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

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

God’s Word is not only real; it is rock-solid. For the first generation to hear God’s voice in the garden as well as 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 will also 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** —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.

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

6—Fatal Attractions [p. 5]
Both Samson and the people he is to deliver are not ready to trust God and obey.

13—Prayer Power [p. 9]
Hannah is faithful to fulfill the vow she makes to God in anguish.

20—Eil’s Bad, Bad Boys [p. 13]
Poor parenting ends in national trouble and family tragedy.

27—Turn It Around [p. 17]
The story of the ark shows God as holy and just, yet full of mercy.

November

3—Trading Leaders [p. 21]
God gives Israel the king they beg for, against His better judgment.

10—So Long, Saul [p. 25]
Outer appearances can’t be trusted; unchecked power almost always corrupts.

17—Giant Faith [p. 29]
Reckless and childlike trust in God turns human reality upside down.

24—The Green-eyed Monster [p. 33]
Saul is out to destroy the very person who wins his battles for him.

December

1—A Sad End [p. 37]
David’s victory celebration is stopped by word of Saul’s final defeat.

8—When Will I Be King? [p. 41]
David hangs on to God even though his path is long and difficult.

15—The Golden Age of Israel [p. 45]
After the long struggle to the throne, David finally unites Israel in prosperity.

22—The Fall and Rise of David [p. 49]
Even after years of complete trust in God, David succumbs to self-sufficiency.

29—Fatal Fallout [p. 53]
David’s moments of self-sufficiency result in painful consequences that affect both his nation and his family.
**fatal attractions**

“Had the Israelites been ready to unite with Samson and follow up the victory, they might at this time have freed themselves from the power of their oppressors. But they had become dispirited and cowardly. They had neglected the work which God commanded them to perform, in dispossessing the heathen, and had united with them in their degrading practices, tolerating their cruelty, and, so long as it was not directed at themselves, even countenancing their injustice. When [they] themselves [were] brought under the power of the oppressor, they tamely submitted to the degradation which they might have escaped, had they only obeyed God. Even when the Lord raised up a deliverer for them, they would, not infrequently, desert him, and unite with their enemies” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 564).
Agree (A) or disagree (D):

____ As a Christian, it's important to mix with all kinds of people, especially the ungodly.
____ God won't bless us unless we are 100 percent faithful to Him.
____ You are what you eat.
____ We should date only people who believe the same things we do about religion.
____ Sinning gets easier with practice.
____ God is patient with even the most persistent sinner.
____ Might makes right.
____ Right makes might.
____ People's characters, for good or bad, are shaped at a very young age.

INTO THE STORY

“Samson led Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines. . . .

“He fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, ‘See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him.’ . . . Delilah said to Samson, ‘Tell me the secret of your great strength.’ . . .

“Samson answered her, ‘If anyone ties me with seven fresh thongs [bowstrings] that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.’ Then . . . she tied him with them. . . . But he snapped the thongs as easily as a piece of string. . . . So the secret of his strength was not discovered. Then Delilah said to Samson, ‘You have made a fool of me; you lied to me.’ . . . With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death. So he told her everything. ‘No razor has ever been used on my head,’ he said, ‘because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.’ . . .

“Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair. . . . Then she called, ‘Samson, the Philistines are upon you!’ He . . . thought, ‘I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.’ But he did not know that the Lord had left him. Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

“Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon. . . . They shouted, ‘Bring out Samson to entertain us.’ So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. . . .

“Then Samson prayed to the Lord, ‘O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.’ Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.”

(Judges 15:20; 16:4-30, NIV)
Samson was to “begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines.” Was he successful in this? How might Israel’s history have been different if he’d been more faithful to his Nazirite vows?

Delilah spelled out her exact intentions to Samson to imprison him. Since he knew what was coming, why did he tell her how to do it?

Samson committed suicide, yet he is counted among the faithful in the New Testament (Hebrews 11). Can God save people even when their final act is one of despair?

Was there something “magical” about Samson’s long hair, or was it more a sign of his connection with God?

If you grew up knowing Samson, do you think you’d like him? What personality traits would you find attractive? Which ones might repulse you?

“Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32, NIV).

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samuel, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies” (Hebrews 11:32-34, NIV).

“Like a city breached, without walls, is one who lacks self-control” (Proverbs 25:28, NRSV).

“For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well. She lies in wait like a robber and increases the number of the faithless” (Proverbs 23:27, 28, NRSV).

“A man bit into one fiery pepper after another, his eyes streaming with tears. A friend came up and asked him, ‘What are you doing?’ Between bites the man gasped, ‘I’m looking for a sweet one.’”—Old Arab proverb (adapted).

“First they came for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me.”—Martin Niemoller, 20th-century German anti-Nazi Protestant theologian.
**Sabbath**
Samson’s saga is packed with issues to chew on. This week’s What Do You Think? presents some ideas about sin, social lives, grace, and overcoming oppression. Read Judges 13:24, 25. Today the Holy Spirit’s power is available to every Christian—not through physical strength symbolized by long hair, but spiritual power to guide our lives and to help others escape from sin’s power. Make a list of the parallels and differences between issues Samson faced and issues you struggle with today.

**Sunday**
Read this week’s Into the Story and Out of the Story. The popular comic book character Spider-Man lives by the motto “With great power comes great responsibility.” What does Samson’s story show us about living up to our potential, and how easy it is to get off track? About God’s grace and patience even when we sin again and again? About taking a stand against evil? About the importance of staying true to our commitment to God?

**Monday**
Read this week’s Key Text, Judges 13:4, 5. While following Jesus is about the state of our heart and not the length of our hair, God wants our wholehearted, whole-bodied devotion. Indeed, our bodies are spiritual temples for the Holy Spirit.

Find and read 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.

How does taking care of our bodies through healthy eating, adequate rest, exercise, and

**Tuesday**
This week’s Flashlight section tells how the Israelites “went along to get along” when oppressed by the Philistines, putting up with their cruelty as long as it was mostly directed at somebody else. Like the Israelites in the desert who begged to go back to Egypt when the going got rough, they preferred relative comfort to putting their lives on the line for what they believed in.

The greatest weapon of today’s oppressive regimes is fear. As long as people are afraid to “rock the boat,” tyrannical governments have power over them. When people realize that uniting together they are stronger than any weapon that can be used against them, oppressive governments fall without so much as a shot being fired.

What injustices do you see in the world around you? How can you stand up and speak out about them in a way that will make a lasting difference?

**Wednesday**
Self-control. This week’s Punch Lines express the importance of self-discipline. Samson had physical strength, but his spiritual weakness got the best of him when it brought out the worst in him. Samson could have accomplished so much more if he’d learned to control his passions and let God lead him. Even so, when Samson had nowhere to turn but to God, God still counted him a hero. How can you stay connected with God so your spiritual gifts don’t go to waste?

**Thursday**
Before his parents even knew they would have him, God had incredible plans for Samson. Yet Samson still had freedom of choice. God never takes away our ability to choose our own destiny, yet He has great plans for us if we’ll walk with Him. Ask people you look up to spiritually how they found God’s calling for them.

**Friday**
The story of the “messenger of the Lord”—who was actually Jesus Himself—visiting Samson’s parents is one of the most amazing in the Bible, ending with the Messenger rising to heaven in the flames of the altar. Why did God honor their faith with such an incredible demonstration of His glory? Why do you think such supernatural demonstrations are so rare in history?

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
“Hannah’s prayer was granted; she received the gift for which she had so earnestly entreated. As she looked upon the child, she called him Samuel—‘asked of God.’ As soon as the little one was old enough to be separated from his mother, she fulfilled her vow. She loved her child with all the devotion of a mother’s heart . . . but she had received him as a treasure consecrated to God, and she would not withhold him from the Giver of His own” (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 570, 571).

“So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the Lord for him.’”

(1 Samuel 1:20, NIV)
**INTO THE STORY**

“There was a certain man from Ramathaim. . . . He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

“Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh. . . . Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.”

“As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, ‘How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.’

“‘Not so, my lord,’ Hannah replied, ‘I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.’

“Eli answered, ‘Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.’

“She said, ‘May your servant find favor in your eyes.’ Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the Lord for him.’”

(1 Samuel 1:1-5, 9-20, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Hannah wanted a child so badly?

Why did Eli think that Hannah was drunk when he found her in the temple?

If a priest or pastor today were to find someone much like Hannah in their church or temple, do you think they would have treated her the same way Eli did? Why or why not?

In what way does this story demonstrate the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of prayer?

