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2nd Quarter 2008
Unrequited Love

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, the Bible story, and your own life.
• **Flashlight**—a brief snapshot of Ellen White’s input on the story. These glints that shed light on the biblical passages will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—the Conflict of the Ages.*
• **Other Eyes**—a couple of quotes from various contemporary or historic sources that may open up a slightly different perspective on the central message of the lesson.
• **Making It Real**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your 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 in 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.
April

5 — Just Scratching the Service [p. 5]
The ancient story of Ahab’s compromises in the leading of Israel and the evil influence of his wife Jezebel offers numerous lessons for us today.

12 — Focus on Prophets [p. 9]
Even after Elisha was called by God and granted a double portion of His Spirit, he wasn’t guaranteed respect from his peers.

19 — The Miracle Worker [p. 13]
Elisha boldly pursued the work God called him to do, in spite of the challenges, and God rewarded his faith—just as He does ours.

26 — Seven Dirty Ducks [p. 17]
Naaman, although wealthy and powerful, received healing only when he humbled himself and obeyed God’s “strange” command to wash in a polluted river.

May

3 — Pride and Prejudice [p. 21]
In the midst of terror on the high seas and a prophecy of doom and destruction, Jonah experiences the graciousness and compassion of a God he was trying to run from.

10 — Heartbreak Hotel [p. 25]
Hosea’s story of rejection and pain of unrequited love from Gomer, his unfaithful wife, and his desperate attempts to deliver her from herself, is also God’s story.

17 — Are You Available? [p. 29]
Isaiah reminds us of three elements of receiving a call from God, who we are in order to accept the call, and how not to drop the call when we hear it.

24 — Hope for the World? [p. 33]
Often some of the brightest and the best are called to live in the darkest of times. Isaiah was no exception.

June

7 — Recipe for Revival [p. 41]
Hezekiah was a breath of fresh air among the kings of Judah. And his godly choices offered the ingredients for a whole new way of life for God’s people.

14 — Not Like Other Gods [p. 45]
Enemy forces tried to convince the Israelites that they were too strong for Israel’s God. But Hezekiah and his people’s trust in the Lord revealed who was the real powerhouse in this battle.

21 — Manamojo [p. 49]
The storied lives of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah portray examples of extreme contrast in their loyalty and faithfulness to God. However, they also reveal the varied ways in which God works to save us in seemingly impossible situations.

28 — Cleaning House [p. 53]
The same fire that was rekindled in the heart of young King Josiah as he heard the lost and forgotten book of God’s law read to him is still waiting to burn today in the hearts of God’s people—young and old.
“Naturally of a covetous disposition, Ahab, strengthened and sustained in wrongdoing by Jezebel, had followed the dictates of his evil heart until he was fully controlled by the spirit of selfishness. He could brook no refusal of his wishes; the things he desired he felt should by right be his” (Prophets and Kings, p. 204).

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

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

(1 Kings 21:25, 26, NIV)
Take the following service quiz by filling in the blank with the first answer that comes to mind.

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

Neil Howe and William Strauss, the authors of Generations and Millennials Rising, give the following report:

Is the narcissism of young people a fearsome national problem? Absolutely, according to a new study by San Diego State University psychology professor Jean Twenge. In a book published last year, Generation Me, and a new report issued last week, Ms. Twenge draws a portrait of undersocialized young people fated to depression, self-destruction, violence, and civic decay as they grow older. . . . But Twenge and others are wildly mistaken about the Millennial generation—those born since the early 1980s. No matter what teens say on surveys, there is scant evidence that they act more selfishly. In fact, the trends in youth behavior support the opposite conclusion—that Millennials have much greater regard for one another, their parents, and the community than Generation Xers or baby boomers had at the same phase of life (© 2007 Los Angeles Times Syndicate).1

Some time later there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, ‘Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you another vineyard in its place.” But he said, “I will not give you my vineyard.”

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

But Naboth replied, ‘The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.’

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

“His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, ‘Why are you so sullen? Why won’t you eat?’

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

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

“Then Jezebel heard about it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and looked out of a window. As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, ‘Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master?’

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

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

(1 Kings 21:1-7, 17-19; 2 Kings 9:30-35, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

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

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

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

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

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

punch lines

“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NIV).

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

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, NIV).

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

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

other eyes

“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, Thinking for a Change (Warner Books, 2002).
**Sabbath**

In a small group of friends share the answers you gave in the What Do You Think? section. Then read the following verses and talk about what they have to say about Christian service:

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

**Sunday**

Think about the story of Ahab and Naboth’s vineyard. Reflect on the following questions:

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

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

Ahaziah ______________________
Jehoram (Ahaziah’s brother) __________
Jeroboam ______________________
Jehoshaphat _____________________
Jehoram (Jehoshaphat’s son) _________
Athaliah _________________________
Jehu ___________________________

**Monday**

Think about how Ahab is remembered still to this day (“There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. . . . He behaved in the vilest manner”). If there was a text that people would read a thousand years from now about you, a verse that summarized your legacy, what would it say? Write it below.

*Each of you should look . . . to the interests of others* (Philippians 2:4, NIV). Here is one person God has called me to take an interest in today: ______________________

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

**Tuesday**

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

**Wednesday**

Apply the selected Punch Lines to your life by filling in the blanks: “Let your light shine before men” (Matthew 5:16, NIV). Here is one way that I can let my light shine today: ______________________

Thursday

Speaking of Ahab’s selfishness, Ellen White writes: “This dominant trait in Ahab, which influenced so disastrously the fortunes of the kingdom under his successors, is revealed in an incident which took place while Elijah was still a prophet in Israel. Hard by the palace of the king was a vineyard belonging to Naboth, a Jezreelite. Ahab set his heart on possessing this vineyard, and he proposed to buy it or else to give in exchange for it another piece of land” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 204, 205).

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

**Friday**

Consider the words of A. W. Tozer: “The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited extension in all directions. And one of the world’s greatest tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little besides ourselves.”

Ask yourself: How big is my heart? How is God asking me to extend myself beyond my own little world? Pray that God would expand your heart to touch the needs of others.

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* A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.

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

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

**this week’s reading**

Prophets and Kings, chapter 16.
To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot, saying, ‘Here am I; send me.’

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

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

‘Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,’ Elisha replied.”

(2 Kings 2:9, NIV)
what do you think?

