“Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.’

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”

(Genesis 4:1-16, NIV)
punch lines

“Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple” (Job 5:2, NIV).

“A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3, NIV).

“Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright” (Proverbs 29:10, NIV).

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren’” (Luke 22:31, 32, NKJV).

“It was faith that made Abel offer to God a better sacrifice than Cain’s” (Hebrews 11:4, TEV).

“Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us” (Acts 4:12, TEV).

“They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11, NKJV).

“Hate is born when men call evil good. And like an infant serpent bursting from its small, confining shell, it can never be cased so small again.”—Calvin Miller, current U.S. poet, preacher, author, and teacher.

“Speak when you are angry—and you’ll make the best speech you’ll ever regret.”

**Sabbath**

Complete the exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section. Why do you think it would be hard to confess and admit that particular shortcoming? What do you think makes owning up to sin difficult? Is it the shame you feel or is it because you think that feeling might go away in time? What are the benefits of honest confession to God and others?

As you reflect on Cain’s fall down the slippery slope, in what way is his story a warning to you?

**Sunday**

Read the story of Cain and Abel in the *Into the Story* section of this week’s lesson and work through the study questions listed in *Out of the Story*. What do you think are the central lessons to be learned?

As you read the story and note how Cain’s rebellion picked up momentum, how do you see this problem among your peers today? Is the slippery slope of Cain’s rebellion still part of the landscape of the lives of young people in your world? If so, in what way? What does this slippery slope look like today?

**Monday**

Read the *Key Text* and consider how much God tried to get Cain to turn from his anger and repent. Look at each phrase God speaks to Cain and note the attitude of God toward Cain. Is it possible that God is trying to get your attention today about an area of your life that can get out of control? Everyone has weaknesses and areas of their life that can lead them on a steep downward path. Talk to God in prayer about those weaknesses and confess them to Him today. Remind yourself of the promise that as we confess to Him, He is faithful to cover us with His grace.

**Tuesday**

The quote in the *Flashlight* section reveals that the sin of Cain was as much in the continued resistance and pride of heart as it was in the act of killing his brother. Cain’s rebellion closely resembles Lucifer’s and highlights the patient grace of God as well. Think of someone you know who admits their faults right away and has learned the value of honest and immediate confession. How do other people perceive this person? What are some things you have learned from them that you think will help you respond to God’s voice promptly?

**Wednesday**

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week and identify the one verse that is speaking directly to your life today. What do you think God is trying to say to you in that passage? Is there an area of your life in which you might be (or about to be) running out of control? What do you think you should do to make a U-turn? Do you know someone who needs to make a turnaround before they gain too much momentum in the wrong direction?

When God spoke to Cain, He warned the young man that his response to his sin would be a pivotal moment in life. What pivotal moments do you face? Do you know someone who is running out of control downhill? Take time to pray for them. Consider writing them a letter letting them know of your prayers.

**Thursday**

If you have it available, read chapter 5 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and note the steps of Cain’s fall. Look for insights into this story that you may not have thought of before. For example, did you know that Cain’s self-absorbed offering was born out of his anger at God for kicking his parents out of the Garden of Eden? He began each day thinking God was unfair and arbitrary. How do our basic perceptions of God shape the way we relate to Him every day? Continue to search this chapter for new insights and make note of them.

**Friday**

In spite of Cain’s rebellion, God labored with him still: “Notwithstanding that Cain had by his crimes merited the sentence of death, a merciful Creator still spared his life, and granted him opportunity for repentance. But Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against the divine authority, and to become the head of a line of bold, abandoned sinners” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 78). Who has been a voice of reason to you—cautioning you about going too far too fast? Try writing them a note thanking them for their influence in your life and think about to whom you could be a voice of grace-filled caution this week.

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**Insight**

*Insight* has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

**this week's reading**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 5.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
a very long walk with God

Flashlight

“But after the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child’s love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that firstborn son, he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of His Son, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 84).

Keytext

“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” (Genesis 5:21-24, NIV)
### What do you think?

*Make a list of a few character qualities or personality traits that seem to run in your family. They can be physical attributes, personality traits, or beliefs and values. How are these passed on?*

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*Agree or Disagree. The tendency to live fully for God is something you are taught more than something you inherit through your family genes.*

Why did you respond the way you did? What kinds of things are genetically passed on from generation to generation and what kinds of things are learned as one grows up in a certain environment?

### INTO THE STORY

“This is the written account of Adam’s line.

“When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them ‘man.’

“When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

“When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh. And after he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

“When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. And after he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

“When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. And after he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

“When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. And after he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

“When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. And after he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”

*(Genesis 5:1-24, NIV)*
Punch Lines

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8, NIV).

“By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And 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 11:5, 6, NIV).

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV).

“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6, NIV).

“Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him’” (Jude 14, 15, NIV).

Other Eyes

“Character is what you are in the dark.”—D. L. Moody, 19th-century U.S. evangelist.

“Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century English Christian writer and scholar.

“What a vast difference there is between knowing God and loving Him.”—Blaise Pascal, 17th-century French mathematician and philosopher.
Sabbath

Complete the exercise in the What Do You Think? section. How do you think the character qualities you described are passed on from one generation to the next? Is it simply genetics? Is it only something you learn as you go through life? What is one quality that you received from your parents or family members that you want to hold on to and perhaps pass on to your children one day?

Consider Paul’s challenge in Romans 12:2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (NIV). What are some patterns you see in your life that you want to change?

Start your change today with prayer, and follow Paul’s counsel to let the transformation begin with your mind.

Sunday

Read the selection from Genesis 5 in the Into the Story section. Try not to get bogged down because you are reading a genealogy. Genealogies can be loaded with insight, but you have to look carefully. Follow the questions in Out of the Story and give this historical survey a chance to speak. The Bible says that “when God created man, he made him in the likeness of God” (Genesis 5:1, NIV). What does this statement mean to you? How much like God are we and in what ways? As you read the details of this passage, what do you think is the message God is trying to give you today?

Monday

Read the Key Text for this week and think about the events in your life that have been turning points for you. According to this verse, the birth of Enoch’s son was a huge turning point when Enoch started to walk with God in a whole new way. Are you at a turning point in your life? Write a prayer to God. Talk to Him about making this day the first day of a new direction in your life.