Read through the story again and write down some of the most important points and the parts that you think mean the most to you.

punch lines

“Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again” (Genesis 20:17, NIV).

“O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, ‘I will build a house for you.’ So your servant has found courage to offer you this prayer” (2 Samuel 7:27, NIV).

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full” (Matthew 6:5, NIV).

“But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God” (Nehemiah 9:31, NIV).

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6, NIV).

other eyes

“Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.”—Søren Kierkegaard, 19th-20th-century Danish philosopher and theologian.


“Prayer is not merely an occasional impulse to which we respond when we are in trouble: prayer is a life attitude.”—Walter A. Mueller.

“We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.”—Oswald Chambers, 19th-20th-century Scottish minister and teacher.
Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? section, you were asked true or false questions about yourself. Most of them were about prayer. Do you think that prayer has the same effect on everybody? Do you think God answers everyone’s prayers differently? God answered Hannah’s prayer and gave her a child, but she also made a sacrifice by giving him back to God and letting him live in the tabernacle. Do you think you would give God something you cherished so much? How must we pray?

Read Matthew 6:9-13 and think about how you might improve your prayers to the Creator.

Try to see it in this perspective: if you had a friend who never does anything for you but asks you for things and wants things out of you, how would that make you feel? It’s the same with God. We can ask Him for things, but we must also think Him and do things for Him in return.

Sunday

In Into the Story we see why Hannah had a lot of grief. She had no children of her own, yet her husband’s other wife, Peninnah, had lots of children. This wounded her and she was filled with sorrow. In the Out of the Story section you were asked why Hannah wanted a child. It wasn’t just because Peninnah had children, although that was part of it. She wanted something to love, and although she had the Lord and her husband, she ached for a child, and God granted her one. Go to a concordance and find some other verses about prayers that have been answered.

Monday

Refer to this week’s Key Text: Hannah named her baby Samuel because it meant that he was something she had asked God for. Think about your life. What is something you have asked God for and received? Is it something you could give a special name to? Naming her son Samuel was one way Hannah showed God how thankful she was for His grace. She also praised God by dedicating him to work for God all his life. Have you dedicated yourself to work for God?

Tuesday

The Flashlight quote leads us to think about how hard it must have been for Hannah to give up her son. He was a cherished gift from God, and Ellen White says that “she loved her child with all the devotion of a mother’s heart.” Imagine giving up someone you love because of your greater love for God. Samuel was a treasure to Hannah, yet she would not “withhold him from the Giver of His own.” What do you think you would have done in Hannah’s position? How willing are you to make even small sacrifices because of your love for God?

Wednesday

In the Punch Lines are four verses about prayer and one about mercy. In what way can you connect them together? They all show the power of prayer. Matthew 6:5 shows us how we must pray; Nehemiah 9:31 tells about God’s amazing mercy. God showed mercy to Hannah by giving her a son; he took away her grief with the precious gift of Samuel; and, in return, she dedicated him to the Lord.

Thursday

What are some different ways that we can pray to God? Are there right and wrong ways of asking God for something? What should be our attitude if we have our prayer answered to our liking?

What should be our attitude even if we believe we didn’t get what we asked for? When God doesn’t answer our prayer the way we want Him to, He often sends other little blessings to “cushion” us through the disappointment. Think back to times when you didn’t have a prayer answered the way you hoped for. Can you think of other things that happened around that time that might have been God’s “cushions”?

Friday

If you fervently prayed to God for something for a long time, and He finally granted it to you but asked that you dedicate it to Him in return, what would be your reaction? What would your heart want—to honor God, or to cherish and use His gift the way you wanted to? What might be some things that this scenario could apply to in your life? A friendship? A talent? What might it look like to dedicate something back to God?

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

Insight

At www.InsightMagazine.org you can “Go Deeper.” 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 55 and 58.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
There is no greater curse upon households than to allow the youth to have their own way. When parents regard every wish of their children and indulge them in what they know is not for their good, the children soon lose all respect for their parents, all regard for the authority of God or man, and are led captive at the will of Satan (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 579).

“Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord.”

(1 Samuel 2:12, NIV)

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”

(Proverbs 22:6, NIV)
what do you think?

Rank the following authority-figure roles in order of importance for the different stages in life:

Formative years (birth to age 8)

____ Teacher  ____ Caregiver
____ Role model  ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian

Primary school years (ages 9 to 15)

____ Teacher  ____ Caregiver
____ Role model  ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian

Youth through young adult (ages 16 to 25)

____ Teacher  ____ Caregiver
____ Role model  ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian

Why did you rank the above roles differently at different stages?

What do you think is the most critical stage for character building?

did you know?

What makes a parent successful?

Studies report that several parenting qualities contribute to raising children effectively: demonstrating love, having patience, enforcing discipline, being understanding. (Adapted from the Barna Research Group Web site)

INTO THE STORY

“Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord.”

“Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

“So he said to them, ‘Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the Lord’s people. If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?’

“His sons, however, did not listen to their father’s rebuke, for it was the Lord’s will to put them to death.”

“Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, . . . ‘Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: “I promised that your house and your father’s house would minister before me forever.” But now the Lord declares: “Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man. Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.

‘“And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always. Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a crust of bread and plead, ‘Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.’”’”

(1 Samuel 2:12, 22-25, 27, 30-36, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

As you read this story, what key facts or insights did you notice that are especially important?

__________________________________________________________________________

What part of this story challenges your view of God? your view of spiritual leaders?

__________________________________________________________________________

Who are the main characters mentioned in this passage, and what are some of their weaknesses this story exposes?

__________________________________________________________________________

What other biblical stories does this passage remind you of? Why?

__________________________________________________________________________

Read 1 Samuel 2:13-17. These verses give more insight into the sons of Eli.

Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What basic truth does it convey about God? What does it say about people?

__________________________________________________________________________

What do you think it means when the Bible says about Eli’s sons that “they had no regard for the Lord”? What would this story look like today?

__________________________________________________________________________

What lesson emerges from this story that is particularly relevant to your life now?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

punch lines

“Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11, NRSV).

“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Genesis 18:19, NIV).

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV).

“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death” (Proverbs 19:18, NIV).

“Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21, NIV).

“Children can stand vast amounts of sternness. It is injustice, inequity, and inconsistency that kill them.” —Robert Capon, current U.S. Episcopal priest and New Testament scholar.

“There is only one way to bring up a child in the way he should go, and that is to travel that way yourself.” —Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th president of the U.S. (1861-1865).
Sabbath
The ranking activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson challenges you to think about how parents impact children throughout the different stages of growth. After you complete the activity, reflect on the well-known passage in Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) which states: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” What are some examples of ideal training?

Sunday
Read the passage in Into the Story and answer the questions listed in the Out of the Story of this week’s lesson. What do you think should be highlighted: Eli’s breakdown in parenting or his sons’ (Hophni and Phinehas) hypocrisy and the impact it had on Israel? What other story in Scripture does this story bring to mind? What specific behaviors do you want to adopt when you have children?

Monday
First Samuel 2:12 is one of this week’s Key Texts, introducing a brief summary of the whole story: “Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord.” It is clear from Patriarchs and Prophets that the problem with Eli’s sons was a gradual and continual rebellion that went unchecked and eventually spun out of control. Hophni and Phinehas served as religious leaders but were openly belligerent and careless about their calling. Perhaps you have friends or relatives who have steadily built a wall between their heart and God’s Spirit. Pray for an awakening in their heart to see the destructive patterns in their life and respond to God’s urging to experience a genuine walk with Christ.

Tuesday
Read the Flashlight quote for this week and reflect on the truth contained in such a pointed warning to parents. Think of a moment when your parent(s) held you accountable or refused something you wanted that upon later reflection you realized was a probably a good thing for them to do. Do you know someone—not your parent—who models a fair and thoughtful approach to disciplining their children? What specific behaviors do you want to adopt when you have children?

Wednesday
Read the Punch Lines listed in this week’s lesson and choose the verse that seems to speak to you most today. Why did you choose that verse? Which verse seems to capture the message of this week’s story of Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas? Maybe this week you will encounter someone who, like Hophni and Phinehas, has no regard for the Lord. What will be your response to such a person? You might encounter a parent who feels regret about their parenting choices. How could you be a source of encouragement to them?

Thursday
Make a list of five qualities you want to have as a parent.

Friday
Reflect on the impact that spiritual leaders had on Israel’s morale and effectiveness as God’s chosen people. Who are some spiritual leaders in your life that have made a positive difference in your relationship with God? What specific stories or events have shaped your perception of them as godly leaders?