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

(No guidance) (Much guidance)

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

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

did you know?

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

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

\[\text{INTO THE STORY}\]

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

‘Go back,’ Elijah replied. ‘What have I done to you?’

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

“Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

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

‘Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,’ Elisha replied.

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

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

“The men of the city said to Elisha, ‘Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive.’

“Bring me a new bowl,’ he said, ‘and put salt in it.’ So they brought it to him.

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

“From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some youths came out of the town and jeered at him. ‘Go on up, you baldhead!’ they said. ‘Go on up, you baldhead!’ He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on
punch lines

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 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 12:6-8, NIV).

“It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation” (Daniel 4:2, 3, NIV).

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

“The Lord’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble” (Proverbs 3:33, 34, NIV).

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

“If you have a talent, use it in every which way possible. Don’t hoard it. Don’t dole it out like a miser. Spend it lavishly like a millionaire intent on going broke.”—Brendan Francis, 20th-century poet, novelist, and playwright.

“God commands us to be filled with the Spirit, and if we are not filled, it is because we are living beneath our privileges.”—Dwight L. Moody, 19th-century evangelist.
Sabbath
1. When you were younger, did you ever get lost or separated from your parent? Describe how that made you feel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. The water is healed (2 Kings 2:21).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thursday
Chapter 18 of Prophets and Kings ends with these texts: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; for the Word of God is ‘a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.’ Luke 6:38; Song of Solomon 4:15” (p. 234).

What does this promise mean to you?

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

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

this week’s reading*
Prophets and Kings, chapters 17, 18.

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

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

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

**keytext**

“She said to her husband, ‘I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God.’”

(*2 Kings 4:9*, NIV)
What do you think?

What do you think of the following statements—do you agree or disagree?

A (agree) or D (disagree)?

___ God works as many miracles today as He did in Bible times.
___ Many times we experience miracles and don’t realize it.
___ If we had more faith we’d see more miracles.
___ If we saw more miracles we’d have more faith.
___ The greatest miracle is our salvation.
___ There is no such thing as a miracle.
___ Faith will take away all your doubts forever.
___ Faith will make everything in your life easier.
___ The faith healers on TV are legitimate miracle workers.
___ If we truly believed in miracles there would be no world hunger.

The word “miracle” is derived from the Latin word miraculum meaning “something wonderful.” Simply defined, a miracle is an event or action that contradicts known scientific laws and that can be explained only as an act of God. Miracles recorded in the Bible can be classified in the following way: power over nature, power over disease, power over death, and power over demons. Bible scholar Herbert Lockyer claims that a “study of Bible miracles will prove that the Lord is triumphant over all human disorders, whether physical, mental or nervous; over all cosmic forces, on land or sea, organic and inorganic; over the spirit-world represented by the devil, demons, and death.”

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

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

‘Your servant has nothing there at all,’ she said, ‘except a little oil.’

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

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

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

‘When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch. . . .

Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out upon him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

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

Death in the Pot: “Elisha returned to Gilgal and there was a famine in that region. While the company of the prophets was meeting with him, he said to his servant, ‘Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these men.’ . . . The stew was poured out for the men, but as they began to eat it, they cried out, ‘O man of God, there is death in the pot!’ And they could not eat it.

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

Feeding of a Hundred: “A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. ‘Give it
“This is what the Lord says: ‘Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,’ declares the Lord. ‘They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future,’ declares the Lord. ‘Your children will return to their own land’” (Jeremiah 31:16, 17, NIV).

“This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Romans 3:22, NIV).

“Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2, NIV).

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

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

Anything God has ever done, He can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere, He can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, He can do for you.”

—A. W. Tozer, 20th-century U.S. Protestant pastor, author, and magazine editor.

“We are all faced with innumerable opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.” —Chuck Swindoll, current U.S. pastor and author.

“The world is not lacking in wonders, but in a sense of wonder.” —G. K. Chesterton, early 20th-century English author.
Sabbath

Read the passage below from Matthew 12:38-42 and discuss how Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees might inform your answers in the What Do You Think? section. What was Jesus saying in His answer?

"Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, ‘Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.’

“He answered, ‘A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.’"

Monday

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

Tuesday

Ellen White points out that this lesson is for God’s children in every age: “When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey.”

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

Wednesday

Compare the Punch Lines to the following verses about faith:

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

Thursday

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

Insight

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

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

this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 19.

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

Photo by Coleen Cahill
Which of the following individuals do you think are prideful? Explain your answers.

___ José ignores his friends whenever a cute girl walks by.
___ Katelyn is constantly showing off her latest high-tech gadget.
___ Your band teacher doesn’t listen to feedback from his students.
___ Reagan smokes, ignoring advice from his parents and friends.
___ Sarah shares her straight-A report card on myspace.com.
___ Jamal mocks any students who are not good at sports.
___ Lindsey complains whenever she falls short of her goal of perfection.
___ Aiden has been cheating on his girlfriend but refuses to tell her.

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

ride is one of the seven deadly sins. According to wikipedia.org the seven deadly sins, also known as the “cardinal sins,” are “a classification of vices that were originally used in early Christian teachings to educate and instruct followers concerning (immoral) fallen man’s tendency to sin. . . . Beginning in the early 14th century, the popularity of the seven deadly sins as a theme among European artists of the time eventually helped to engrain them in many areas of Christian culture and Christian consciousness in general throughout the world.”

INTO THE STORY

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

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

“Now Naaman went out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, ‘If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.’”

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

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

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

“The prophet answered, ‘. . . I will not accept a thing.’

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

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

“But then he went in and stood before his master Elisha.

“‘Where have you been, Gehazi?’ Elisha asked.

“‘Your servant didn’t go
“If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load” (Galatians 6:3-5, NIV).

“Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar” (Psalm 138:6, NIV).

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

“A man can counterfeit love, he can counterfeit faith, he can counterfeit hope and all the other graces, but it is very difficult to counterfeit humility.” —Dwight L. Moody, 19th-century U.S. evangelist.

“A man can counterfeit love, he can counterfeit faith, he can counterfeit hope and all the other graces, but it is very difficult to counterfeit humility.” —Dwight L. Moody, 19th-century U.S. evangelist.