Tuesday

Read the quote in the Flashlight section about Enoch’s defining moment at the birth of Methuselah. What do you think people learn about a relationship with God when they become parents? What do you learn about a relationship with God from the viewpoint of a child? Clearly, becoming a parent has a way of transforming someone. Ask someone who has a real walk with God what keeps them closest to God in their journey. Invite them to share with you the Bible character that most inspires their walk with God.

Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines for this week and identify the verse that most urgently speaks to you. Why do you think it does? Highlight or underline in the other verses the key phrases that speak to you and identify someone with whom you might be able to share your insights. Pray that God will give you the opportunity and the courage to say the words that might be a blessing to someone else in the coming week.

Thursday

If you have it available, read chapter 6 in Patriarchs and Prophets and note the rich insight that Ellen White offers on the life of Enoch and the world in which he lived. In many ways, Enoch’s world is much like our world today in thought and in practice. Choose the lesson that emerges in this chapter that you think is the most important for you right now, and write that lesson in a sentence or two. Share with someone why you think it is so important.

Friday

Reflect on the moments of your life when you have felt very close to God as well as the moments when God seemed very distant. What elements of your life contribute to the closeness you feel to God?

What things in your life create distance between you and God?

The Bible says, “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6, NIV). Where will you walk today? Think about the places and the people and the things you will have to walk to today. How would Jesus walk in those places if He were here? When you walk today, invite Jesus to show you His style of walking, and practice the walk of Christ.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at cornerstoneconnections.adventist.org.

this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 6.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time....But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

(Genesis 6:5, 8, NIV)
what do you think?

Either/Or. Choose one of the two statements given and explain your response.

I believe Jesus will come in my lifetime. OR I don’t think Jesus will come in my lifetime.

Why did you answer the way you did? What are some common explanations you have heard from people who hold either of these opinions?

INTO THE STORY

“This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.’”

“And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark.”

“By the first day of the first month of Noah’s six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. Then God said to Noah, ‘Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it.’”

(Genesis 6:9-14; 7:5-13; 8:13-17, NIV)
“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7, KJV).

“By the word of God . . . the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:5-7, KJV).

“As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isaiah 54:9, 10, KJV).

“As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:38, 39, KJV).


“Faith is more than thinking something is true. Faith is thinking something is true to the extent that we act on it.”—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century U.S. scholar, writer, preacher.
Sabbath
Look at the What Do You Think? exercise at the beginning of this lesson and reflect on the similarities between the days of Noah and today. Read Matthew 24:38, 39 and make a list of three to five similarities between the time of the end and the time of Noah and the Flood.

“As in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:38, 39, KJV).

Sunday
Read the story portion of Noah and the Flood found in Genesis 6 through 9:17 and respond to the study questions given in your lesson. Why do you think this story is in the Bible? As you reflect on it, what do you think is the message God has for you today? What aspect of the story speaks to your life?

Monday
The Key Text for this week portrays aspects of God’s character that are both troubling and heartwarming. Read Genesis 6:5-8. It is sad that humanity became so disconnected from God that He would be “grieved” that He had made them. It’s hard to imagine God being so sorry for the mess of sin that He chose to start all over again.

But what is so beautiful is that God cared so much for the human race that He did start over instead of giving up on humanity altogether. That “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” is a rainbow of hope that God will start over rather than giving up on us.

Tuesday
Have you considered thanking God for not giving up on you? Write a prayer of thanks to God for sticking with you.

Wednesday
Perhaps there are moments in your week when an opportunity to share God’s Word with a friend or a stranger will arise. Read the Punch Lines and identify one verse that you think might be especially relevant to people in your sphere of influence. Explain why you would choose the particular verse you did and who you would share it with if the opportunity presented itself. Pray for God to give you a chance this week to convey a word of hope from this week’s study to someone else.

Thursday
It may be that one of the reasons the antediluvians (people before the Flood) did not respond to the promptings of Noah’s preaching was that they thought they had time. Do you have a tendency to postpone aspects of your relationship with God because you don’t feel a sense of urgency? Does the story of Noah awaken any sense of urgency in you?

Friday
The Bible says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). Reflect on the story of Noah and the faith in what he could not see that he had to exercise. What other characters in Scripture had to exhibit similar “blind faith”? Make a list of your top 10 heroes of faith in the Bible and decide why their story is important to you. Also, think of the challenges you face and how the example of these characters might encourage you.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: cornerstoneconnections.adventist.org.

Insight
At www.InsightMagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community.

Insight has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 7, 8, and 9.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
*Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’* (Genesis 11:4, NIV)
what do you think?

Do you ever try to be God? Complete the following statement with one or more statements from the list below: I play God when I . . .

a. tell on a friend who does something wrong.
b. skip personal worship time.
c. make important decisions after talking with friends.
d. ask God to guide my future.
e. eat healthful foods.
f. don’t listen to my parents.
g. do my homework.

into the story

"Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. "They said to each other, 'Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'"

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.'

"So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth."

(Genesis 11:1-9, NIV)

did you know?

The people of Babel didn’t just come up with the idea to build a tower on their own. No, they had an instigator. His name was Nimrod, ruler of the nation, and a man whom the Bible refers to as a “mighty hunter" (Genesis 10:8-10, NIV). The great historian Josephus wrote: “Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God."
OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)

What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

The builders of Babel had harnessed two of the greatest powers known to humans: effective communication and unity. Can you give any modern-day examples of groups that communicate effectively and are unified in doing something wrong?

To whom or what was the tower a monument?

What types of monuments to themselves might people produce or create today?

How do we know the difference between using the gifts God gives us as monuments to ourselves or as monuments to God?

What are two main lessons that you got from reading this story?

punch lines

“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain” (Psalm 127:1, NIV).

“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him” (Psalm 34:8, NIV).

“Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway” (Proverbs 8:34, NIV).

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1, NIV).

“Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like” (James 1:23, 24, NIV).

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins” (James 4:17, NIV).

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV).

other eyes

“I gave in, and admitted that God was God.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century English Christian writer and scholar.

“When a man takes one step toward God, God takes more steps toward that man than there are sands in the worlds of time”—The Work of the Chariot.
The What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson challenged you to identify times in your life when you may play God by the choices you make. In what way were the builders of the Tower of Babel playing God? Explain.