Of the five qualities you have listed above, which do you think will be the most difficult challenge and why?

Invite someone you respect to help you develop this quality in your character.

*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: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 56.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
There is need today of such a revival of true heart religion as was experienced by ancient Israel. Repentance is the first step that must be taken by all who would return to God. No one can do this work for another. We must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols. When we have done all that we can do, the Lord will manifest to us His salvation” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 590).

“And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, ‘If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”

(1 Samuel 7:3, NIV)
Have you ever done something or made a decision without thinking about the consequences? When we do things that are wrong and our actions do not have immediate consequences, sometimes we think we can get away with them. Below is a list of actions; label them by their consequences, whether they have immediate consequences (IC), delayed consequences (DC), or have no consequences (NC).

- Cheating on a test
- Making fun of the new kid
- Skipping class
- Forgetting to say your grace
- Playing with cell phone during church
- Eating five candy bars
- Attending a Friday night basketball game
- Telling your friends a little white lie
- Not studying your Sabbath School lesson

The ark of the covenant was a sacred box that God told Moses to build. It was made of wood and covered in gold. On the top of the box sat two gold-covered angels with their wings raised, facing each other. God’s glory and presence dwelled between the angels (1 Samuel 4:4). God was very particular about the ark of the covenant. It was housed in the Most Holy Place. No one was to look at it, except the high priest, once a year. When it traveled, it had to be wrapped in a veil, badgers’ skin, and a blue cloth to keep it hidden from human eyes.

“And Samuel’s word came to all Israel. Now the Israelites went out to fight against the Philistines. The Israelites camped at Ebenezer, and the Philistines at Aphek.”

“So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. The ark of God was captured, and Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.” “Then they carried the ark into Dagon’s temple and set it beside Dagon. . . . But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the Lord! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained . . . .

“The Lord’s hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors. When the men of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, ‘The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon our god.’”

“They placed the ark of the Lord on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumors. Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh . . . .

“But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the Lord had dealt them.”

“It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord. And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, ‘If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.’ . . .

“Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far has the Lord helped us.’ So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again.”

(1 Samuel 4:1, 10, 11; 5:2, 4, 6, 7; 6:11, 12, 19; 7:2, 3, 12, 13, NIV)
“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV).

“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Exodus 20:3, 4, NIV).

“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols” (Isaiah 44:8, NIV).

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:7, NIV).

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).

“God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.” —Augustine, 4th-5th-century theologian, writer.

“Conscience is God’s built-in warning system. Be very happy when it hurts you. Be very worried when it doesn’t.” —Anonymous.
Sabbath

Look at the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. It challenged you to look at some actions and think about the consequences. This week’s lesson shows the consequences of not following God. Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked priests. They did a lot of evil things, and nothing happened to them for a long time. They began to think they were above the law.

When you get away with something, are you more likely to do it again or to repent? Why do you think that is? The Bible says: “And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done” (Psalm 62:12, NIV). What does this verse say to you?

Sunday

Read the Into the Story section, which tells of the ark of the covenant being captured, and answer the study questions provided in the Out of the Story section. Both the Philistines and Israel upset God and both experienced judgment from Him. What reasons can you give for God’s being upset with the Israelites?

What reasons can you give for God being upset with the Philistines?

This story includes a lot of judgment and punishment. But with judgment, God always shows mercy. What elements of this story show the mercy of God?

Monday

Read the Key Text and memorize it this coming week. Israel had been doing what was right in their own eyes instead of what was right in God’s eyes. Israel had learned their lesson and were now sorry for their actions. Samuel told the children of Israel what God wanted from them. God wanted them to turn from idols and wanted their complete attention and worship, just like He wants yours. Rewrite the key text to include specific things God wants you to turn from, as you commit your ways to Him.

Tuesday

The quote in the Flashlight section lays out the steps Israel took to get back to God. First Samuel 7:2 says that “all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord” (NIV). They experienced sorrow for what they had done and wanted to make it right. They experienced repentance, which means to turn from their old ways and walk in a new direction. God calls for us to repent of wrong and experience His salvation. People often try to ignore the guilt they feel after doing wrong. What good can guilt and sorrow over wrong play in our lives?

Wednesday

Read the Bible verses in the Punch Lines section. Which verse stood out to you the most? Why? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this passage?

One of the Punch Lines is 2 Corinthians 7:10. In The Message, it reads like this: “Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets.” Think about a time when you felt godly sorrow. What did you learn from that experience?

Thursday

We all know that there are bad things that can keep us from God. There are good things that can keep us from God, also. Things such as school, jobs, friends, and just good old fun all have their place, but sometimes we allow these things to take priority over God. God does not want to come before just evil things in our lives; He wants to come before everything in our lives. What are some things that are not necessarily bad but have come before God in your life? What can you do to make sure you have a balance between the good and God?

Friday

When we turn from doing things our way and begin doing them God’s way, God will bless us. He blessed Israel with deliverance from the Philistines. When Israel repented, they were heard by God and were helped by God. Samuel set up a stone memorial so that Israel would remember how God helped them. He called it Ebenezer, which means “a stone of help.” Can you find a symbol that will help you remember the commitment you made to God this week? Write a prayer dedicating your life to God. Place your symbol in a prominent place so you will remember your commitment.

Insight

At www.insightMagazine.org you can “Go Deeper.” 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 57.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“When the Israelites first settled in Canaan they acknowledged the principles of the theocracy, and the nation prospered under the rule of Joshua. . . . Gradually they lost their reverence for God and ceased to prize the honor of being His chosen people. Attracted by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity. Jealousy and envy sprang up between the tribes. . . . As they departed from obedience to God’s law, they desired to be freed from the rule of their divine Sovereign; and thus the demand for a monarchy became widespread throughout Israel” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 603).
what
do you think?

Would you rather depend on how God leads you or on how human culture leads you? Look at these scenarios and write down what God has planned as opposed to what man has planned:

Revenge on someone who has wronged you:
God’s plan _____________________________
Man’s plan _____________________________

Becoming intimate with a boyfriend/girlfriend:
God’s plan _______________________
Man’s plan _____________________

Stealing something you want but cannot afford:
God’s plan ____________________
Man’s plan ____________________

INTO THE STORY

“Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, saying, ‘Has not the Lord anointed you leader over his inheritance? When you leave me today . . . three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them.

‘After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.

“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.’ . . .

“As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.”

“Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the Lord at Mizpah and said to them, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.” But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said, “No, set a king over us.” So now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and clans.’

“When Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri’s clan was chosen. Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. So they inquired further of the Lord, ‘Has the man come here yet?’ And the Lord said, ‘Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage.’

“They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others.

“Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.’ Then the people shouted, ‘Long live the king!’”

(1 Samuel 10:1-9, 17-24, NIV)

did you know?

The word “theocracy” comes from the Greek theokratia, which is by definition a government directly guided by God. This was the governmental structure God had set up and which was actually working well in Israel. However, the people wanted to be like their neighboring countries and have a king they could call their own. Sounds as if they might have given in to some peer pressure, doesn’t it?
OUT OF THE STORY

What did you think of the introduction speech that Samuel gave to the people before introducing Saul? (verses 17-19)

__________________________________________________________

Would you like to be introduced that way?

__________________________________________________________

How do you think choosing to be ruled by a human king as opposed to by God was a bad idea for the Israelites?

__________________________________________________________

What prompted the people of Israel to want a human king?

__________________________________________________________

What is the background of Samuel’s sons (1 Samuel 8)? How do you think these activities might have played into the people’s desire for a king?

__________________________________________________________

What themes do you see displayed in this reading?

__________________________________________________________

Why was Samuel so specific in the instructions that he gave to Saul?

__________________________________________________________

In what ways do you think Saul had what it took to lead a group of people? In what ways didn’t he?

__________________________________________________________

punch lines

“If it is encouraging,” let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully” (Romans 12:8, NIV).

“When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The Lord is with you, mighty warrior’” (Judges 6:12, NIV).

“He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens” (Exodus 18:25, NIV).

“The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly” (1 Chronicles 29:9, NIV).

other eyes

“Leaders must live by higher standards than their followers.” —Anonymous.

“A godly leader finds strength by realizing his weakness, finds authority by being under authority, finds direction by laying down his plans, finds vision by seeing the needs of others, finds credibility by being an example, finds loyalty by expressing compassion, finds honor by being faithful, finds greatness by being a servant.” —Roy Lessin, Christian pastor and author.
Sabbath
Take time to do the exercise in the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. Do you think it would be harder to do what people would have you do or what God would have you do? It seems that we often find ourselves doing things to impress other people, and those things are rarely what God has asked us to do. Even the children of Israel were looking to impress their neighbors by obtaining a human king, when they already had the Creator of the universe as their leader. Seems crazy, doesn’t it?