“It’s ludicrous for any Christian to believe that he or she is the worthy object of public worship; it would be like the donkey carrying Jesus into Jerusalem believing the crowds were cheering and laying down their garments for him.” —Charles Colson, current U.S. author, speaker, and former chief counsel for President Richard Nixon from 1969 to 1973 and one of the Watergate Seven, jailed for Watergate-related charges.
Sunday
Tell the story of Naaman from the following perspectives:

• The perspective of the captive girl.
• The perspective of Naaman’s guardian angel.
• The perspective of the king of Israel (read 2 Kings 5:4-7, NIV):

“Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said, ‘By all means, go,’ the king of Aram replied, ‘I will send a letter to the king of Israel.’ So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: ‘With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.’

“As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, ‘Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!’” (2 Kings 5:4-7, NIV).

Monday
In what area of your life do you long to be “washed and cleansed”? Read Colossians 2:13, 14. Write a letter to God confessing this struggle in your life. Burn or shred the letter to remind yourself of God’s perfect and complete forgiveness.

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

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

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

I think they’re usually . . .

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

What do arrogance and self-debasement have in common?

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

Friday
Reflect on this quote from C. S. Lewis: “The Second Person in God, the Son, became human Himself: was born into the world as an actual man—a real man of a particular height, with hair of a particular color, speaking a particular language, weighing so many stone [pounds]. The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man but (before that) a baby, and before that a fetus inside a woman’s body. If you want to get the hang of it, think how you would like to become a slug or a crab.”

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this week’s reading*
Prophets and Kings, chapters 20, 21.

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

“Yet Nineveh, wicked though it had become, was not wholly given over to evil. He who ‘beholdeth all the sons of men’ (Psalm 33:13) and ‘seeth every precious thing’ (Job 28:10) perceived in that city many who were reaching out after something better and higher, and who, if granted opportunity to learn of the living God, would put away their evil deeds and worship Him. And so in His wisdom God revealed Himself to them in an unmistakable manner, to lead them, if possible, to repentance” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 265, 266).
What words, thoughts, or impressions come to your mind when you hear the following words?

Muslims ____________________________
Immigrants __________________________
Goths ______________________________
Skaters ______________________________
Emo kids ____________________________
Jocks ________________________________
Snobs ______________________________
Goodie-goodies _____________________
Posers ______________________________
Pastor’s kids ________________________

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

Established where the Khor and Tigris rivers meet, Nineveh sat in the middle of East and West, with the Mediterranean Sea in one direction and the Indian Ocean in the other. Trade traveled freely in both directions, bringing goods, knowledge, and prosperity to Nineveh. Yet Nineveh is an example of an ancient city that was completely demolished. Attacked by the Medes, Babylonians, and Elamites, its buildings and walls were smashed to pieces and its people slaughtered or sent into exile. The Medes and Babylonians divided up the land of the once-powerful empire.

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

“From inside the fish Jonah prayed. . . . ‘In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. . . . What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord.’ And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. . . .

“Jonah . . . went to Nineveh. . . . He proclaimed: ‘Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.’ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. . . . [God] had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. . . .

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

“But the Lord said, ‘You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?’”

(Jonah 1–4, NIV)
When Jonah asked to be thrown overboard, he was asking to die. His fear of God had led him to think he had nowhere to turn but a watery grave. What does God’s dramatic rescue of Jonah tell you about His love for people even when they feel like no good solutions exist?

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

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

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

punch lines

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man—the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath” (Hosea 11:8, 9, NIV).

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

other eyes

“Most people repent [of] their sins by thanking God they ain’t so wicked as their neighbors.”—Josh Billings, 19th-century U.S. humorist.

“Self-pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything wise in this world.”—Helen Keller, 20th-century U.S. author and writer.

“All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and backbiting, the pleasures of power, of hatred. . . . That is why a cold, self-righteous prig, who goes regularly to church, may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century British author and theologian.
This week’s What Do You Think? looks at some of the lines we draw between people in today’s world. Read Jonah 4:11. How might God’s words shape how you look at people you might avoid or even look down on as sinful, violent, or evil?

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

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

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

God has a reputation for smashing and smiting people and things. Insurance companies even call destructive natural events “acts of God.” Yet Jonah recognized how much more God would rather forgive than destroy—and resented how much that fact impacted his reputation. Jonah would have rather watched more than a hundred thousand people die than have preached a prophecy that didn’t come true—especially when it involved people he felt no love for whatsoever.

Read Matthew 12:41. Jesus condemned the people in His day for not repenting and accepting His message when Someone much greater than Jonah had come to them (and for far longer than just a few days). Why did so many reject Jesus when they already worshipped God? What blinded them to the message of love and compassion Jesus brought? What should those people have learned from the story of Jonah?

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

Read this week’s Flashlight. What do you think it would take for the average unbeliever to “see the light,” repent, and follow Jesus? What’s missing from the Christian witness that causes more people not to do so? In what ways do some Christians’ actions and attitudes turn people away from Jesus?

Read Hosea 11:8, 9. How does God feel about bringing judgment on His children? Is the old line “This hurts me more than it hurts you” really true in God’s case? How should we view such Bible texts in light of Jesus’ death on a cross?

Read Matthew 12:41. Jesus condemned the people in His day for not repenting and accepting His message when Someone much greater than Jonah had come to them (and for far longer than just a few days). Why did so many reject Jesus when they already worshipped God? What blinded them to the message of love and compassion Jesus brought? What should those people have learned from the story of Jonah?

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

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

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

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

keytext

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

(Hosea 14:4, NIV)
Write down what emotions you would feel if the following happened to you:

• You find a $100 bill on the street. _______________
• You drop your cell phone in the toilet. ___________
• You get a C on your exam. _________________
• Everyone laughs at your new outfit. ________________
• You find a mouse in your backpack. ____________
• Your best friend moves away. _____________
• Your parents forget your birthday. ___________
• It is the last day of school. ____________

“When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, ‘Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.’ So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.”

“She will chase after her lovers but not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now.’”

“The Lord said to me, ‘Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.’ So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, ‘You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.’ For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the Lord and to his blessings in the last days.”

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them...”

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not come in wrath. I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.”

(Hosea 1:2, 3; 2:7; 3:1-5; 11:1-4, 8, 9; 14:4, NIV)
“The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.” (Jeremiah 31:3, NIV).

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

“Come back to me, you unfaithful children, and I will forgive you for being unfaithful.’ Yes, we will come to you, because you are the Lord our God. It was foolish to worship idols on the hills and on the mountains. Surely the salvation of Israel comes from the Lord our God” (Jeremiah 3:22, 23, NCV).