They were not the first beings to try to play God. Read Isaiah 14:12-15. Then identify three actions and behaviors exhibited by Satan in his effort to kill God and take His throne. (Hint: Notice the number of I’s in Satan’s statements.)

1. 
2. 
3. 

Read the Into the Story passage for this week. Toward the end of the passage God is seen taking a very central role in the project undertaken by the builders. What was it that caught God’s attention?

Was God worried that the Babel builders were going to succeed in their act of defiance? What specifically moved Him to confuse their ability to communicate?

Read Matthew 27:11-23. Who was being swept away in a tide of wrongdoing? What does Jesus’ mock trial tell you about the dangers of following the crowd?

If you could witness to a friend who is about to join a gang or follow the wrong crowd, what would you say to them?

Several texts in the Punch Lines section deal with obedience to God’s Word. Choose one of these scriptures that specifically captured your attention. Explain what this scripture means to you.

After reading about the Tower of Babel, list two ways in which the same attitude is seen in society today. For instance, people who store up huge amounts of money for themselves while other people who are in need perish.

Now list two ways that you can care for those in need in your community, church, or school.

Do one act of caring for someone today. Say a prayer for that person.

When was the last time that God gave you a second chance? Was it a test for which you failed to study? Did you somehow escape punishment for something wrong you did or something right you failed to do? Why not thank God right now for His grace toward you?

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
long, strange trip

Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 11 and 12.

flashlight

“It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. . . . God had spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 126).

keytext

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”

(Genesis 12:2, NIV)
Throughout the Bible God calls on seemingly ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Fill in the blanks below.

__________ was called to deliver God’s people from the Philistines.

__________ was very young when called by God and very afraid.

__________ spent 40 years getting ready for his task.

__________ has a name that sounds like that of his mentor, who was taken to heaven.

__________ volunteered to pay the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

The city of Ur—Abraham’s home until God told him to leave—was a developed city, complete with libraries, schools, and a system of law. It was also a place where astrology was the main religion. Even Abraham’s father, Terah, worshipped strange gods and idols (see Joshua 24:2). No wonder God told Abraham to leave.

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

“He took him outside and said ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’

“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, ‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?’”

whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.”

“After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’”

“He took him outside and said ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’

“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, ‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?’”
“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.”

(Genesis 12:1-5; 13:10-12; 15:1, 2, 5; 17:1, 2, 15-17; 18:1, 2, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)

What new thing about God have you learned from Abraham’s story? Explain.

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Put a rectangle around them.)

What two lessons can Sarah’s life teach us?

1. 

2.

What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (Circle them.)

punch lines

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8, NIV).

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25, NIV).

“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life” (1 John 2:24, 25, NIV).

“A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken” (Psalm 34:19, 20, NIV).

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me” (Proverbs 8:17, NIV).

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5, NIV).

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1, NIV).

other eyes

“It is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich.”—Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century U.S. clergyman.

“A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”—Lao Tsu, 6th-century B.C. Chinese philosopher.
Sabbath
Were you able to find all the answers in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson? Read the following scriptures below, each of which tells us something interesting about God’s call to each of these people, and to us. Write a brief explanation of how God called each of these people to serve Him.

Judges 13:1-5._____________________
Jeremiah 1:4-8.____________________
Exodus 3:7-12. ____________________
2 Kings 2:7-15.____________________
What can God do for you?

Tuesday
Read the quotation from Patriarchs and Prophets found in the Flashlight section of the lesson. Notice the last sentence.

Does this mean that Abraham never got upset with God for making such a challenging request of him? When God asks tough things of us, how should we respond?

Wednesday
What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25, NIV). That’s one of the Punch Lines this week. In the space provided below, explain in your own words what this text means to you.

Do you know of someone who went after the alluring things of the world—money, riches, fame, illicit relationships, etc.—only to lose sight of who they really were? How can the Punch Line found in 1 John 2:24, 25 help to prevent this from happening to any of us?

Thursday
One of the truly sad episodes in the life of Abram and Sarai was the Ishmael scandal. Read Genesis 16:1-8. Abram and Sarai couldn’t wait for God to fulfill His promise to give Abraham an heir that would extend his name and make his descendants numberless. So they “helped” God.

What did they do to “help” God’s promise come true? How did their scheme turn out? In what ways might you be trying to “help” God out—trying to make something happen for you that God alone has power to control?

Try this for one day: ask God’s guidance about what to wear, what to eat, where to go, whom to talk to, what to say to those you meet, etc. Look for opportunities to seek God’s guidance before you act.

Friday
A bram’s life of faithfulness got him into the great Hall of Faith found in Hebrews 11. Most of us will never be asked by God to leave our home for a strange land we don’t know. Most of us will never be required to sacrifice a child. However, to achieve God’s purpose for our lives, He will require a sacrifice of something we hold dear. Are you prepared to make that sacrifice?

In your own words, write a prayer to God asking Him to show you His plan for your life and to give you willingness and strength to sacrifice for Him.

Remember, God’s timing may not match yours perfectly. He may choose to reveal His plan for your life in pieces, bit by bit. But if you trust Him and do not give up, He will bless you beyond your wildest dreams.

this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 11 and 12.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 152).

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” (Genesis 22:12, NIV)
Each of the following people made several huge sacrifices to achieve world change, and obey their conscience. List one sacrifice each had to make.

a. Mohandas Gandhi _______________________.
b. Abraham Lincoln _____________________.
c. Esther __________________________.
d. Rosa Parks ___________________.
e. Josiah ______________________.
f. Mother Teresa _______________.
g. Ellen White ________________.

He name Isaac means "he will laugh." It is the name given to him by his father Abraham. Laughter was a theme in the birth of Isaac. You may remember that when God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son, he fell on his face and burst out laughing (see Genesis 17:16, 17). When God found out about the promise she too burst out laughing, isn’t it great to see into the Bible character’s personalities? However, God didn’t find their laughter at His words funny.

What do you think?

"Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. "Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!, he replied. "Yes, my son? Abraham answered. God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (Genesis 21:1-5, NIV)

INTO THE STORY

I will tell you about

burnt offering

on one of the mountains

I took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on the son Ishmael. And I himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said, "Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (Genesis 21:1-5, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

Who are the minor actors in this story, the people who are in the background of the story?