Sunday
Read Into the Story about how Saul became the king of Israel. Do the questions in Out of the Story. What do you think was the attitude of God, as reflected through His prophet Samuel? Do you think it was happy, angry, or mad? Spend some time writing the emotions you would feel if you were leading a group of people who just couldn’t seem to listen to you and take you seriously.

Monday
Read the Key Text and see how the people reacted to having a king. Why do you think they were so excited to have a king when they had the King of the universe as their leader? Do you think they understood what God had been doing through Samuel for all this time? Do you think they were happy because God had listened to their desire for a king?

Tuesday
The Flashlight section gives us some insights from the inspired commentary on the texts we have been studying. A few words are used there that are interesting; “jealousy” and “envy” are the first two that jump off the page. Do these words have any meaning in your life? Have you ever asked for things out of jealousy and/or envy? Has it ever been the motivating factor in pursing something, saying something, or looking or acting a certain way? It is a good time to ponder what motivates us to do the things we do. Usually, there is a negative outcome when we do something out of jealousy and envy.

Wednesday
The quotes from the Punch Lines and Other Eyes deal specifically with leadership. You may want to read 1 Samuel 19 to see what kind of leader Saul became. He did not do a great job. The quotes show us some qualities of a good leader. It is safe to say that a good leader has the best in mind for the group he is leading. Saul had a pretty rough time with that approach to leadership during his tenure as king of Israel. Think about how you would be if you were king. Would you be like Samuel and follow God’s leading? Would you be like Saul? How about David or Solomon?

We often are critical of those in charge, but we rarely think about what we would do given a certain situation. List the qualities you have that would make you a good king or queen. If you are really brave, give your list to someone else to verify that you are who you think you are.

Thursday
If you have the book or a computer available, read chapter 60 of Patriarchs and Prophets. What you will see are the many mistakes and character flaws that were exhibited by Saul during his reign. He even was so proud that he ordered his son Jonathan be put to death. You should have already thought about those characteristics you have that would make you a great leader; now take some time to think about those things that are not so great in your character. What can you do to help get rid of those character traits so that you might be more effectively used by God and not fall into the traps that Saul found himself trying to muddle through.

Friday
You have seen what the people asked God to do—give them a king! You have seen the kind of king Saul turned out to be—not a great one! You may have even looked inside yourself to see what kind of leader you might be. Now take a minute to think about what type of people you would like to lead, and how you might be able to do that. The world and the church are in need of thoughtful leaders, whether it be in business, politics, sports, music, entertainment, academics, or even working at the neighborhood fast-food restaurant. What leadership role do you think God has for 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: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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

this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 59 and 60.

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

flashlight

“When Saul chose to act independently of God, the Lord could no longer be his guide, and was forced to set him aside. Then He called to the throne ‘a man after His own heart’ (1 Samuel 13:14)—not one who was faultless in character, but who, instead of trusting to himself, would rely upon God, and be guided by His Spirit; who, when he sinned, would submit to reproof and correction” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 636).

keytext

“Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: ‘I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.’”

(1 Samuel 15:10, 11, NIV)
Agree or disagree? Discuss your answers with a friend.

- Games with a satanic theme (Ouija boards, tarot cards, Dungeons and Dragons, etc.) are relatively harmless.
- The root cause of depression is selfishness.
- Demons and the occult are the creation of superstitious imaginations.
- Demon possession happened only in Bible times but is not a problem today.
- Mental health and spiritual health are closely related.
- Satan cannot tempt us if we are fully committed to God.
- One of the ways Satan gains access to our minds is through horoscopes.

**What do you think?**

**Cornerstone Connections**

Doctors and social scientists have long believed that many teens begin drug use and sexual activity to deal with depression. However, a study published in the October 2005 edition of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine reverses such beliefs. Health policy researcher Denise Dion-Halffors explains: "Findings from the study show depression came after substance and sexual activity, not the other way around."

The research came from a national survey of 13,491 adolescents. Approximately 25 percent, called "abstainers," had never had sex, smoked, drunk alcohol, or taken drugs. Only 4 percent of these teens experienced depression. According to the study, girls among the 75 percent who had taken drugs and experimented with sex were two to three times more likely to experience depression than abstaining girls. Boys who engaged in binge drinking were 4.5 times more likely to experience depression than the abstainers.1

**INTO THE STORY**

“Samuel said, ‘Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, “Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.” Why did you not obey the Lord?’ . . .

“But I did obey the Lord,’ Saul said. ‘I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.’

“But Samuel replied: ‘Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.’"

“The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.’

“There is one in Endor,’ they said.

“So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. ‘Consult a spirit for me,’ he said, ‘and bring up for me the one I name.’

“Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.’

“But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.”

(1 Samuel 15:17-22; 28:4-8; 31:1-6, NIV)
punch lines

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (Mark 14:38, NIV).

“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6, 7, NIV).

“Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 12:28, NIV).

“Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:13, 14, NIV).

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1, NIV).

“If you are successful, it becomes possible for you to leave an inheritance for others. But if you desire to create a legacy, then you need to leave something in others. When you think unselfishly and invest in others, you gain the opportunity to create a legacy that will outlive you.”—John Maxwell, author and speaker, Thinking for a Change (Warner Books, 2002).
Sabbath
The What Do You Think section of the lesson connects Saul’s story with modern-day temptations posed by the occult. Read Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; and James 4:7, then answer this question: How can Christians stand against Satan?

Have I ever grieved God? If so, how?

Does God still “turn away from” people He has called to leadership? Why or why not?

What can I do to safeguard myself from God’s withdrawing His Spirit from me?

Sunday
Read 1 Samuel 15; 28; and 31 to get a broader perspective on Saul’s story. In 1 Samuel 15:10, 11 God tells Samuel that He is grieved He made Saul the king. How would you explain these kinds of regrets expressed by God? Why did God choose Saul as king in the first place? Did God not know how this decision would turn out?

Another sticky question that emerges from the story is this: What was Saul’s “big” sin that ultimately did him in? Why is it that Saul’s sin of keeping animals to sacrifice to God resulted in the death penalty and yet David committed adultery and murder (see 2 Samuel 11) only to be venerated as a man after God’s own heart? What was the difference, in God’s eyes, between David and Saul?

Monday
Memorize the Key Text then reflect on these questions:

Tuesday
Identify two people you know who strike you as persons who might be described as David was: i.e., a person after God’s own heart. List the characteristics that come to mind when you think of these people.

Wednesday
Think about the steps that led to Saul’s downfall. Read 1 Samuel 15:9-11 and notice how spiritually strong Saul was when he began. Note how in the beginning of Saul’s career that “God changed Saul’s heart” (1 Samuel 10:9, NIV) and he prophesied along with the prophets in Gibeah. Notice the story of Nahash the Ammonite and think about Saul’s fearless resolve to fight for God.

But then, as you see in the Punch Lines, something deep within Saul’s character began to unravel. Identify the steps in Saul’s downfall. What can we do today to avoid this spiritual spiral toward destruction?

Thursday
C. S. Lewis wrote in The Screwtape Letters: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”

Which ditch am I more inclined to fall into—the ditch of disbelieving in demons or the ditch of obsessing about them?

Friday
One of the primary reasons for Saul’s demise was his selfishness. Ask yourself: How can I become more selfless? What examples from Christ’s life give me a picture of what a selfless life looks like? Who is God calling me to selflessly serve today?

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: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“David, in the beauty and vigor of his young manhood, was preparing to take a high position with the noblest of the earth. His talents, as precious gifts from God, were employed to extol the glory of the divine Giver. . . . The love that moved him, the sorrows that beset him, the triumphs that attended him, were all themes for his active thought; and as he beheld the love of God in all the providences of his life, his heart throbbed with more fervent adoration and gratitude, his voice rang out in a richer melody, his harp was swept with more exultant joy; and the shepherd boy proceeded from strength to strength, from knowledge to knowledge; for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 642).

“David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.’”

(1 Samuel 17:45, NIV)
If you took a test that measured how much faith you have in God, what grade do you think you would deserve? (Circle only one grade.)

A  B  C  D  F

If your friends graded the test, what grade do you think they would give you?

A  B  C  D  F

Rank the following Bible stories in order from the person who demonstrated the greatest faith (1) to the one who showed the least faith (10).

