a word about what’s ahead...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• Making It Real — the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Begin here if you are studying this lesson on your own prior to, or after, studying it in a Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God apply to you personally. Use the Notes pages in the back of the study guide to write answers to questions (if you run out of room).

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.
January
1—The Way of Two Worlds [p. 5]
Both Creation and the fall of Lucifer begin the story of God’s uncompromising plan to be in relationship with humanity.

8—Law Meets Love [p. 9]
Adam and Eve break trust with their Creator and open the door of death and destruction that would ultimately cost Him His life.

15—Out of Control [p. 13]
The story of Cain and Abel provides the first recorded contrast between those who trust and obey, and those who rationalize and choose their own way.

22—A Very Long Walk With God [p. 17]
Enoch lives the story of how much God wants to be in relationship with us, and how a life of trusting togetherness will restore us to permanent companionship with Him.

29—Noah Way! [p. 21]
Noah walks with God in a story very parallel with ours today. He lives a life of faithful diligence in preparing for the storm ahead.

February
5—Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door [p. 25]
The futility of trying to find a way to save ourselves is exemplified in the story of the Tower of Babel. Only a life of trusting obedience brings ultimate and lasting safety.

12—Long, Strange Trip [p. 29]
Abraham’s name is a synonym for, and his life an example of, the kind of faith that God looks for in His friends.

19—Boy Wonder [p. 33]
The story of the miraculous birth of Isaac is the story of how God keeps His promises even when the most enlightened human reasoning pronounces the situation hopeless and impossible.

26—No Laughing Matter [p. 37]
By choosing a life close to the evils of his age rather than one as far away as possible, Lot laid the groundwork for the destruction of his family.

March
5—Winsome . . . and Then Some [p. 41]
The story of God, the matchmaker, provides encouragement in this age of shaky relationships. Rebekah also portrays the virtue of going the second mile in service to others.

12—Identity Theft [p. 45]
Through the story of Jacob and Esau we can explore themes of identity, delayed gratification, and integrity—all very relevant themes for coping with life today.

19—Struggle by a Stream [p. 49]
The life of Jacob points out the unconditional acceptance of God. Persevering through his problems, Jacob was able to experience joy as he entrusted the broken pieces of his life to God.

26—Family Fiascoes [p. 53]
The effects of sin as well as the evidence of God’s healing grace are vividly portrayed in the story of Jacob and his family. Through it we are called to trust God with all our family challenges.
God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34).

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

(Relation 12:7-9, NIV)
Perhaps the most challenging question Christians have ever asked is why God permitted sin to corrupt His perfect world. With so much pain and suffering in the world, how do we explain God’s decision to others? Who below do you think would be the hardest person to explain it to? Why? (Rank them from one—hardest, to five—easiest.)

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

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

According to a 2009 study, the notion that Satan, or the devil, is a real being who can influence people’s lives is considered fiction by most Americans. Only one quarter (27 percent) strongly believes that Satan is real, while a majority argue that he is merely a symbol of evil. Mormons are the group most likely to accept the reality of Satan’s existence (60 percent), while Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists are the least likely (just one fifth).—www.barna.org.

**into the story**

“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

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

(Isaiah 14:12-14; Revelation 12:7-9; Genesis 1:26, 27; 1:31–2:3, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

What are some key facts in these passages that show who Lucifer was? What was his role in heaven? What was he like? What was his downfall? What did he ultimately desire more than anything else? What was God’s response?

What do you think it means to be made in the image of God? What do you think is significant about the fact that humans were created in the image of God?

What do you think is significant about the fact that the Sabbath, marriage, work, and long walks with God existed before sin entered the world?

What do you think is more important to understand—why God let sin continue or what He was thinking when He created the world and humanity? Explain.

Underline the verse that you think is the most important part of the story. Why did you choose that one?

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punch lines

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

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

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

“You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.”

“Sin would have few takers if its consequences occurred immediately.”—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century U.S. scholar, writer, preacher.

“Sin will keep you from the presence of God or the presence of God will keep you from sin.”—Unknown.

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

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

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

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

Read John 10:10 and consider how Jesus described God’s plan and Satan’s plan for life on earth. How does this saying of Christ add to the discussion about God’s seeming nonresponse to Satan’s work on earth? What evidence do you see in their life that reveals to you that they follow God freely and willingly? Do you think this attitude is rare or common? Explain.