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)

What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

What words in this story help us understand how Ishmael and Hagar might have felt? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

What one thing is God saying to you through this story?

What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (Circle them.)

What situation in your life do you feel compares to Abraham’s challenge—being 100 years old and having a new baby to rear?

punch lines

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12, NIV).

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9, NIV).

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ’My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’” (Matthew 26:39, NIV).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10, NIV).

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV).

“Jesus replied, ’I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done’” (Matthew 21:21, NIV).

other eyes

“Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds.”

—George Eliot, 19th-century English novelist.

“Feed your faith and your fears will starve to death.”—Anonymous.

“The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.”—Chinese proverb.
Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson you are asked to list some of the sacrifices made by great men and women of history.

The Merriam Webster’s online dictionary has three definitions for the word “sacrifice.” The third definition is striking: “Destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.” When one makes a sacrifice, it is done because one values something else more than the thing they had to sacrifice.

In your own words, explain what Abraham valued more than the life of his young son, Isaac?

Sunday

Read the story of Abraham and Isaac again in the Bible passage for this week. Pay special attention to Genesis 22:3.

What person has taught you the most about what it means to sacrifice? What have you learned from them?

Do any words in this verse really grab you? The phrase “early the next morning” should make you pause. This phrase hints at a very important part of what it means to be obedient to God. When God asks us to do something—even when it is difficult—we must never hesitate to comply. To do so is to disobey.

Give three reasons Abraham could have used to avoid obeying God:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Monday

If you read the Key Text for this week’s lesson you had to say, “Wow, that was a close one!” Abraham and Isaac had constructed the altar. Isaac was placed on the altar by his father. Abraham grabbed the slaughtering knife and raised it. Then, just in the nick of time, God spoke from heaven and stopped Abraham, providing a ram for the sacrifice.

Does God always come right on time? To answer this question, read the story found in John 11:17-37. Am I willing to trust God even when He seemingly fails to show up in time to meet my need?

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight quotation.

Which of the following would best describe what you might have said to your father:

a. “Are you crazy?”

b. “There’s no way I’m letting you kill me!”

c. “Give me a few minutes, Dad. I’ll go find you a ram.”

d. “If this is what God wants, then I’ll do it.”

God will test us from time to time. Read John 6:5, 6. What test did God give His disciples? How did they do? Did God give up on them?

Wednesday

Read Matthew 26:39 from the Punch Lines section of the lesson.

Jesus was so pained by the sacrifice that lay before Him that the blood came through His pores, quite a rare medical condition. Jesus persevered out of His love for us. Read the other Punch Lines for this week and answer the following:

What is promised to those who persevere in trials? _______________________

If you used your faith, you would be able to move ______________________.

We are to trust God with how much of our hearts? What happens when we let God lead in all our ways?

Thursday

Obedience to God requires faith, and faith is demonstrated through obedience. God has made several requests of His people. One of them is found in Mark 8:34. Followers of God must be willing to do something. What is that?

Try this today: Identify one bad habit that you’d like to change—wasting time watching too much TV, swearing, getting too angry, talking back to your parents, procrastination, etc. Write that bad habit down on a piece of paper along with what you want God to do with it. Then pray, asking God for strength to sacrifice this habit for His glory. Find a safe place to burn this prayer request. Start overcoming your bad habit today by doing one thing to change it. (For instance, if anger is your challenge, begin the change by asking a cool-headed adult how they stay calm.)

Friday

What does Abraham’s relationship with Isaac teach you about the kind of relationship God wants to have with you? If you want a closer relationship with God, ask Him for it right now.

What are you willing to do to develop a closer walk with God?

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 13.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“The Redeemer of the world declares that there are greater sins than that for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Those who hear the gospel invitation calling sinners to repentance, and heed it not, are more guilty before God than were the dwellers in the vale of Siddim. And still greater sin is theirs who profess to know God and to keep His commandments, yet who deny Christ in their character and their daily life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 165).
If a catastrophe was going to happen in your town, rank the following warnings from which you would want given first priority to which you would want given last priority (1-highest; 5-lowest).

___I want my mother and father to be warned.
___I want my friends to be warned.
___I want my pets to be warned.
___I want someone to warn me.
___I want my city to be warned.

The names Sodom and Gomorrah were not the original names of the cities God destroyed in Genesis 19. Unfortunately, the real names of Sodom and Gomorrah were not preserved. Sodom was derived from the Hebrew word S’dom, which means “burnt.” Gomorrah was derived from the Hebrew word Amorah, which means “a ruined heap.” These appear to be place names that were assigned after the disaster and were not their original names.

Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, ‘No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.’

‘Get out of our way,’ they replied. And they said, ‘This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We’ll treat you worse than them.’ They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.

The two men said to Lot, ‘Do you have anyone else here . . . who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.’

So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, . . . ‘Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!’ But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.”

(Genesis 19:1-14, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)

What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

Lot hesitates before obeying the angels’ command to leave Sodom. Is this true obedience? Explain.

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

Why do you think it is that Lot’s sons-in-law didn’t believe him?

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

If it is never wise to live close to people who are committing sin, what should Lot have done?

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

punch lines

“The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34, NIV).

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2, NIV).

“How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you” (Psalm 31:19, NIV).

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2, NIV).

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1, NIV).

“As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15, NIV).

other eyes

“One act of obedience is better than one thousand sermons.”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 20th-century German Lutheran pastor and theologian.

“The first step in a person’s salvation is knowing their sin.”—Seneca, 1st-century A.D. Roman philosopher.
Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? section this week you had the difficult task of choosing whom you would warn if a disaster was about to happen and you had to choose the order in which the warnings would be given.

God takes His warnings very seriously, as we’ll find out this week. Read the following scriptures: 2 Chronicles 19:10; Ezekiel 3:18; Ezekiel 33:9.

In each of these scriptures God gives specific consequences for failing to carry out His warnings. List those consequences below:

Monday

Read this week’s Key Text again. This scripture really expresses the sad reality of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time that God destroyed them. How did Lot’s sons-in-law respond to his warnings about Sodom’s destruction? Which of the following best describes their attitude at the time.
1. “I don’t care.”
2. “Nothing is going to happen here.”
3. “Come back tomorrow.”
4. “You sound so funny with all your God talk, Old Man.”