___ Noah and the ark
___ Daniel in the lions’ den
___ Peter walking on the water
___ David slaying Goliath
___ Naaman dipping seven times in the Jordan River
___ Esther approaching the king to save her people
___ Moses leading the Israelites through the Red Sea
___ Rahab hiding the Israelite spies
___ Joseph refusing to compromise with Potiphar’s wife
___ Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice

“The Lord said to Samuel, ‘How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.’ . . .

“Samuel did what the Lord said. . . . Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.’

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’ . . .

“Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, ‘The Lord has not chosen these.’ So he asked Jesse, ‘Are these all the sons you have?’

“There is still the youngest,’ Jesse answered, ‘but he is tending the sheep.’

“Samuel said, ‘Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.’

“So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.

“Then the Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him; he is the one.’

“So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.”

“Then [David] took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached [Goliath] the Philistine. . . .

“David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head.’ . . .

“As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.
“So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.”

(1 Samuel 16:1-13; 17:40-50, NIV)

punch lines

“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV).

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, 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).

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

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

OUT OF THE STORY

The narrative of David and Goliath is perhaps the most well-known and beloved story in Scripture. Perhaps the timelessness of the story can be explained by the fact that it contains the essential elements of classic drama: the smaller and weaker prevails against the taller and stronger; one kid changes the destiny of nations; with God’s help, a humble boy triumphs against impossible odds.

Read the entire chapter of 1 Samuel 17 and underline any details of the story that are new to you. What jumps out at you that you haven’t noticed before? To what do you attribute the story’s timeless appeal to children? What do you think is the most important point of the story? How does the story apply to your life today?

What does the story teach us about the following topics:

Competition?

Purpose in life?

Talents and spiritual gifts?

Faith in God?

other eyes

“A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”—John Shedd, 19th-20th-century U.S. philanthropist.

“Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn’t really matter.”—New Tribes Missionary (author unknown), Eternal Perspectives Newsletter (Fall 2003), p. 15.

“The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows less and less about the meaning of his own life, but that it bothers him less and less.”—Vaclav Havel, current Czech playwright and president of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992).
Sabbath

Share in a small group your reasons for ranking the Bible characters in the order that you did. Discuss these questions:

- What other Bible stories come to mind when you think about death-defying faith?
- Compared with the saints in Scripture, are we faith-impaired today?
- Is there a modern-day equivalent to David? Do you know of anyone who demonstrated similar faith to the shepherd boy marching toward some giant obstacle with unflinching courage?
- What would it take to build the kind of faith we read about in the Bible?

Sunday

Read the story of David’s anointing as king and his encounter with Goliath. The following commentary may be helpful in understanding the story better:

The NIV Life Application Bible offers this commentary:

- Saul was tall and handsome; he was an impressive-looking man. Samuel may have been trying to find someone who looked like Saul to be Israel’s next king, but God warned him against judging by appearance alone.
- Appearance doesn’t reveal what people are really like or what their true value is.

Fortunately, God judges by faith and character, not appearances. And because only God can see on the inside, only He can accurately judge people. Most people spend hours each week maintaining their outward appearance, they should do even more to develop their inner character.

From the selected verses in 1 Samuel 16 and 17 the character that has the most impressive outward appearance is clearly Goliath. Of course, the story is a graphic illustration of how the inward character is more desirable than the outward appearance. Goliath appears from the camp of the Philistines as a “champion” (verse 4, NIV), using a rare Hebrew word that occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible (1 Samuel 17:4, 23). The word translated “hero” in verse 51 is a more common Hebrew word. In the War Scroll discovered at Qumran, the word seems to mean “infantryman.”

Monday

Personalize the Key Text to carry with you as a promise this week when you battle temptation. For example, your personal translation might be something like this:

“Satan, you come to me through pornographic Internet sites, but I come to you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This battle belongs to the Lord.”

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight section and then reflect on the following questions:

- What is a love that moves you?
- What are sorrows that beset you?
- What are triumphs that attend you?

How can your answers to these questions become “themes for [your] active thought” so that your heart might throb “with more fervent adoration and gratitude” and your voice ring out in “a richer melody” so that you can live from strength to strength?

Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines and pray about God’s purpose in your life. What is God calling you to do?

Thursday

Think about Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah. Chances are you don’t even know who they are, right? They were three of David’s brothers who paraded in front of Samuel in hopes of being anointed as king. These were the same brothers who were in Saul’s army and listened to Goliath’s taunts for 40 days, while cowering in fear. Because they allowed their fears to paralyze them, and not one of them had the kind of heart that David possessed, they have been forgotten while David’s legacy lives on.

So what risk is God asking you to take? How can you swallow your fears and step out in faith in order to be like David and do something great for God?

Friday

What qualities in David’s heart does God want to develop in 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: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.


this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 62 and 63.

* By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
Although Saul was ever on the alert for an opportunity to destroy David, he stood in fear of him, since it was evident that the Lord was with him. David’s blameless character aroused the wrath of the king; he deemed that the very life and presence of David cast a reproach upon him, since by contrast it presented his own character to disadvantage. It was envy that made Saul miserable and put the humble subject of his throne in jeopardy. What untold mischief has this evil trait of character worked in our world!” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 651).

“May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you.”

(1 Samuel 24:12).
Complete the following statement in your own words:
I dislike people who are jealous because

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

What are some qualities about themselves that jealous people overlook when envying others?

__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

I did you know that jealousy is referred to as the “green-eyed monster”? We have William Shakespeare to thank for turning jealousy green. It was the great English poet who first used a form of the phrase in his play *The Merchant of Venice.*

“How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,
And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy!” *(The Merchant of Venice, 3.2.115-116).*

“After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father’s house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

“Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul’s officers as well.

“When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.’

“Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. ‘They have credited David with tens of thousands,’ he thought, ‘but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?’ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

“The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, ‘I’ll pin David to the wall.’ But David eluded him twice.

“Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with David but had left Saul. So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did he had great success, because the Lord was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.”

*(1 Samuel 18:1-16, NIV)*
punch lines

“It was just before the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love” (John 13:1, NIV).

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matthew 16:25, NIV).

“A man’s pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor” (Proverbs 29:23, NIV).

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

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29, NIV).

“The Lord replied, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest’” (Exodus 33:14, NIV).

other eyes

“Love looks through a telescope; envy, through a microscope.”—Josh Billings, 19th-century U.S. humorist.

“Military power wins battles, but spiritual power wins wars.”—General George Catlett Marshall, U.S. military commander during World War II.
**Sabbath**

Long before Shakespeare (check out the Did You Know? section), Israel’s first king, Saul, was giving new meaning to the word “jealousy.”

Refer to your answers for the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. Read 1 Samuel 18:8. What was it that got Saul so angry at David? __________________________

Did David do anything to warrant Saul’s response? What blessing or blessings did Saul overlook in his jealous rage at David? __________________________

**Sunday**

The Into the Story biblical narrative for this week’s lesson begins a dark chapter in the lives of David, Jonathan, and Saul. After reading 1 Samuel 18:1-16, complete the Out of the Story study questions.

Having completed the study questions, list two specific ways that Saul could or should have addressed his feelings of envy toward David.

1. __________________________
2. __________________________

**Monday**

This week’s Key Text captures a scene at the end of a long chase. Read the following scriptures to get up to speed on what’s going on: 1 Samuel 19:1; 1 Samuel 20:1; 1 Samuel 21:1, 2; 1 Samuel 22:1; and 1 Samuel 23:7. By the time the story gets to 1 Samuel 24:12, our key text for this week, David has been on the run for some time, struggling to stay out of Saul’s sight.

In his pursuit of David, Saul stopped to rest in the very cave where David and his men were hiding (1 Samuel 24). While Saul slept, David took a knife and cut off a piece of the king’s robe, proof that he could have killed him if he had wanted to do so.

What reason does David give for refusing to hurt Saul? (1 Samuel 24:10). __________________________

**Tuesday**

Read this week’s Flashlight quotation. Did any part of the quotation stand out to you? Notice the first part of the second sentence: “David’s blameless character aroused the wrath of the king.”

What was it about David’s life and character that made Saul’s character seem so bad? Do you think the slaying of Goliath by David exposed flaws in Saul’s character? Explain. __________________________

**Wednesday**

Read the Punch Lines for this week. Choose the scripture that really speaks to you, then complete the following statements:

This scripture is meaningful to me because

If I follow the lesson taught in this scripture, it would help me deal with ________________

**Thursday**

This week you have studied about Saul’s all-consuming jealousy of David’s success in military endeavors, popularity with the subjects of his kingdom, and the favor of God that seemed to rest on David’s life.