Wednesday

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

This week’s reading

* Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 1 and 2.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’”

(Genesis 3:8, 9, NIV)
what do you think?
Agree or Disagree (A/D)

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

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

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

INTO THE STORY

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

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

“You will not surely die,’ the ser-
pent said to the woman. ‘For God
knows that when you eat of it
your eyes will be opened, and
you will be like God, knowing
good and evil.’

“When the woman saw that
the fruit of the tree was good
for food and pleasing to
the eye, and also desir-
able for gaining wis-
dom, she took some and ate it. She also
gave some to
her husband,
who was with her,
and he ate it. Then the
eyes of both of them were
opened, and they realized they were
naked; so they sewed fig leaves
together and made coverings for
themselves. Then the man and his wife
heard the sound of the Lord God as he
was walking in the garden in the cool
of the day, and they hid from the Lord
God among the trees of the garden.
But the Lord God called to the man,
‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I
heard you in the garden, and I was
afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’
And he said, ‘Who told you that you
were naked? Have you eaten from the
tree that I commanded you not to eat
from?’ The man said, ‘The woman you
put here with me—she gave me some
fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then
the Lord God said to the woman,
‘What is this you have done?’ The
woman said, ‘The serpent deceived
me, and I ate.’”

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

(Genesis 3:1-13, 21-24, NIV)
“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23, NIV).

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

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

“Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:18, 19, NLT).

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

“It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen.”—Ellen G. White, 19th-century inspired writer and church cofounder.
Sabbath

The What Do You Think? exercise offers a few questions that you are to agree or disagree with and asks you to state why. Consider the following passage from Scripture: “Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:18, 19, NLT). What is the most meaningful part of the verse to you? Why?

Sunday

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

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

Monday

Read the Key Text in a couple of different translations if possible. Rewrite the verse in your own words, including the different emotions you think Adam and Eve were feeling.

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

Tuesday

Take a look in the Flashlight section at the powerful statement Ellen White makes about the glory of a redeemed world. Especially consider the phrase “The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed outmeasured even the anguish and sacrifice of the Prince of life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 65). Apparently the big picture of the plan of salvation enabled the angels to rejoice even though it meant the death of the Son of God. Do you know someone who, like the angels of heaven, has the ability to see the big picture in life? How has this person helped you see the big picture?

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Friday

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

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

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

*This week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 3 and 4.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
“Notwithstanding that Cain had by his crimes merited the sentence of death, a merciful Creator still spared his life, and granted him opportunity for repentance. But Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against the divine authority, and to become the head of a line of bold, abandoned sinners” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 78).

keytext

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.’”

(Genesis 4:6, 7, TEV)
**Rank in order from hardest (1) to easiest (5).**

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

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

**INTO THE STORY**

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

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

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

**did you know?**

God refused Cain’s sacrifice and warned him, “Sin is crouching at the door; ... but you must master it” (Genesis 4:7, NASB). The word “master” in the Hebrew is maschel, which means to rule, reign, or govern with the authority that is given. Cain was given the choice and the power to squash the stubborn pride in his heart.

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

"Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’

‘I don’t know,’ he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

other eyes

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

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

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

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

Sunday
Read the story of Cain and Abel in the Into the Story section of this week’s lesson and work through the study questions listed in Out of the Story. As you read the story and note how Cain’s rebellion picked up momentum, how do you see this problem among your peers today? Is the slippery slope of Cain’s rebellion still part of the landscape of the lives of young people in your world? If so, in what way? What does this slippery slope look like today?

Monday
Read the Key Text and consider how much God tried to get Cain to turn from his anger and repent. Look at each phrase God speaks to Cain and note the attitude of God toward Cain. Is it possible that God is trying to get your attention today about an area of your life that can get out of control?

Everyone has weaknesses and areas of their life that can lead them on a steep downward path. What can you do today to enable God’s grace to work in your life and strengthen those weak areas?

Tuesday
The quote in the Flashlight section reveals that the sin of Cain was as much in the continued resistance and pride of heart as it was in the act of killing his brother. Cain’s rebellion closely resembles Lucifer’s, and highlights the patient grace of God as well.

Think of someone you know who admits their faults right away and has learned the value of honest and immediate confession. How do other people perceive this person? What are some things you have learned from them that you think will help you respond to God’s voice promptly?