Read Acts 26:25-29. The apostle Paul would shortly be sentenced to death, but before he was, he preached an awesome sermon. What was King Agrippa’s response to Paul’s appeals?

How do you respond to God’s appeals to you?

Tuesday

What were some of the sins committed by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? Several sexual sins come to mind, but they were also guilty of idolatry, witchcraft, and other evil behaviors.

Ellen White notes that there is a sin greater than these. Read the Flashlight quote.

Why is this sin considered greater than even those of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Wednesday

One of the few bright spots in the story of Lot, Sodom, and Gomorrah is the theme of hospitality. Do you think Lot knew who his two mysterious guests were when he first invited them to his home? Is it wise today to invite total strangers to your home?

In many cultures, the form of hospitality showed by Lot is expected of all the people. Read the Punch Lines for this week and answer the following: How are we supposed to treat strangers we meet? Who might these strangers be?

Can you remember anyone you met or helped who seemed to be an angel sent from God to you? What did Jesus say about helping others in Matthew 25:40?

Thursday

One of the powerful themes in the story of Sodom is sexual immorality. The men of the city came to Lot’s house to have sex with his guests.

How would you witness to a friend who is homosexual or confused about their sexuality?

Does God love people who commit sexual sins? Read the story found in 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26, 27. God loves sinners, but He cannot accept our sins.

What two things can you do this week to stay sexually pure?

Friday

Is there anything in your life separating you from God? In Lot’s family, the sights and sounds of Sodom were too much to give up for God. The angels had to literally drag Lot, his wife, and his daughters from Sodom.

What is preventing you from seeing God? Why not run to God right now? You are His child, no matter what you’ve done. God wants you back (1 John 3:1).

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 14.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.’ (Genesis 24:19, NIV)

Flashlight

“It was a time of anxious thought with [Eliezer]. Important results, not only to his master’s household, but to future generations, might follow from the choice he made; and how was he to choose wisely among entire strangers? Remembering the words of Abraham, that God would send His angel with him, he prayed earnestly for positive guidance. In the family of his master he was accustomed to the constant exercise of kindness and hospitality, and he now asked that an act of courtesy might indicate the maiden whom God had chosen” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 172).

Winsome...and then some

Keytext

“After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.’”

(Genesis 24:19, NIV)
what do you think?

Rank the following attributes from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important) in the order you hope to find them in your future spouse.

1. Kindness
2. Honesty
3. Attractiveness
4. Contentment
5. Optimism
6. Selflessness
7. Courage
8. Self-confidence
9. Humility
10. Creativity

Why is your first choice so important to you? Who do you know who best embodies that trait? What person in the Bible exhibited this attribute? Would you ever marry a person who did not have this quality? Why or why not?

did you know?

Approximately half of marriages today are still arranged by the parents. Such was the custom in Abraham’s day. Abraham was 140 years old (Sarah had died three years earlier) when he arranged for the marriage of his son Isaac. Abraham entrusted the matchmaking to his chief servant, Eliezer. So solemn was this assignment, Eliezer placed his hand under Abraham’s thigh to swear that Isaac’s wife would not be found among the Canaanites. The thigh was considered the seat of generative power, so to put the hand under a person’s thigh was to promise obedience to the one requiring the oath.

INTO THE STORY

“Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, ‘Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.’”

“Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and left.”

“Then he prayed, ‘O Lord . . . May it be that when I say to a girl, “Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,” and she says, “Drink, and I’ll water your camels too”—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.’”

“Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. . . . The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

“The servant hurried to meet her and said, ‘Please give me a little water from your jar.’

“Drink, my lord,’ she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

“After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.’”

“Then the servant took Rebekah and her maids ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.”

“Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

(Genesis 24:1-4, 10, 12-19, 26, 27, 61, 67, NIV)
punch lines

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23, 24, NIV).

“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (Matthew 5:39-41, NIV).

“Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex” (Hebrews 13:4, Message).

“But if a man thinks he ought to marry his fiancée because he has trouble controlling his passions and time is passing, it is all right; it is not a sin. Let them marry” (1 Corinthians 7:36, NLT).

“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22, NIV).

“ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:31-33, NIV).

other eyes

“Marriage is adventure, not an achievement.”—David A. Seamands, current U.S. professor of pastoral ministries.

“The love we have in our youth is superficial compared to the love that an old man has for his old wife.”—20th-century U.S. philosopher Will Durant on his ninetieth birthday.
Sabbath

The What Do You Think? activity at the beginning of this lesson urged you to make choices about what attributes are most important to you in a future spouse. Why did you choose the top three you chose? What do you imagine will be the hardest quality to find in a spouse? Why? The attributes of character are too important to ignore, given what Paul says marriage should be like in Ephesians. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31, NIV).

When you think about how your life unites with someone else’s, how much do you think it matters that the key qualities in your list are present?

Sunday

As you read Into the Story try to read the passage taking in every word and detail you can. What three insights did you gain from observing some of the details brought out by the Out of the Story questions?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What do you think is the main reason this story is included in the Bible? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this story about love and marriage?

Monday

In this week’s lesson Rebekah models the beautiful trait of offering a gesture of kindness and “then some.” Read the Key Text again and notice how she goes beyond the expected response, as Eliezer had prayed someone would do. Do you believe Eliezer’s prayer for someone who exhibited this quality was strange? When you look at the way Bible characters prayed specifically for certain events to occur, how do you feel about praying in a similar way? As you pray today, talk to God about a specific hope you have about your future spouse. Write out your prayer and keep it in a safe place so you can find it when you are making decisions about marriage.

Tuesday

In this week’s Flashlight section Ellen White observes Eliezer’s earnest desire to be guided by God in choosing a wife for Isaac. The decision was too pivotal for thoughtless choosing. Read the quote from Patriarchs and Prophets and notice that the qualities that governed the choice were “kindness” and “hospitality.” Why do you think these attributes were so important to Abraham’s family? What decisions do you face that might affect the direction of your future? Who do you know today who enjoys a joyful marriage because they made good relationship decisions when they were young? Ask them about the qualities they would seek in a marriage partner.

Wednesday

Read the verses listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson and make brief title headings for each verse. Which verse speaks especially to your life today? Why do you think this scripture stands out to you more than the others? As you reflect on how this passage pertains to you, think of a friend you have that might benefit from the same passage, and pray for an opportunity to encourage them this week.