Have you ever been jealous of a family member or friend? How did you deal with your feelings? Did you tell the person of whom you were jealous how you felt about them? Did you tell God? __________________________

**Friday**

One of the most beautiful themes in this week’s lesson is the friendship that developed between Jonathan, Saul’s son, and David. Jonathan risked his life to save David from his father’s wrath. How is what Jonathan did for David similar to what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross? Explain. __________________________

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
David seemed to be cut off from every human support. All that he held dear on earth had been swept from him. Saul had driven him from his country; the Philistines had driven him from the camp; the Amalekites had plundered his city; his wives and children had been made prisoners; and his own familiar friends had banded against him, and threatened him even with death. In this hour of utmost extremity David, instead of permitting his mind to dwell upon these painful circumstances, looked earnestly to God for help. He ‘encouraged himself in the Lord’” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 692).
What do you think?

Which do you like better, the beginning of a long journey or the ending of one? Explain your answer:

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

Do you remember a particularly trying time in your life that you wished would come to an end? What did you learn from that experience?

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

What do you think?

INTO THE STORY

“David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):

‘Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen!

“Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.

“O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil.

“From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.

“Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

“O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.

“How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights.

“I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.

“How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!”

(2 Samuel 1:17-27, NIV)

did you know?

Do you know the meaning of the word “lament”? A lament is a song or poem expressing grief, regret, or mourning. Many of the oldest and most lasting poems in human history have been laments. Laments are present in both the Iliad and the Odyssey, in the Hindu Vedas, and in ancient Near Eastern religious texts, including the Mesopotamian city laments such as the Lament for Ur, and the Jewish Tanakh or Old Testament (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lament).
"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Ephesians 4:1, NIV).

"Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you" (Job 22:21, NIV).

"Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies—make straight your way before me" (Psalm 5:8, NIV).

"My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away" (Psalm 38:11, NIV).

"For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you" (Isaiah 41:13, NIV).

"If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 19th-century U.S. poet, educator, linguist.

"The angels minister to God's servants in time of hardship and danger."—Billy Graham, current U.S. evangelist.
**Sabbath**

Read and respond to the What Do You Think? questions in this week’s lesson. Life is filled with beginnings and endings, journeys started and ended, projects begun and finished. In this week’s study, David’s life as a fugitive comes to an end, as does Saul’s life of disobedience to God.

King David’s son, Solomon, wrote: “The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride” (Ecclesiastes 7:8, NIV). Do you agree? _______________

How are Solomon’s words applicable to the experience his father went through while running from Saul? _______________

**Sunday**

As you read the Into the Story passage and complete the Out of the Story study questions, keep the setting in mind. David, his men, and their families have just returned to their burned-out homes after a daring rescue from the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30).

As they struggle to survey the damage to the city and their homes, an Amalekite brings news of Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths. Remember, David respected Saul, and he loved Jonathan.

What do you think David was feeling as all of these events came together at once? _______________

**Monday**

Read this week’s Key Text. The news of Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths devastated David and his men. Read 2 Samuel 1:5-10. How did David and his men find out about Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths?

What did David do to the Amalekite who killed Saul (2 Samuel 1:14, 15)? _______________

Why? _______________

What does this act tell you about David’s respect for the person God chose to be king? _______________

**Tuesday**

Read the Flashlight focus for this week. Ellen White is writing about one of the lowest moments in David’s life. As great as David was, he was not without human flaws. As he fled from Saul, David made a pact with Achish, a Philistine commander, and hid among his people (1 Samuel 27:1-4).

How did the alliance fall apart? Read 1 Samuel 29:1-7. _______________

Why did David put his safety and that of his people in the hands of an enemy? What does this say about his trust in God’s protection? _______________

**Wednesday**

As you read this week’s Punch Lines, focus on the promise given to us by God in each one. God’s promises are always conditional upon our obedience. Choose two scriptures from the Punch Lines list and state below the promises God makes and the conditions we must meet to receive them.

Promise _______________

Condition _______________

Promise _______________

**Thursday**

Do you know of someone at your church, school, or in your community who has been hurt or killed? What can you do to help this person and/or their loved ones during this difficult time?

Not sure what to do? Why not ask God to show you how to help, then talk with your parents, pastor, and youth leader to get ideas about what you can do.

**Friday**

When King David and his men returned to Ziklag—their home among the Philistines—following their broken alliance, they found the city in flames and their families taken captive.

The Amalekites were exacting revenge on David for his raids on them. David’s alliance with the Philistines brought him much trouble. How did David’s failure to trust God affect those around him? How do your failures to obey God affect others?

**Insight**

At www.insightMagazine.org you can “Go Deeper.” 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 68.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
The hour for the coronation was appointed; the man who had been expelled from the court of Saul, who had fled to the mountains and hills and to the caves of the earth to preserve his life, was about to receive the highest honor that can be conferred upon man by his fellow man. . . . The time had come, and David, by solemn rite, was consecrated to his office as God’s vicegerent. The scepter was placed in his hands . . . , and the people gave their pledges of loyalty. The diadem was placed upon his brow, and the coronation ceremony was over. Israel had a king by divine appointment. He who had waited patiently for the Lord, beheld the promise of God fulfilled” (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 701, 702).
What do you think?

Which statement best describes your attitude when you have to wait a long time for something?

____ I get frustrated and angry, and everyone knows it.
____ I get angry, but I keep the anger inside and it stresses me out.
____ I really don’t care.
____ I get excited because I know the thing will be worth waiting for.
____ I try to change the situation to see if I can make things happen faster.
____ I lose interest and move on to something else.

Did you know?

What did it mean to be a king in Bible times? A king was far more powerful than a president or prime minister today. While a king in the ancient world would usually have advisors or counselors, he wasn’t required to take their advice. He was considered “above the law.” Everything in the nation was believed to be the king’s property—including all the people—and the king was free to use the land, its resources, and its people as he chose.

The idea of having a king was new for the people of Israel. Until Saul was chosen king, the Israelites had had no single, all-powerful ruler except God. The role of king placed a huge amount of power in the hands of one man. He couldn’t be voted out of office—removed only by death! When David was crowned king, people in Israel hoped to have a king who would rule justly and follow God’s laws, rather than one who would abuse his power and make his people suffer as so many kings at that time did.

Into the story

“In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. ‘Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?’ he asked. ‘The Lord said, “Go up.”’ David asked, ‘Where shall I go?’ ‘To Hebron,’ the Lord answered.

“So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. . . .

“Ish-Bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David.”

“The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. . . .

“Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, ‘For some time you have wanted to make David your king. Now do it! For the Lord promised David, “By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.”’

“Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do. When Abner, who had twenty men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men. Then Abner said to David, ‘Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a compact with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.’ So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.”

“All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, ‘We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, “You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.”’

“When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.”

(2 Samuel 2:1-4, 10; 3:1, 17-21; 5:1-3, NIV)
punch lines

“After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do’” (Acts 13:22, NIV).

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31, NKJV).

“Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness” (Psalm 72:1, NIV).

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, NKJV).

other eyes

“I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness and the willingness to remain vulnerable.” —Joseph Addison, 18th-century English writer.

“Never think that God’s delays are God’s denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out. Patience is genius.” —George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, 18th-century French scientist.

OUT OF THE STORY

If God had chosen David as king, why did David have to fight a long and bloody civil war to secure his right to the throne?

Do David’s actions throughout this story indicate that he was, in fact, following God’s will? Why or why not?

What was David’s attitude toward his defeated enemies? What does this tell us about David?

How do you think David felt about finally becoming king after waiting so long?

How do you think David was able to maintain his faith in God, and his trust in God’s promise, when he had to wait so long and fight so hard to become king?

If God had chosen David as king, why did David have to fight a long and bloody civil war to secure his right to the throne?

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How do you think David was able to maintain his faith in God, and his trust in God’s promise, when he had to wait so long and fight so hard to become king?
Sabbath
David was called by God as a young boy to become Israel’s king, yet he had to wait for many years and experience many hardships before he finally wore the crown. What do you think kept him going during those years as an outlaw? What obstacles did he still face even after he was crowned king of Judah?

During those years, David’s faith must have wavered at times. It seemed as if God’s promise was so far from being fulfilled. Yet the difficult experiences of those years prepared him to become the king Israel needed.

How does the story of David help you trust God’s promises? How many years did he have to wait to become king of all Judah and Israel?