Wednesday
Read the Punch Lines for this week and identify the one verse that is speaking directly to your life today. What do you think God is trying to say to you in that passage? Is there an area of your life in which you might be (or about to be) running out of control? What do you think you should do to make a U-turn?

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

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

Friday
In spite of Cain’s rebellion, God labored with him still. Who has been a godly voice of reason to you—cautioning you about going too far too fast? Try writing them a note thanking them for their influence in your life and think about to whom you could be a voice of grace-filled caution this week.


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this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 5.

* A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
a very long walk with God

flashlight

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

keytext

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

(Genesis 5:21-24, NIV)
Make a list of a few character qualities or personality traits that seem to run in your family. They can be physical attributes, personality traits, or beliefs and values. How are these passed on?

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

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

INTO THE STORY

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

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

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

“When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh. And after he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 870 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

“When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. And after he became the father of Kenan, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

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

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

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

(Genesis 5:1-24, NIV)

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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

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

DID YOU KNOW?

Adam lived 930 years, and many of his descendants lived several centuries. Since Adam and Eve lived alongside many of the generations that eventually populated the earth, firsthand stories of the Garden of Eden, the serpent, and the promise of grace were readily available. It is hard to imagine, but Adam, while he was still alive, was a great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather. Now that’s a little difficult to understand!
OUT OF THE STORY

Read through the entire passage about the lineage of Enoch. Underline initial insights you have as you read this passage.

Which names are you most familiar with? Which names are new?

On a piece of paper, make a time line that shows how long each person lived and how long each generation overlapped the others. How many descendants listed in this passage were born while Adam was still living?

What do you think were the lessons that were passed on from generation to generation? If you could pass on godly advice to the next generation, what would you say (in 20 words or less)?

When did Enoch actually begin walking with God? Why do you think the birth of Methuselah would have been that significant?

What do you think is meant by the statement that Enoch “walked with God”? What would that look like in the life of someone today?

Why do you think God “took” Enoch when He had not “taken” others who were faithfully devoted to Him?

punch lines

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

“By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:5, 6, NIV).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monday

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

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Friday

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

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

*This special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. . . . But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. (Genesis 6:5, 8, NIV)

Noah way!

“But Noah stood like a rock amid the tempest. Surrounded by popular contempt and ridicule, he distinguished himself by his holy integrity and unwavering faithfulness. A power attended his words, for it was the voice of God to man through His servant. Connection with God made him strong in the strength of infinite power, while for one hundred and twenty years his solemn voice fell upon the ears of that generation in regard to events, which, so far as human wisdom could judge, were impossible” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 96).

keytext

“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. . . . But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

(Genesis 6:5, 8, NIV)
Either/or. Choose one of the two statements given and explain your response.

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

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

Have you ever heard the rumor that the Flood and Noah’s ark is a fanciful fairy tale that made its way into the Holy Scriptures? Whoever started that rumor has some explaining to do. The existence of a catastrophic flood is not solely a Christian story but a narrative that is embedded in many ancient cultures. The Babylonians, the Mayans, the Egyptians, and even some cultures of Asia report stories from their history that bear a close resemblance to the Flood story of the Bible. Even the Australian Aborigines tell a story of a great flood, a family, and a boat as part of their cultural tradition.

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

“And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and...
“By the word of God . . . the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:5-7, KJV).

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

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

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


“Faith is more than thinking something is true. Faith is thinking something is true to the extent that we act on it.”—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century U.S. scholar, writer, preacher.
Sabbath

Look at the What Do You Think? exercise at the beginning of this lesson and reflect on the similarities between the days of Noah and today. Read Matthew 24:38, 39 and make a list of three to five similarities between the time of the end and the time of Noah and the Flood.

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

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight section. What are some events or experiences that seem unimaginable to you today? Consider how the faith Noah demonstrated in his day is still needed in your world. Do you know anyone of whom this quote reminds you? How do you see a little of Noah in them? What challenge might God be calling you to that seems impossible?

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Friday

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

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 7, 8, and 9.

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Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’ (Genesis 11:4, NIV)

“There were some among them, however, who feared the Lord, but who had been deceived by the pretensions of the ungodly and drawn into their schemes. For the sake of these faithful ones the Lord delayed His judgments and gave the people time to reveal their true character” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 123).
Do you ever try to be God? Complete the following statement with one or more statements from the list below: I play God when I...  

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

**What do you think?**

**INTO THE STORY**

“Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

“They said to each other, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’”

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

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

(Genesis 11:1-9, NIV)
“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain” (Psalm 127:1, NIV).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. 
2. 
3. 