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

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

“It ain’t no sin if you crack a few laws now and then, just so long as you don’t break any.”—Mae West, 20th-century U.S. actress.

“The saints are the sinners who keep on trying.”—Robert Louis Stevenson, 19th-century Scottish novelist.

“God proved His love on the cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, I love you.”—Billy Graham, retired U.S. evangelist.
Sabbath

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

Emotions are not bad. They give us a clue to what is going on in our hearts. This week’s lesson is an emotional one. It takes a peek into the heart of God. Look up the following verses and write down the emotion God is displaying:

- Genesis 6:6
- Psalm 2:4
- Exodus 32:9, 10
- Zephaniah 3:17

Sunday

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

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

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

How are you like Gomer?

Monday

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

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

Tuesday

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

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

Wednesday

God loves us to death. He works hard at keeping a relationship with us. Even when Satan tries to distract us, God reveals Himself and speaks to us through His Word. Take some time to read all the verses in the Punch Lines section. What do these verses reveal about God? If you had to summarize all the verses in five words or less, what would you write? Which verse stood out to you the most? Why?

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

Thursday

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

Time: __________ Place: __________

Things to remember in prayer: __________

Friday

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

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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*

Prophets and Kings, chapters 23, 24.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“Suddenly the gate and the inner veil of the temple seemed to be uplifted or withdrawn, and he was permitted to gaze within, upon the Holy of Holies, where even the prophet’s feet might not enter. There rose up before him a vision of Jehovah sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, while the train of His glory filled the temple.”

(Prophets and Kings, p. 307).
Are you connected? What I mean is, do you have a cell phone, Internet service, e-mail, text messaging, voice mail, etc.? Write down all the different ways that you are connected to people—be it through school, church, or your cell phone. You can even write down how many people you are connected to by going through your address books and seeing how many people you are available to be connected with. After all that, ask yourself this question: “With all these people vying for my time, can I hear the call of God on my life?”

looking at the Internet usage statistics from www.internetworldstats.com, it is estimated (as of March 10, 2007) that of the 334 million people in North America, 69 percent are connected to the Internet. This is approximately 20 percent of the world’s usage! When you look at the statistics for Asia, there are almost one half billion people connected. All together, there are close to 1.2 billion people connected to the Internet at any given time. What a powerful communication tool. Just think of the people we can be available to by just plugging in!

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’

Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ He said, ‘Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.” Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.’ Then I said, ‘For how long, O Lord?’ And he answered: ‘Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.’”

(Isaiah 6, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

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

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

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

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

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

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

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

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

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

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

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

punch lines

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

“I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man” (Galatians 1:14-16, NIV).

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

“No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was” (Hebrews 5:4, NIV).

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

other eyes

“There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow men. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well.” —Walter Reuther, 20th-century U.S. labor organizer.

“Your profession is not what brings home your paycheck. Your profession is what you were put on earth to do. With such passion and such intensity that it becomes spiritual in calling.” —Virgil, ancient Roman poet and author.
Sabbath

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

Maybe a better question is, “When are you NOT connected, or available?” It seems that in this day and age someone can get hold of us at anytime—and it’s probably a good thing that they can! However, perhaps it should make us think about whether or not we are available to God in that same way.

This has always been a question for us humans. In Isaiah 6 God asks a question: “Whom shall I send?” Isaiah answers, “Here am I, send me.” Is this the answer that we have for God today?

“Are you connected?” It is a good question for us today. The world is so loud that sometimes we can’t hear the whispering of Jesus Christ.

Sunday

After having read the text and the story of the call of Isaiah, what do you think is the most important lesson? Two words are pretty important in conjunction with this story: repentance and forgiveness. Repentance is the act of acknowledging our sin and recognizing that we are in need of a Savior from that same sin. Forgiveness is God’s act of justification and making us right with Him again.

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

Monday

Be sure to read the Key Text for this week. Isaiah 6:8 is Isaiah’s response to God when God asks the question of who will go and be His representative to the world.

Isaiah was ready for a couple reasons: (1) he could hear the voice of the Lord, and (2) he had been cleansed by God of his sins.

How do you hear the voice of God in your life? Is it through parents or pastors? Friends or family? Quiet time or study? Delving into the Word of God or into prayer? All of these things help us hear the Word of God. If we seek His voice, He is more than willing to let us hear what He has for us.

Tuesday

What do you think the throne of God looks like? This week’s Flashlight section gives us a glimpse into the vision that Isaiah had into the Holy of Holies in heaven. What do you think you might do if you saw that vision? Would you fall on your knees and sing the same song as the seraphs who sing constantly of God’s praises?

Would that vision do to you what it did to Isaiah, and show you just how unworthy you are of the grace given to us by God? Would you be afraid, or would you desire that God come closer to you and your life? It’s hard to tell what such a clear vision of God would do to us. But it’s awesome to think that we seek a God who is this majestic and powerful! A God who is powerful enough to wipe our sins away.

Wednesday

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

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

Thursday

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

Friday

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

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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*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 25.
“Had Israel been true to her trust, all the nations of earth would have shared in her blessings. But the hearts of those to whom had been entrusted a knowledge of saving truth were untouched by the needs of those around them. As God’s purpose was lost sight of, the heathen came to be looked upon as beyond the pale of His mercy. The light of truth was withheld, and darkness prevailed. The nations were over-spread with a veil of ignorance; the love of God was little known; error and superstition flourished” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 370, 371).

“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: Isaiah 11; 12; 44.  

“They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, ‘I belong to the Lord’; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and will take the name Israel.”

(Isaiah 44:4, 5, NIV)
**Rate which of the following items people are most likely or least likely to pass on to others. (Note: 1 would be the item people would have no problem giving away; 7 would be the item least shared with others.)**

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**did you know?**

Did you know that the prophet Isaiah lived through the reigns of three different kings of Judah? Scholars believe that his ministry started sometime around 740 B.C. and ended in 681 B.C. His ministry began under the evil King Ahaz, ran through the spiritual reawakening brought about by Hezekiah, and ended under the evil Manasseh. While Isaiah was one of the most "political" of prophets, he never failed to speak God’s truth to the weak or the mighty.

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**into the story**

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

“He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

“The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest.

“They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea....

“He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.”