It may take a long time before others see and recognize what God has seen in you all along—the person you are capable of becoming. During the years David was a shepherd boy, an outlaw, and a pretender to the throne, God always saw him as a king. Eventually, others recognized the person God had created David to be.

Monday
The fulfillment of the prophecy Samuel had made when David was a teenager finally came about on the day that David was crowned king of the united kingdom of Israel and Judah. God had kept His promise, just as God always does.

How does the story of David help you trust God’s promises? How many years did he have to wait to become king of all Judah and Israel?

This week’s Punch Lines come from various places in the Bible. Choose the one that speaks most directly to you and look it up, noting the context in which it is written. How does that verse, its context, the account of King David’s life, and yours all relate to one another?

Thursday
Can you think of an area in your life where it’s hard for you to trust God’s promises? Maybe you’ve prayed for help in a situation but don’t see any immediate results. As you think of David’s long journey to the throne, write a brief prayer telling God what you want to happen in your situation, and promising to trust Him with the future outcome.

Friday
David was probably just about the age you are now when he was anointed by the prophet Samuel and began his journey to the throne. By age 30, he was king of Israel.

Where do you imagine yourself at age 30? Take a little time to picture your own future. Do you believe that God has a plan for you? Do you have a sense that He is calling you toward a particular role, or is the future still very unclear for you? Do you trust Him to lead you in the direction that’s best for you?

Tuesday
Read the Flashlight section of the lesson. As Ellen White describes in this passage, life takes unexpected twists and turns. Just look at the lives of celebrities who can be popular and adored one minute, hated or forgotten the next. But when we, like David, allow God to take control of our lives, we can be assured that life’s twists and turns will always end up being for our good. Can you think of some “ups and downs” in your life that have worked out for the best in the end?

Wednesday
This week’s Punch Lines come from various places in the Bible. Choose the one that speaks most directly to you and look it up, noting the context in which it is written. How does that verse, its context, the account of King David’s life, and yours all relate to one another?

Insight
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this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 69.

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

“The kingdom of Israel had now reached in extent the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, and afterward repeated to Moses: ‘Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates’ Genesis 15:18. Israel had become a mighty nation, respected and feared by surrounding peoples. In his own realm David’s power had become very great. He commanded, as few sovereigns in any age have been able to command, the affections and allegiance of his people. He had honored God, and God was now honoring him” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 716).
**what do you think?**

Choose the best response to the statements below:

When things are going well for me, I feel . . .

a. guilty  
b. worried that it can’t last  
c. excited  
d. grateful

I think that God has blessed me . . .

a. a little bit  
b. not that much, right now  
c. a great deal  
d. not at all

---

**INTO THE STORY**

**"After the king was settled"**

in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, ‘Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.’

"Nathan replied to the king, 'Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.'

"That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

"Go and tell my servant David, "This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’"

"‘Now then, tell my servant David, “This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

"‘The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”'”

(2 Samuel 7:1-16, NIV)
**OUT OF THE STORY**

What was the secret of David’s success as king?

____________________________________________________

Once David had established peace in Israel, what was his next goal? Why was this important to him?

____________________________________________________

Why did God not want David to build a temple for Him? (See 1 Chronicles 22:8-10 for more detail.)

____________________________________________________

What had God done for David in the past?

____________________________________________________

What promises did God make to David for the future?

____________________________________________________

How do you think David might have felt after receiving this message from the Lord? Read 2 Samuel 7:18-29 for David’s response.

____________________________________________________

How do you think you would feel receiving a message like this?

____________________________________________________

What has God already promised you in His Word that compares?

____________________________________________________

**punch lines**

“He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever” (Psalm 18:50, NIV).

“I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword” (Psalm 144:9, 10, NIV).

“And now, Lord God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever” (2 Samuel 7:25, 26, NIV).

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:31-33, NIV).

**other eyes**

“Success is more dangerous than failure, the ripples break over a wider coastline.” —Graham Greene, 20th-century English novelist.

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.” —Colin Powell, general, U.S. Army (ret.), secretary of state (2001-2005).

Sabbath
Success affects different people in different ways. After experiencing many hardships in his youth, David was richly blessed by God when he became king. Read his words in 2 Samuel 7:18-29. Sum up in your own words how David responded to the blessings God had given him:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What can we learn from this about how we should respond to the good things God does for us?

Sunday
As David reflected on how God had blessed him by making him king, he wanted to do something to honor God in return. His idea seemed like a good one: he would build a permanent temple in which to worship God, to replace the movable tabernacle that had been God’s house in Israel ever since the days of wandering in the wilderness.

What was the first thing David decided to do to secure God’s presence in his new capital city? How did God respond? What was God’s response to the second part of David’s plan?

How do you think you would feel if God told you not to do something you wanted to do for Him, choosing your child instead to do it?

Monday
God promised David that a king from his line of descendants would sit on his throne and rule Israel forever. At first glance, this seems like a promise that was not fulfilled. The line of kings descended from David ruled only until the Babylonian captivity—and for most of that time, the nation was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, with the kings of David’s line ruling only in Judah.

Why would God make such a firm, definite promise and then not keep it? Christians believe that God’s promise was fulfilled in a spiritual sense through Jesus, who came from King David’s family line and whose reign will last into eternity. What evidence can you find in the Bible for that view?

God’s promises to us are not always fulfilled in the way we expect them to be. God’s plan may be far greater than we can comprehend, yet we can always trust Him to eventually bring good out of whatever happens.

Tuesday
As Ellen White points out in the Flashlight quote from Patriarchs and Prophets, the reign of David was a golden age for Israel in terms of power and influence among the nations. For a brief time the 12 tribes were united into one kingdom that was victorious over its enemies and prosperous within its own borders.

Why do you think God blessed David’s rule in spite of the very human and serious mistakes he made? What can we do to open the way for God’s blessing in our lives?

When our lives are in harmony with God’s will, it’s easier for God to pour out His blessings on us and to use us to bless others.

Wednesday
David experienced success during the early years of his reign. He had worked hard and earned that success, but success has its dangers as well as its benefits. A successful person can come to believe that he is “self-made.” How is it possible to be successful while not becoming overconfident, or acting as if ordinary rules don’t apply to you?

David never lost his sense of gratitude to God for the way He had led him. However, when he fell to the temptation to put his faith in himself, what happened?

Thursday
How well do you handle success? Check one or more responses below:

___ I haven’t experienced enough success to know.
___ Success worries me. I’m not comfortable with it.
___ I’m grateful when God sends good things my way.
___ I get conceited and make mistakes when things are going well.

When you are trying to succeed at something—school, sports, anything that’s important to you—you probably pray and ask God to help you do well. Next time, also pray that if you succeed, God will help you to handle success well and use it to glorify Him and benefit others—just as David did during the “golden years” of his reign.

Friday
Gratitude is good for you! When you reflect on the good things in your life, it lifts your spirits and strengthens your faith in God.

Make a list of 10 things you are grateful for. Take the time to pray a prayer of thanks to God for those blessings. Then, think of other people who have been part of those good things. Write a card, note, or e-mail to each of those people to say thanks for what they have done for you.

this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
the fall and rise of David

“Whoever under the reproof of God will humble the soul with confession and repentance, as did David, may be sure that there is hope for him. Whoever will in faith accept God’s promises, will find pardon. The Lord will never cast away one truly repentant soul” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 726).

keytext

“Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.’”

(2 Samuel 12:13, NIV)
It is a well-known truth that dishonesty has a way of building and compounding the more one tries to maintain the lie. At what point on the continuum do you think it is most difficult for someone to confess and repent of a lie?

1—When you first realize that lying is an option.
2—After you have made the first step into dishonesty.
3—After you have had to cover the first lie with another.
4—When all the evidence is making it clear that you have been dishonest but it is too big to own.

Why? ____________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, ‘There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.’

‘The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, ‘There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.’

‘The Lord burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.’

‘Then Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.”

‘This is what the Lord says: “Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.”’

‘Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.’”

(2 Samuel 12:1-13, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

While this story is one of the more familiar narratives in the Old Testament, read 2 Samuel 11:1-17 first, then examine the dramatic conclusion and answer the following questions.

Circle all the key people mentioned in this story.

What are some reasons you think David relentlessly pursued the course he chose?

Are any details of this story new to you?

Why do you think Nathan confronted David with a parable?

How might David’s reaction to the story have been different if Nathan had used a different approach?

How would you describe David’s repentance? Do you think David sincerely repented because he was convicted of his sin or because he was caught? How do you tell the difference?

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

Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What message(s) does it convey to us today?

PUNCH LINES

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalm 51:10-12, NIV).