Thursday

If you read chapter 15 in Patriarchs and Prophets, you will discover wonderful insights into this week’s lesson. Make note of the new insights you gain from reading this chapter and how they illuminate the story for you. Also, listen for advice! What timeless principles do you see in the reading that would help you in any age, whether it be in Abraham’s time or today?

Insights:
1. 
2. 
3. 

Timeless principles: 

Search the Bible for passages that give insight into the topic of marriage. List the texts in your Bible and read them before you go on a date.

Friday

The experience of marriage and building a God-honoring relationship over the years is one of life’s most noble adventures. As stated in the Punch Lines: “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22, NIV). This is true also for a young woman who would find a good man to marry. God truly intended for our joy to be complete, and part of that joy is experienced in our relationships with others. What aspects of this week’s lesson was particularly helpful to you today? What other Bible characters or Bible stories demonstrate some of the same themes that emerged in this week’s lesson?

Write a thank-you note to a couple that you know who have had a positive influence on your concept of marriage.

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 15.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
When, after his sin in deceiving Esau, Jacob fled from his father’s home, he was weighed down with a sense of guilt. Lonely and outcast as he was, separated from all that had made life dear, the one thought that above all others pressed upon his soul was the fear that his sin had cut him off from God, that he was forsaken of Heaven. In sadness he lay down to rest. . . . As he slept, . . . the divine voice was heard in a message of comfort and hope. Thus was made known to Jacob that which met the need and longing of his soul—a Savior” (Steps to Christ, pp. 19, 20).

Scripture Story: Genesis 25:19-34; 27.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 16.

“Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, . . . and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The Lord said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.’”

(Genesis 25:21, 23, NIV)
Use this code to make a generalization and classify a person from each of these occupations according to their honesty: AH (Absolutely, 100 percent honest in every way, never compromising); MH (Mostly honest, the majority of the time except for the occasional “white lie”); OH (Occasionally honest, but not always); RH (Rarely honest).

___ A rock star ___ A pharmacist
___ A pastor ___ A lawyer
___ A teacher ___ A farmer
___ A priest ___ A police officer
___ A veterinarian ___ A magician
___ A used-car salesman ___ The president of the United States

How would you classify yourself? Where would you put Jacob on the honesty scale? What about Esau? Isaac? Rebekah?

One of the most meaningful Jewish celebrations is the Feast of Sukkoth. It commemorates the 40 years of the Jews wandering in the wilderness. Although it was only 200 miles from Egypt to Canaan, it took God’s people 40 years to make the trip!

The Feast of Sukkoth reminds us of the importance of time in spiritual life. Good things cannot be hurried. It was during the wilderness wanderings that the Israelites received the Ten Commandments, the pattern for the tabernacle, and the necessary character to enter the Promised Land.

The Feast of Sukkoth reminds us that selling a long-term birthright for short-term gratification is foolish. God’s blessings come to those who understand the value of delayed gratification.

the story

“The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

“Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, ‘Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!’ . . .

Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’

“Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’”

“When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, . . . ‘I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death. . . . Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.”’

“Rebekah said to her son Jacob, . . . ‘Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.”’

“He went to his father and said, ‘My father.’

“Yes, my son,’ he answered. ‘Who is it?’

“Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me.’”

“Then he said, ‘My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.”’

“After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.”

Isaac trembled violently and said, ‘Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!’

“When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, ‘Bless me—I too, my father!’

“But he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.”’

(Genesis 25:27-32; 27:1-4, 6-10, 18, 19, 25, 30, 33-35, NIV)
punch lines

“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3, NIV).

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Hebrews 12:2-4, NIV).

“Oh listen, dear child—become wise; point your life in the right direction” (Proverbs 23:19, Message).

“So God led the people around by the desert road” (Exodus 13:18, NIV).

“If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.”—Charlie Parker, 20th-century U.S. jazz saxophonist.

“Since the invention of push buttons, we have grown accustomed to instant gratification. We get instant meals. . . . Instant entertainment. . . . We don’t even have to ‘roll’ the windows up in the car anymore. . . . We are forgetting the concepts of delayed gratification. God Himself has to have long patience. It is hard to persuade a person who gets almost everything he or she wants within a moment’s notice that the things of eternity and of the Kingdom of God only come through LONG PATIENCE.”—Ken Raggio, current U.S. pastor.

OUT OF THE STORY

Read the entire story and reflect on the spiritual lessons that occur to you.

Circle the phrases in the story that are new to you.

What does this story teach us about integrity?

What does the story teach us about delayed gratification?

Besides the importance of integrity and delayed gratification, what other lessons emerge from this story?

What are the primary emotions of the story? Underline the phrases in the text that capture these emotions.

What do you think is the key verse in the story? Why?

other eyes
Sabbath

Complete the What Do You Think? activity at the beginning of the lesson and reflect on the experiences you have had personally or have witnessed from a distance that prompted you to generalize the way you did. Which occupation was the easiest to generalize about? Which was the most difficult to generalize?

Solomon says, “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3, NIV). Where would you rank on the scale of personal integrity? Think about the different experiences you have had in your life in which you chose the path of integrity as opposed to the path of compromise. How did you feel about your choices? Why do you think a life of integrity is often so hard to live?

Sunday

Read the Into the Story section about the ethical drama between Jacob and Esau and answer the study questions provided in Out of the Story. As you read this story, what elements emerge that you had not thought of before? What do you think God is trying to say to you about your life today in this story?

Monday

Read the Key Text found in Genesis 25:21-23 and commit this passage to memory or write it down and place it somewhere where you will see it on a daily basis. Have you ever wondered about the awesome truth that God knows what is ahead and is ultimately in control of the big events of history? The prophet Isaiah said, “For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:27, NIV).

Talk to God today specifically about His will for your life and convey your willingness to trust in His will, no matter what compromises might confront you.

Tuesday

Read the quote in the Flashlight section and reflect on the weight of Jacob’s sin and how it burdened him with guilt. What did Jacob need to see? What did he finally see in this season of guilt and shame? In what way are you like Jacob wrestling with guilt? Do you see your need of a Savior, or do you simply get overwhelmed with remorse? Who do you know who responds to their mistakes in life with a deep gratitude for their Savior, Jesus Christ? How have they modeled true repentance to you in the way they respond to shortcomings?