“But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

“They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, ‘I belong to the Lord’; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, ‘The Lord’s,’ and will take the name Israel.”

(Isaiah 11:1-9, 12; 44:1-5, NIV).
punch lines

“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).

“The mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3:6, NIV).

“After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: ‘Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe’” (Acts 15:7, NIV).

“All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him” (Psalm 22:27, NIV).

“A religion that takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion.” —Mohandas Ghandi, nonviolent leader of India’s struggle for independence.

“The moral and religious system which Jesus Christ transmitted to us is the best the world has ever seen, or can see.” —Benjamin Franklin, author, diplomat, inventor, physicist, politician, and printer.
Sabbath

After completing the What Do You Think? section, read Isaiah 11:12. In Isaiah 11, God promises Israel that a special Deliverer would come from the line of King David’s father, Jesse. Among the many things He would do is “raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel” (NIV). What message was God hoping to send to surrounding nations by rescuing exiled Israelites from groups that had taken them captive? How might those nations view God after such an act?

If God thought enough of the Israelites then and those of us today who are spiritual descendants of Abraham that He would send Jesus to save us, shouldn’t we tell others the good news?

Sunday

Read the Into the Story section to get at the heart of this week’s lesson. Now complete the Out of the Story questions. The two passages in Isaiah that form the basis of this week’s lesson are both hopeful in tone. God is making some very big and bold promises. The theme of hope runs through the writings of Isaiah. What do you think was happening in Judah at the time that made these messages so essential? How might Isaiah’s messages apply to your life today?

Monday

In many Western societies, a woman adopts the last name of her husband-to-be once they are married. Marie James may become Marie Smith, or Marie James-Smith. This taking on of the fiancé’s last name used to be considered quite a high honor bestowed by a wife on her husband. Read this week’s Key Text. What did God say future descendants of Jacob would do? What do you think this promise meant to the current crop of Israelites who were scattered and downtrodden?

Tuesday

After reading this week’s Flashlight, write a short paragraph to finish the following statement:

Ancient Israel could have been a great spiritual example to the then-known world by _________________________________.

Wednesday

Refer to this week’s Punch Lines. Did any of the highlighted verses catch your attention? After reading Isaiah 11:1-5 (Into the Story, passage 1), how does Luke 1:31-33 fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy? Notice also that Jesus was not simply coming to bless Christian believers; He came to bless everyone who would dare believe in Him.  

Thursday

Watch your local evening news tonight. More than likely you’ll see a story of someone touched by violence, perhaps someone experiencing a weather-related incident, or maybe just a call for folks to help out a local soup kitchen. After you’ve seen the telecast, ask yourself: What small thing can I do to make my community better? Ask a friend to join you in carrying out your good deed.

Friday

Why are you here? Why do you think God made you and placed you where you are at this special time in history? How might sharing the gospel with others help you find yourself and your purpose?

Insight

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this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapters 26, 31.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“This was indeed a time of great peril for the chosen nation. Only a few short years, and the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel were to be scattered among the nations of heathendom. And in the kingdom of Judah also the outlook was dark. The forces for good were rapidly diminishing, the forces for evil multiplying. The prophet Micah, viewing the situation, was constrained to exclaim: ‘The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men.’ ‘The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge’ Micah 7:2, 4. ‘Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant,’ declared Isaiah, ‘we should have been as Sodom, and . . . Gomorrah’ Isaiah 1:9” (Prophets and Kings, p. 324).
The following are some of history’s worst leaders. Try to match each of them with the number of people killed by them, or their policies.

1. Pol Pot ___a. Cultural revolution led to 14 to 20 million civilian deaths.
4. Joseph Stalin ___d. Murdered 300,000 of his rival’s support- ers in Uganda.
5. Adolf Hitler ___e. Killed approximately 20 million people, sending millions to the Gulag.

did you know?

Did you know that some of God’s people offered their children as human sacrifices to the Ammonite god Molech? The practice was done in a place called Topheth or altar, in the Valley of Ben Hinnom. The prophet Micah hints why: “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgres- sion, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:7, NIV). They thought this practice would appease God.

“Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, ‘I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.’ And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.

“Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. So Uriah the priest built an altar in accord- ance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned. When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it.”

(2 Kings 16:1-12, NIV)
“But the people refused to listen to Samuel. ‘No!’ they said. ‘We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles’” (1 Samuel 8:19, 20, NIV).

“Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd” (Exodus 23:2, NIV).

“Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 26:1, NIV).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only”’” (Matthew 4:10, NIV).

“But you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go” (Deuteronomy 12:5, NIV).

“People fashion their God after their own understanding. They make their God first and worship Him afterwards.” —Oscar Wilde, Irish poet.

“A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping we are becoming.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson, U.S. poet, lecturer, and essayist.
Did you successfully match the names of history’s worst leaders with the crimes they committed against their people in the What Do You Think? section? Bad leaders come and go, but some leaders stand out due to their barbarity. In the Bible, bad political leaders are defined differently than they are today. Read 2 Kings 16:2, 3 to see one such example. Which is worse, a leader who leads his people into sin, or one who murders scores of his people?

After reading the Into the Story section and completing the Out of the Story questions, consider this question: Was there anyone to whom Ahaz could have turned for godly counsel? Do some research to find out which prophets were in the land of Judah during his kingship. (Hint: One of them is considered the greatest Old Testament prophet.)

This week’s Key Text tells us that Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign. Do you think his relative youth had anything to do with his poor spiritual decisions? Explain. ____________________________________________________________________________

Why was King Josiah faithful to God even as a young king, and Ahaz was not? Was Ahaz born bad? ____________________________________________________________________________

Are there any idols in your life? Here are some questions that might help you find out. What do you spend the majority of your leisure time doing? What specific pleasure do you derive from the person or activity occupying your carefree moments? Try this: Add up the time that you spend texting, e-mailing, surfing, and watching (TV), then dedicate half of this time to get to know God better through prayer, Bible study, serving others, or sharing your faith.

Set aside a quiet moment this evening. Turn off your cell phone, your computer, iPod—everything. Get your space really quiet. Then, get a piece of paper and something to write with. Finish the following statements: My relationship with God would be much tighter if I would let go of ____________________________________________________________________________

It’s not easy to do it, but I plan to ____________________________________________________________________________

Close with a prayer, asking God for strength to overcome whatever is preventing you from getting closer to Him.