“Then I let it all out; I said, ‘I’ll make a clean breast of my failures to God.’ Suddenly the pressure was gone—my guilt dissolved, my sin disappeared” (Psalm 32:5, Message).

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable” (Hebrews 4:12, 13, NLT).

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7, KJV).

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27, 28, NIV).

OTHER EYES

“Years of repentance are necessary in order to blot out a sin in the eyes of men, but one tear of repentance suffices with God.”—French proverb.

“Sin would have few takers if its consequences occurred immediately.”—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century U.S. writer, scholar, preacher.
Sabbath
Read and respond to the exercise in the What Do You Think? section of this week's lesson. Some may acknowledge the wrong they do and immediately confess and ask forgiveness. Others give in to the notion that they can escape the shame of their wrongdoing by another lie. In Hebrews 4:13 (NIV) the Bible says: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” How does being aware that God knows everything impact whether you expand on a lie or confess it?

When we reflect on the hurtful things we do to others we often fail to recognize what it does to God. Consider for a moment how your thoughts or behavior affect God.

Tuesday
Take a moment to read and reflect on the amazing promise written by Ellen White in this week's Flashlight quote. What part of this promise would you like to claim today?

Write a prayer to God embracing this promise to you. Think about someone you know who responds to God's voice promptly when they sense they have done something wrong. For some the words “I was wrong” or “I was being selfish” or “I'm sorry” ring with humility and sincerity. How has such a person shaped your life? How do you see their example helping you in the future?

Wednesday
Read the Punch Lines for this week's lesson and highlight the key phrases that speak to you in each verse. Reflect for a moment why you think these phrases are particularly relevant to you today and write out your own paraphrase of the one verse you want to share with someone else this week. Pray that God will cause you to encounter someone who will need a promise found in these passages and be looking for an opportunity to share how the story of David's fall and repentance has deepened your walk with God.

Thursday
In what area of your life do you struggle with temptation, and not just the temptation itself, but the hiding of the fact when you give in to it? Maybe this week you could share your struggle with a godly friend who can pray for you and hold you accountable for making the right choice in your next hour of temptation. There's a freedom that comes from sharing your struggle with a safe friend. They may strengthen you in ways that might be surprising. As you do this, write down what you think was most helpful: (1) the liberating feeling of honest confession; (2) the support you felt because your friend was praying for you; (3) the knowledge that your friend was going to hold you accountable for a good choice.

Friday
Reflect on David's struggle story and ruminate on how his struggle mirrors aspects of your own life. How have you reacted toward God after making a regrettable choice? Do you tend to first try to find a way of escape? When in your life have you simply hoped the problem would just go away? Think of the rich joy and grace that awaits anyone who will face God with honest and humble repentance, trusting in God's forgiving nature.

The history of David affords one of the most impressive testimonies ever given to the dangers that threaten the soul from power and riches and worldly honor—those things that are most eagerly desired among men. Few have ever passed through an experience better adapted to prepare them for enduring such a test....David had enjoyed precious experiences of the love of God, and had been richly endowed with His Spirit; in the history of Saul he had seen the utter worthlessness of mere human wisdom. And yet worldly success and honor so weakened the character of David that he was repeatedly overcome by the tempter” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 746).

“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).

Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 13–19; 24; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 21; 28; 29.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 72 and 73.

“The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!’” (2 Samuel 18:33, NIV)
“All we need is love.” Rock stars sing it, and there’s a certain truth to it. But what is love? “God is love”—but love, when distorted by sin, can be an idol that destroys us. How well do the following examples from this week’s lesson demonstrate true love? What makes the difference between “true” love and distorted love?

- Amnon’s love for his half sister Tamar.
- David’s love for his firstborn son, Amnon, which kept him from punishing him.
- Absalom’s love for his sister Tamar, avenging her rape by murdering Amnon.
- The Philistine Ittai the Gittite’s devotion to King David.
- Shimei’s love for King Saul that inspired him to denounce David for the deaths of Saul’s family.
- David’s grief when Absalom died, wishing he could have died instead of his son.

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were composed after the Israelites’ return from exile in Babylon to encourage readers not to lose hope despite all the bad things that had happened. In contrast to Samuel’s “warts and all” recording of history, Chronicles presents an abridged, “good news” version of David’s story, skipping the stories of Bathsheba, Absalom, and Adonijah entirely.

The New Revised Standard Version adds a line to 2 Samuel 13:21, found in the Dead Sea scrolls, that other translations omit: “When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn.”

“Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon. . . . He grabbed her and said, ‘Come to bed with me, my sister.’

“Don’t, my brother!” she said to him. ‘Don’t force me. . . . Where could I get rid of my disgrace?’ . . . But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

“Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. . . . And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman. . . .”

In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him.”

“Go to bed and pretend to be ill,’ Jonadab said. ‘When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat.’ . . .’

“So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. . . .”

“Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, ‘As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, “Absalom is king in Hebron.”’ . . .”

“There the army of Israel was defeated by David’s men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. . . . Now Absalom . . . was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick
branches of a large oak, Absalom’s head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair. . . . [Joab] took three javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom’s heart.”

“The king was shaken. He . . . wept. . . . ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!’”

(2 Samuel 13:1-28; 14:25; 15:4-14; 18:7-14, 33, NIV. You can find a lot more of the details of this sad story in the Scripture Story passages listed at the beginning of the lesson.)

**OUT OF THE STORY**

David’s son Amnon, obsessed over his half sister Tamar, lusted after her until the day he raped her. Then he despised her even more than he’d lusted after her. Why do you think that was?

What parallels do you see between the trouble that resulted from Jacob’s polygamy and the conflicts between David’s children from multiple marriages?

When spiritual or political leaders commit sexual sins, people often refer to David’s adultery. David’s desire to increase his nation’s army received an even greater punishment than his sexual sin did, yet that story is largely forgotten today. Why do you think so few Christians apply this story to modern-day situations? What relevance does this story have to us today when we no longer live in a God-directed theocracy?

**punch lines**

“To the Lord I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. Selah. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side” (Psalm 3:4-6, NIV).

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7, NIV).

“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in” (Proverbs 3:11, 12, NIV).

“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in abundance of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14, ESV).

“So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty”’ (Zechariah 4:6, NIV).

**other eyes**

Love ceases to be a demon only when it ceases to be a god.”—M. Denis de Rougemont, 20th-century Swiss writer.

“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”—Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th president of the U.S. (1861-1865).

“Ultimately, the only power to which man should aspire is that which he exercises over himself.”—Elie Weisel, Romanian-born U.S. writer, Nobel Prize for Peace in 1986.
Sabbath
Look at this week’s What Do You Think? and reflect on how much our emotions shape our lives. In this week’s stories King David becomes an increasingly heartbroken man, his reputation and influence shattered by poor choices. If not for wise counsel from friends and confidants, his situation would have been even worse. How can we make sure our actions are based on godly principles? Look through all the passages listed at the beginning of this lesson, and make a list of incidents in which David makes a choice based on emotions, but wise advice sets him straight again.

Sunday
Read the full story of Absalom in 2 Samuel 13–18. In what ways are the events in this story a fulfillment of the prophet Nathan’s words to David after his sin with Bathsheba? “Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the Lord says: ‘Out of your house and your house will be removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin’” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 728).

Ellen White and President Abraham Lincoln both described the American Civil War as a punishment for slavery—to the South for practicing it, and to the North for encouraging it and making money off it. Is it “just” of God to allow evil to occur as a response to sin that hasn’t been dealt with? How can Christians balance the need for grace with the need for justice?

Wednesday
David wrote Psalm 3 while running from Absalom, pouring his heart out to God for deliverance. Read the whole psalm. David’s relationship with God sometimes seems like a seesaw. He’s faithful and true to God at one point, and then tries to manage things on his own again, forgetting that he’s nothing without God.

Is it easier to trust in God at some points in our lives than in others? Do we sometimes trust the world’s methods for solving problems while still congratulating ourselves on being good Christians? What happens as a result?

Thursday
Is advice easier to give or to take? Nathan and Joab used fictional stories of injustice to help David see the consequences of his actions. Why is it so much easier to see our own faults in somebody else? How can we be more honest and transparent with ourselves and others?

Friday
In 2 Samuel 7:10, 11 God describes how He hopes to bless Israel through David’s reign, yet David’s sins caused much turmoil and destruction, and ultimately contributed to his country breaking apart. If the sins of one person can make such a difference, can another person’s faithfulness have a similar ripple effect on the world? What kinds of actions change the world for the better? What can you do to show Jesus to the world?

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