Wednesday

Read carefully and thoughtfully through the Punch Lines provided in this week’s lesson and choose one verse that speaks pointedly to your life today. Why does this passage stand out to you now? Think of the people you have influence with (friends, younger siblings, or younger people at church) and consider how you could share this passage with them in a way that will deepen their commitment to God. List them by name and invite God to lead you to them this week.

Thursday

Take some time today to read chapter 16 in Patriarchs and Prophets (if it’s available to you), noting the insights the prophetic eye reveals. What does Ellen White say about integrity and delayed gratification? What Bible passages does she highlight or lead you to study? What principle emerges from this chapter that will apply to any generation, any season in the journey of life? Write that principle out in your own words below.

Principle:

Friday

The author of the book of Hebrews had it right in saying, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Hebrews 12:2-4, NIV).

The point of this passage captures Jacob’s experience well. How does it capture your experience? When you look at Jacob’s journey (dishonesty and mistakes; struggles with guilt, shame, God, and repentance), where are you in your journey? What is the next step for you that moves you closer to God?

Insight

At www.InsightMagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community. Insight has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 16.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
"Up to the time of man’s rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from heaven, so that man could not have communion with his Maker. Yet the world was not left in solitary hopelessness. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication. Had He not with His own merits bridged the gulf that sin had made, the ministering angels could have held no communion with fallen man. Christ connects man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 184).

Scripture Story: Genesis 28-33.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 17 and 18.

flashlight

“‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. . . . I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’

(Genesis 28:13-15, NIV)
what do you think?

Rank the following situations in order from the one that makes you feel the worst (number 1) to the one that makes you feel the least upset (number 10).

___ Arguing with a parent
___ Breaking up with a boyfriend/girlfriend
___ Disobeying God
___ Flunking a class
___ Being rejected for a sports team
___ Having a conflict with a teacher
___ Failing to spend time with God
___ Wasting a whole day just watching TV
___ Sleeping through church
___ Compromising your standards

Have you ever wrestled with God over one of these issues? What did you sense God trying to say to you? Have you grown as a person through any of these experiences? If so, how?

into the story

"Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. . . . He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. . . . I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'"

"Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. . . . Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, 'I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.'"

"Laban said, 'It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.' So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel. . . ."

"But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. . . ."

"When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?'

"Laban replied, 'It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.'

"And Jacob did so."

"So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.'

"But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' . . ."

"So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.'"

(Genesis 28:10-15; 29:16-28; 32:24-30, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Chart an emotional time line through these stories in Jacob’s life. Graph the times when he was emotionally soaring as well as the times when he was in the dumps.

Find a map of the ancient world and trace Jacob’s journey through these stories.

List the people in the stories and reflect on each one in terms of their faithfulness to God.

There are four primary stories included in this biblical passage. Write the central lesson to be learned from each story:

1. Jacob’s dream of the ladder and angels descending from and ascending to heaven

2. Jacob working for Laban for Leah and Rachel

3. Jacob wrestling with the angel

4. Jacob meeting Esau

What do you think was the primary, overall spiritual lesson that Jacob learned through these experiences?

“Don’t waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention.” —F. B. Meyer, 19th-20th-century English Baptist minister.

“If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.” —Betty Reese, current U.S. officer and pilot.

“Only he who can say, ‘The Lord is the strength of my life,’ can say, ‘Of whom shall I be afraid?’” —Alexander MacLaren, 19th-century Scottish preacher.

punch lines

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him” (1 John 3:1, NIV).

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13, NIV).

“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:3-5, NIV).

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

other eyes

“Don’t waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention.” —F. B. Meyer, 19th-20th-century English Baptist minister.

“If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.” —Betty Reese, current U.S. officer and pilot.

“Only he who can say, ‘The Lord is the strength of my life,’ can say, ‘Of whom shall I be afraid?’” —Alexander MacLaren, 19th-century Scottish preacher.
**Sabbath**

Complete the exercise in the What Do You Think? section. Why do you think you answered as you did? When you run headlong into moments when you are faced with your sin, how do you respond? Consider the way Paul encourages us to deal with the suffering we experience because of sin: “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:3-5, NIV). What part of this passage speaks to you in your wrestling with God?

**Sunday**

Read the Bible story of Jacob’s wrestling with God in the Into the Story section and study the passage using the Out of the Story questions. What do you think is the central issue in Jacob’s struggle? Why? What do you think is significant about Jacob’s testimony at the end of the struggle when he says, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” If God were trying to give you one message in this story, what would that message be?

**Monday**

Read the Key Text (Genesis 28:13-15) and take some time to imagine God’s voice as He is giving this promise, not just to Jacob, but to you. It is God’s voice that claims “I am the Lord” and “I am with you” and “I will watch over you.” If it were any human making bold promises it might be somewhat suspicious, but God assures Jacob that He will keep His promises. Count on it. Whom do you know who needs to hear this promise from God this week? You can write a note anonymously, or share in person, or even pray that God will give you the opportunity to offer encouragement to someone whose future is uncertain. Pray today that God will show you the right person with whom to share this promise.

**Tuesday**

In the Flashlight portion you will notice a quote from Patriarchs and Prophets, page 184. Read this commentary on Jacob’s ladder and notice the basic truth it represents. Is there someone in your life who helps you keep the lines of communion open with God? Who encourages you to continue to walk with and talk to the Savior? Let them know this week how they have been a support for you in your relationship with God.

**Wednesday**

Read through the various passages offered in the Punch Lines section and identify whether the Bible verse offers: (1) encouragement, (2) insight, or (3) a challenge. Choose the Bible verse that you think you need the most today and be ready to share it with someone else. There may come a moment today when someone needs a word of encouragement, or insight, or instruction. Pray that the Lord will help you discover which is most needed in your life today as well as by someone else with whom you may come in contact.

**Thursday**

To really dig into this story more fully, read chapters 17 and 18 of Patriarchs and Prophets (if available to you) and find the power-packed statements that jump out at you. For example, Ellen White writes: “Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His experience testifies to the power of importunate prayer. It is now that we are to learn this lesson of prevailing prayer, of unyielding faith” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 203). God wants us to continue to cling to Him relentlessly! In what way is God challenging you to persevere in prayer? Try to make a brief list of five insights you gained from the reading that you hadn’t really thought about before:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

**Friday**

Paul knew what it was like to rest in God’s grace when the future was uncertain. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 and notice the tender, sustaining power of God’s grace. Jacob learned through wrestling with the angel and through the drama with his family about the way God interacts and transforms people. What experience in your life resembles most closely the story of Jacob wrestling with God? Why? How have you been transformed by this experience?