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

flashlight

“These and other like messages revealing the willingness of God to forgive and accept those who turned to Him with full purpose of heart, had brought hope to many a fainting soul in the dark years when the temple doors remained closed; and now, as the leaders began to institute a reform, a multitude of people, weary of the thraldom of sin, were ready to respond” (Prophets and Kings, p. 334).

keytext

“Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. . . . He held fast to the Lord and did not cease to follow him.”

(2 Kings 18:5, 6, NIV)
What do you think?

Which sentence best describes your church, Sabbath School class, or youth group?

___ Everyone is on fire for the Lord.
___ A few people are excited about God, but most aren’t.
___ Everyone seems to be going through the motions of religion.
___ People want to know God better but don’t seem to know how.
___ Nobody takes God seriously.

Do you think you need a revival among young people in your church? What would it take to get everyone really excited about serving the Lord? Would you want to be part of a group that was “on fire”?

The word “revival” is often used to talk about getting people excited about God. In fact, one of the dictionary definitions of the word is “a time of reawakened interest in religion.”

The Bible never uses the word “revival.” It comes from a Latin word that means “to live again.” It wasn’t used in a religious sense until 1702, when it was used by the American preacher Cotton Mather. But the Bible does describe several periods in Israel’s history that we would probably call “revivals.” These were times when Israel had turned away from God, but a strong leader—usually a king or a prophet—led the people back to God and, once again, they became excited about serving and worshipping Him.

Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. . . . He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done. In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side and said: “Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the Lord, the God of your fathers. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary. . . . I intend to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense. . . .”

“So the service of the temple of the Lord was reestablished. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly. . . . Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel. The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. . . . They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written. . . .

“A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley. . . .

“The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully. . . . There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.”

(2 Chronicles 29:1-11, 35, 36; 30:1-5, 13, 14, 23, 26, 27, 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).

“Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known” (Habakkuk 3:2, NIV).

“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28, 29, NIV).

“Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs” (Isaiah 61:7, NIV).

“If you are walking with Jesus, in the Spirit, you need not fear going too far. No believer has gone as far as God wants him to go.”—A. A. Allen, 20th-century U.S. evangelist.

“As a large fire begins with kindling of small twigs and branches, even so a large revival is preceded by the prayers of a few hidden, seemingly insignificant souls.”—Gary Amrault, 20th-century U.S. writer and speaker.
Look back at your answers to What Do You Think? Do you think your church or youth group needs a revival? What would “revival” look like for you and your friends?

Second Chronicles 30:23 tells us that the people of Israel joyfully chose to celebrate Passover for an extra seven days after King Hezekiah brought back the festival that had been forgotten for so many years.

Have you ever wanted a church service or program to last longer? What kind of worship service would you enjoy so much that you’d want to stay twice as long as you were supposed to?

King Hezekiah’s revival included three steps that can give us an idea of how God brings about revival for His people today.

Seeking God’s will. Hezekiah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 29:2, NIV). True revival begins by seeking God’s will for us as it’s revealed in the Bible.

Sacrifice. There were things the people of Israel had to give up in order to truly follow God. All evidence of idol worship had to go (2 Chronicles 29:5; 30:14, NIV). What are the “idols” in your life that you would need to remove before God could completely rule your world?

Celebration. That Passover—the first in many years—was a joyful time for Israel. People were having such a good time, they decided to stay, worship, and celebrate for an extra week! Revival is serious, but it’s also joyful. When God truly takes over our lives, our churches, our communities, we’ll enjoy spending time in His presence.

Hezekiah “held fast” to the Lord. That means that he held on and kept following God even when temptations and distractions threatened to tear Him away. Without a firm grip on God, we can never experience revival ourselves, or help bring revival to God’s church.

What temptations and distractions in your life might lead you to let go of God?

What helps you “hold fast” to the Lord when times get tough?

Revival begins inside—with a person who is, as Hezekiah was, completely committed to following God. It moves outside—to change a church, a community, the world.

What’s one thing you’d want to do in your own spiritual life to make it happen?

What’s one thing you’d like to see happen in your church or youth group?

A true spiritual revival is exciting and inspiring—but also scary.

As you think about revival coming to your church or youth group, to your life, is there anything about it that scares you? Are there things you’d be afraid to give up? Are you afraid of what God might ask you to do?

Revival is a serious thing, and it’s good to take it seriously. Ask God to help make you ready for revival.

Many people who might not seem to be active in church are quietly longing for a relationship with God. If a revival were to start in your church or youth group, you might be surprised by some of the people who were “ready to respond.” Don’t ever write off anyone as a lost cause!

Hezekiah’s revival reawakened the spiritual life of Judah at a time when the nation had been spiritually asleep for years. God calls men and women, youth and adults, in every era to reconnect with Him and get others excited about following Him again.

Read Joel 2:28, 29, probably written during the same period of Jewish history. This passage is quoted in Acts 2 to show that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost fulfilled Joel’s prophecy.

As we get closer to the end of earth’s history, God again promises to pour His Spirit out on young and old, men and women—anyone who will commit their lives to Him and get serious about bringing revival to His church and the world.

What’s one thing you’d want to do in your own spiritual life to make it happen?

What’s one thing you’d like to see happen in your church or youth group?

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.

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“Nothing more quickly inspires faith than the exercise of faith. The king of Judah had prepared for the coming storm; and now, confident that the prophecy against the Assyrians would be fulfilled, he stayed his soul upon God. . . . What though the armies of Assyria, fresh from the conquest of the greatest nations of earth, and triumphant over Samaria in Israel, should now turn their forces against Judah? . . . Judah had nothing to fear; for their trust was in Jehovah” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 351, 352).

Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 32; 2 Kings 19.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 30.

“So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side.”
(2 Chronicles 32:22, NIV)
Circle “Agree” or “Disagree” to indicate your opinion on each statement.

Agree   Disagree  People who believe in God never need to be afraid.
Agree   Disagree  God will make sure nothing bad ever happens to His people.
Agree   Disagree  We can trust God to care for us even when things are going wrong.
Agree   Disagree  Preparing for hard times shows a lack of trust in God.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, ruled his empire for 24 years. During those years, Assyria was the most powerful and feared nation in that part of the world.

Sennacherib’s father, Sargon, defeated the northern kingdom of Israel and led 27,000 Israelites into captivity. The deported people were probably put to work digging canals in the new Assyrian capital city of Nineveh. Sennacherib also defeated the Babylonians, but he was unable to defeat King Hezekiah of Judah, even though Judah was a small nation and not very powerful. Trusting God made King Hezekiah and his people able to stand their ground against a tyrant who defeated all others.

“After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to make war on Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him. . . . Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it. . . . He also made large numbers of weapons and shields.

“He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: ‘Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles.’ And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.

“Later, when Sennacherib king of Assyria and all his forces were laying siege to Lachish, he sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah king of Judah and for all the people of Judah who were there:

“This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, ‘The Lord our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,’ he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. . . . Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? . . . No god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!’ . . .

“King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to heaven about this. And the Lord sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons cut him down with the sword.

“So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others.
He took care of them on every side.”
(2 Chronicles 32:1-22, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What preparations did King Hezekiah make for Sennacherib’s attack on Jerusalem?

What message of hope did Hezekiah have for his people?

How did Sennacherib try to frighten the people of Judah? What was his confidence based on?

How do you think the people of Judah reacted to Sennacherib’s message?

Why do you think the Lord defeated the Assyrians directly, rather than having Judah’s army fight and win?

punch lines

“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1, 2, NIV).

“Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you” (Deuteronomy 3:22, NIV).

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

“Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s” (2 Chronicles 20:15, NIV).

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31, NIV).

“Don’t waste life in doubts and fears; spend yourself on the work before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour’s duties will be the best preparation for the hours and ages that will follow it.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th-century U.S. poet, lecturer, essayist.

“We gain strength, courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face. . . . We must do that which we think we cannot.”—Eleanor Roosevelt, 20th-century U.S. humanitarian, United Nations diplomat, First Lady.

other eyes
Sabbath

When Sennacherib’s army came to lay siege to Jerusalem, Hezekiah took some practical steps to get ready for war. From 2 Chronicles 32:1-6, list three specific things Hezekiah did to get Jerusalem ready for attack.

1. _____________________________
2. _____________________________
3. _____________________________

What do Hezekiah’s preparations tell us about his trust in God? Do they show that he did trust God, or that he didn’t?

Imagine you’re taking a tough exam. You ask God for help—but you also study as hard as you can! Being well prepared doesn’t show a lack of trust in God—rather, it puts us in a place where God is able to help us.

Sunday

Siege was a popular battle tactic back in the days of walled cities. You simply parked your army outside the enemy city and waited for them to surrender or starve. This was Sennacherib’s plan for conquering Jerusalem.

Of course, if you were the one sitting outside, your soldiers might get bored, or sick, or simply start to drift away if they didn’t have some action. So the attacking army did what they could to make the siege go faster. This included sending messages to try to weaken the morale of those inside the walls.

Sennacherib’s message to the people of Jerusalem hit right at the heart of their hope—Hezekiah’s faith in God. What did Sennacherib remind God’s people of, to try to weaken their faith?

The Assyrian armies had experienced huge success. None of the gods of the nations they’d conquered had been able to stand against them. But the God of Israel wasn’t like other gods—He was real, ready, and able to defend His people.

Monday

Read the Key Text (2 Chronicles 32:22) in a few different Bible translations (if you don’t have multiple Bibles handy, go online to www.biblegateway.com). Notice how the last part of the text (“He took care of them on every side,” NIV) is translated in different versions.

Which of these translations is most encouraging to you, when you think about God’s protection over you?

Tuesday

Nothing more quickly inspires faith than the exercise of faith.” The Flashlight passage from Prophets and Kings tells us that the best way to develop greater trust in God is simple—try trusting Him! The people of Judah discovered that the Lord was not like other gods—He actually had the power to save them.

Think about a situation in your life today in which you need to trust God to care for you. Then, think of three times in the past when you know God protected and helped you. List them here:

Wednesday

Choose one of the Bible texts from Punch Lines that you find encouraging. Cut a 1-inch strip from a piece of construction paper or card stock and copy that verse neatly onto the strip. Use it as a bookmark in your Bible to remind you to trust God in difficult times!

Thursday

Look back at Tuesday’s lesson. Do you have trouble trusting God because you don’t have a lot of experience trusting Him? You can also learn from the experiences of others! If you didn’t have three things to list on Tuesday, talk to a parent, teacher, or friend who’s been a Christian longer than you have. Ask them for examples of times God has proven His ability to take care of them. If you still need a third example, write: “God saved Jerusalem from Sennacherib’s army.” The Bible is full of examples showing how God comes through for His people!

Friday

Look back at Tuesday and Thursday’s lessons. How can the experiences you listed—times when God has come through for you or others in the past—give you greater courage as you think about the problems you’re facing today?

* A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 30.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“Born of a wicked king, beset with temptations to follow in his father’s steps, and with few counselors to encourage him in the right way, Josiah nevertheless was true to the God of Israel. Warned by the errors of past generations, he chose to do right, instead of descending to the low level of sin and degradation to which his father and grandfather had fallen” (Prophets and Kings, p. 384).

“In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.”

(2 Chronicles 33:12, 13, NIV)
what do you think?

What do you think are the most essential qualities in a leader? Rank them in order of importance (1—most important; 8—least important).

___ confident
___ compassionate
___ humble
___ selfless
___ courageous
___ honest
___ wise
___ persevering

What are the three qualities you ranked to be the most necessary in a leader? Why?

Who do you know that exemplifies these qualities, and how have you seen such attributes in action?

did you know?

eventeen magazine reported

64 percent of teenage girls say they are as religious or more religious than their parents (December 2005). According to the Barna Research Group, 78 percent of teens said parents had a lot of influence on their religious experience (1999). To be sure, this influence can be positive or negative. But at what point do you begin to assume responsibility for your relationship with God on your own?

INTO THE STORY

“The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.

“Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah.

“He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the Lord, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. Then he restored the altar of the Lord and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel. The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the Lord their God.

“The other events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all are written in the records of the seers. Manasseh rested with his fathers and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

“Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped and offered sacrifices to all the idols Manasseh had made. But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the Lord; Amon increased his guilt.

“Amon’s officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his palace. Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah
punch lines

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1, 2, NIV).

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them’” (Ecclesiastes 12:1, NIV).

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:10, NIV).

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Matthew 23:37, NIV).

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent” (Revelation 3:15-19, NIV).