**Insight**

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**this week’s reading**

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 17 and 18.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.”

(Genesis 35:11, 12, NIV)

“There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one's own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.”

(Genesis 35:11, 12, NIV)
Circle three words that best describe your family:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Busy</th>
<th>Loving</th>
<th>Stressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Noisy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheap</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional</td>
<td>Growing</td>
<td>Outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clueless</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fractured</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Disconnected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allowing for the possibility of a “perfect family,” finish the following statements:

*A perfect family would always ______ _____________________________.”

*A perfect family would never ______ _____________________________.”

**did you know?**

**By the time Joseph turned 10 years old,** here’s the situation in his family: The father is a polygamist, fathering 12 sons from four women (two of whom were sisters) who lived in the same household, as did all of the brothers and half brothers. His only sister had been raped. His older brothers were guilty of murder, plundering, theft, and gross immorality. His half brother Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah, who was the mother of two of his half brothers. And Jacob, his father, did nothing about the family fiasco. Here’s a family ready to star in a TV reality show that redefines “dysfunction.”

“Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her.”

“All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised. Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male.”

“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Go up to Bethel.’”

“Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died.”

“Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. . . . So Rachel died.”

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, . . . and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

“Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.”

“So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern.”

“Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed.

“So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.”

“Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, ‘We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.’

“He recognized it and said, ‘It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.’”

*Genesis 34:1, 2, 24, 25; 35:1, 8, 16-19; 37:3-5, 23, 24, 26-28, 31-33, NIV*
This season of Jacob’s life is filled with many family traumas. Underline each one, then rank them in order of difficulty.

What picture of God do you get when reading these stories from Jacob’s life?

Circle the phrases that suggest dysfunction in Jacob’s family.

What can we learn from this season of Jacob’s life with regard to the following issues? Identify a part of Jacob’s story that informs our understanding of each issue listed below, then write down the principle we learn from the biblical account.

The consequences of sin:
Sanctification (growing to become like Jesus):
Uncontrolled anger:
The dangers of being aligned with the world:
Peer pressure:
Community:
Revenge:
Human nature:

If the following stories were produced as Hollywood movies, what titles would you give them?

Dinah and the Shechemites (Genesis 34)

Jacob’s return to Bethel (Genesis 35:1-15)

The deaths of Rachel and Isaac (Genesis 35:16-29)

Joseph’s dreams (Genesis 37:1-11)

Joseph sold into slavery (Genesis 37:12-36)

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” (Proverbs 17:1, NIV).

“Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honor the Master. Husbands, go all out in love for your wives. Don’t take advantage of them. Children, do what your parents tell you. This delights the Master no end. Parents, don’t come down too hard on your children or you’ll crush their spirits” (Colossians 3:18-21, Message).

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:5-7, NIV).

“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones” (Proverbs 14:30, NIV).

“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth” (James 3:14, NIV).

“Jacob is a classic illustration of a man who was too busy for his family, too preoccupied and unconcerned, which meant he was too passive to deal with what was occurring in the lives of his children.”—Charles Swindoll, current U.S. writer and clergyman.
Sabbath

Do the What Do You Think? activities listed in the beginning of this week’s lesson and respond to the questions given. While the “perfect family” may be hard to find, sometimes knowing what is most important aids in evaluating whether a family is functional or dysfunctional. What do you think about the following passage cut from the words of the wise man?

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” (Proverbs 17:1, NIV).

My paraphrase: What do you think is the central truth in this passage? How do the words of the wise man relate to your family?

Sunday

Read the snapshots of Jacob’s family traumas in the Into the Story section. As you read each passage carefully, how do you feel about some of the unsavory stories (such as that of Dinah) that are included in the Bible? Why do you suppose God included such sleazy tales in the Sacred Record?

Respond to the questions in the Out of the Story section as they guide you into a deeper understanding of the family issues of this Bible story. What do you think is the central truth in this passage? How do the words of the wise man relate to your family?

In a relatively short time Jacob lost three close companions (Deborah, Rachel, and Isaac). What’s the best thing you can do for somebody like Jacob who is grief-stricken with loss?

Monday

Read the Key Text for this week and reflect on why this promise is significant. One important reality to consider is that from the promise of a Savior in the Garden of Eden to the time of Jacob, people were waiting for a Savior to come from within their family line—family dynamics are extremely crucial! It must have been frustrating for Jacob to watch the way mistake after mistake marred the family peace and to still believe that God could truly fulfill His promise. But God had made a clear and simple promise (Genesis 35:11, 12). Compare this promise with Philippians 1:6 and invite God today to continue working out His plan in your life, no matter what kind of struggles may come.

Tuesday

Ellen White reveals a masterful insight on the power of choice in the Flashlight quote. Examine this statement and think about two people you know: one who may be resisting the promptings of God’s Spirit in their life; another who is aligning their life in harmony with God’s plan for their salvation. Both have a choice to make. Pray for them, as well as yourself to deepen your commitment to God’s work in your lives.

Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines and choose the verse that seems to speak to the scenario in which you live today. Of all the passages offered in this section, which do you think would make the biggest difference in families today if taken to heart and applied? Why? Share this scripture with your parents or others you know who might need a helpful word from God in their daily struggles. Be sure to let them know you are praying for them.

Thursday

Read chapter 19 in Patriarchs and Prophets (if available) and try to glean from this reading three insights that open your eyes to aspects of Jacob’s life that are like your own. Write them in the space below:

Like Jacob/Like Me

1.

2.

3.

What lesson in this chapter do you think would benefit families and believers in any generation?

Friday

Paul offers a prayer for believers, saying, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:5-7, NIV). As you look at the way you relate to your family members, do you see a message God might have for you in the above text? Is there someone whom you can befriend and encourage this week in your family (or in another family) who is experiencing trouble? If necessary, go out of your way to be a peacemaker, and God will go with you and bless you!

* A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at cornerstoneconnections.adventist.org.

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