“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now.” —Chinese proverb.

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

Read and respond to the activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. Which quality did you choose as a primary attribute of a leader? Why? First Peter 5:6 promises that success and abundant living are the result of humility. Read this passage and write it out in your own words. Reflect on the lives of people in the Bible who followed this principle.

Tuesday

Read the quote from Prophets and Kings in the Flashlight section of this lesson. Think about your legacy of faith. How have your parents and leaders shaped your walk with God? What are some examples you want to follow? What are some patterns you need to avoid?

Examples to follow: ____________________________

Patterns to avoid: ____________________________

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson, which verse speaks most prominently to you today? Why do you think this verse is particularly relevant to you today? What can you do this week to respond actively to the message in this Scripture?

Thursday

In Prophets and Kings we are told that Josiah had “few counselors” urging him in the right direction. Do you ever feel alone in your desire to be more devoted to God? Take some time this week to find someone you admire as a spiritual leader. Ask them to share with you one spiritual insight that God has revealed to them. Also, pray for them to continue to be faithful and filled with God’s Spirit.

Friday

Reflect on the three kings referred to in this lesson and consider how God labored with each of them to different ends. Consider the many ways God has labored with you, patiently prompting you to deeper devotion. Are you listening to His voice? How are you going to respond?

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

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

this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 32.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.
“Thus Josiah, from his earliest manhood, had endeavored to take advantage of his position as king to exalt the principles of God’s holy law. And now, while Shaphan the scribe was reading to him out of the Book of the Law, the king discerned in this volume a treasure of knowledge, a powerful ally, in the work of reform he so much desired to see wrought in the land. He resolved to walk in the light of its counsels, and to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven” (Prophets and Kings, p. 398).

“He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.”  
(2 Kings 22:2, NIV)
Check the response that fits your attitude about God’s Word the most; then explain why.

____ I’m so busy I get tired and simply don’t have the energy it takes to study.
____ I fail to see how the Bible relates to my life today.
____ I don’t know how to study the Bible in such a way that it affects my life.
____ I just forget to integrate the Bible into my life each day.
____ I have heard all my life that Bible study is crucial, but I’m just bored by the topic.
____ I read my Bible regularly but wonder if it is really changing me.

How do you think your response compares to your peers?

INTO THE STORY

“Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother’s name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.

“In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the Lord. He said: ’Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the Lord, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the Lord—the carpenters, the builders and the masons. Also have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are acting faithfully.’

“Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, ’I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord.’ He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: ’Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the Lord and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple.’ Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, ’Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

“When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king’s attendant: ’Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord’s anger that burns against us because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.’”

(2 Kings 22:1-13, NIV)
**punch lines**

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Joshua 1:8).

“I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8, NIV).

“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18, NIV).

“Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me through your law” (Psalm 119:29, NIV).

“I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight” (Psalm 119:174, NIV).

“Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble” (Psalm 119:165, NIV).

“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3, NIV).

“Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left” (Joshua 23:6, NIV).

“A Bible that is falling apart belongs to a person that isn’t.”

—Unknown.

“Sink the Bible to the bottom of the ocean, and still man’s obligations to God would be unchanged. He would have the same path to tread, only his lamp and guide would be gone; the same voyage to make, but his chart and compass would be over-board!”—Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century U.S. clergyman.

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**OUT OF THE STORY**

Circle and identify all of the characters/people mentioned in this story. Who are they and what is their contribution to the story?

**Underline** what you think the key phrase, sentence, or verse is in this passage. Explain why you think this passage of Scripture is central.

What truths about people emerge from this story? What truths about God are made clear to you?

What other story or event in Scripture does this passage remind you of, and why?

It is possible that for almost 100 years the Book of the Law had not been read or even spoken of by the king or the people. Imagine this scene and describe some of the emotions you think the king and the people listening were experiencing.

In this story, is there... an example to follow? __________________________

a prayer to pray? __________________________

a sin to confess? __________________________

a challenge to embrace? __________________________

a promise to claim? __________________________

a truth to believe? __________________________

an action to take? __________________________

Do you think Israel slipped into idolatry because they lost the Book, or did they lose or set the Book aside because they deliberately chose idolatry?

What do you think enabled Josiah, at such a young age, to be able to make such a difference in Israel?

—
Sabbath
Respond to the exercise in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. Which obstacle seems to get in the way of you getting into God’s Word? Read Psalm 119:18, 29, 165, 174 and compare David’s passion for God’s law to the people in Josiah’s time. How do you think David would have reacted to discovering the dust-covered Book of the Law buried deep in a storage closet?

Sunday
As you read Into the Story, answer the questions in the Out of the Story section and try to imagine what this story would look like if it happened today. What message do you think God has for you in this passage? When Josiah tried to start a reformation he began with a cleaning of the Temple to get the people back into the presence of the Lord. What kind of housecleaning can you do spiritually this week to get into God’s presence? Think of some specific activities you could do to make room for God’s Word in your life.

Monday
The Key Text for this week is a brief but powerful statement about Josiah: “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left” (2 Kings 22:2, NIV). A reference is made to David (a great-, great-, great-, etc. grandfather) instead of Amon, Josiah’s dad. Why do you think Josiah called David his father instead of Amon? What relative in your family do you take after most?

Tuesday
Read the quote from Prophets and Kings in the Flashlight section and remember that Josiah was perhaps younger than you. What do you think was Josiah’s greatest challenge: his perceived youth or the problem of how ignorant people were of God’s law of love? Whom do you know that possesses great leadership qualities at a young age? Affirm them this week and remind them of Josiah’s mark on Israel.

Wednesday
Read the Punch Line verses and choose the one that speaks to you the most. Rewrite it in your own words. Pray this week to encounter someone who is seeking to know God but is not sure where to begin. Be ready to share some of the beautiful passages about how God’s Word can transform hearts and lives.

Thursday
Place your Bible in the middle of your room so it is in the way and not put away this week. If you deliberately place God’s Word in your path you will think about reading it more often than if it were on a shelf or in a drawer. What do you think some of your thoughts will be as you walk past it?

Friday
Josiah was told by the prophetess that even a full-blown repentance would not stop the calamity that would soon come upon Israel. He was also told that because of his faithfulness he would not have to witness the sadness of that day. Still, Josiah pressed on with determination to lead Israel to a place where they would be sensitive to God’s Word. Imagine what this story might look like today.

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