Read the Into the Story passage for this week. Toward the end of the passage God is seen taking a very central role in the project undertaken by the builders. What was it that caught God’s attention? Was God worried that the Babel builders were going to succeed in their act of defiance? What specifically moved Him to confuse their ability to communicate?

The Bible says that they wanted to build a great city and erect a huge tower “so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4, NIV). Great plans made without God are great plans doomed to failure.

List two goals you hope to achieve in the future. Pause now and ask God to tell you if these are the right goals for you to pursue. Trust God to answer your request. Watch for His responses each day. Through His Word, other Christians, and circumstances.

1. 
2. 

Tuesday

In the Flashlight section Ellen White is quoted from the book Patriarchs and Prophets in which she states that there were faithful believers among the rebellious and disobedient people who were building the tower. Some who assembled to erect the tower were sincerely mistaken in what they were doing.

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

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

Wednesday

Read the scriptures in the Punch Lines section. Psalm 34:8, NIV encourages us to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” How can you “taste” God? Why does the psalmist David ask us to taste God first before seeing how good He is? Don’t you like to see your food first before tasting it? If someone asks you to close your eyes before they feed you a piece of some food, they are asking you to trust them. To experience God we must trust Him and exercise faith in Him.

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

1. 
2. 

Thursday

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

1. 
2. 

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

1. 
2. 

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

Friday

By right, God could have destroyed the builders of Babel for disobeying His direct command to scatter throughout the earth and populate it. Instead, God simply confused their language and scattered them Himself, thereby allowing them another chance to obey Him.

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

1. 
2. 


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

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

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

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

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

___________ spent 40 years getting ready for his task.

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

___________ volunteered to pay the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

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

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

“So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”

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

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

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

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’

“God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’

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

“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.’

(Genesis 12:1-5; 13:10-12; 15:1, 2, 5; 17:1, 2, 15-17; 18:1, 2, NIV)
“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8, NIV).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Making it Real

Sabbath

Were you able to find all the answers in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson? Read the following scriptures below, each of which tells us something interesting about God’s call to each of these people, and to us. Write a brief explanation of how God called each of these people to serve Him.

Judges 13:1-5.
Jeremiah 1:4-8.
Exodus 3:7-12.

What can God do for you?

Matthew 11:28, ____________
John 10:28, ____________

What do you think God is calling you to do? Ask Him to show you, and have faith that He will.

Sunday

Read the Bible passages around which this lesson is built (Into the Story section). You will notice that these scriptures are a series of short passages about the life and times of Abraham. Based on what you just read, list the three most important moments in Abraham’s life. Explain how these three moments changed Abraham’s life. (Hint: One is provided for you.)

1. God tells Abraham to leave his home.
2. ____________
3. ____________

Monday

Read carefully Genesis 12:2. Imagine God coming to you and saying the following: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” (NIV).

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

Wednesday

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

What place in your life is God asking you to leave? Abraham could not receive the blessing God had for him until he was willing to leave all behind to follow God. What things are you willing to give up for God?

Tuesday

Notice the last sentence in the Flashlight section of the lesson.

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

What place in your life is God asking you to leave? Abraham could not receive the blessing God had for him until he was willing to leave all behind to follow God. What things are you willing to give up for God?

Friday

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

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

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

Thursday

One of the truly sad episodes in the life of Abram and Sarai was the Ishmael scandal. Read Genesis 16:1-8. What did they do to “help” God’s promise come true? How did their scheme turn out? In what ways might you be trying to “help” God out—trying to make something happen for you that God alone has power to control?

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

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

this week’s reading

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 11 and 12.

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"At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission." (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 152.).
Each of the following people made several huge sacrifices to achieve world change, and obey their conscience. List one sacrifice each had to make.

a. Mohandas Gandhi ________________________.
b. Abraham Lincoln ________________________.
c. Esther ____________________________.
d. Rosa Parks _______________________.
e. Josiah _________________________.
f. Mother Teresa ___________________.
g. Ellen White ____________________.

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

“Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.”

“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’”

“Here I am,” he replied.

“Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.’

“Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.’

“Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, ‘Father?’

“Yes, my son?’ Abraham replied.

‘The fire and wood are here,’ Isaac said, ‘but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’

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

‘Here I am,’ he replied.

‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’”

(Genesis 21:1-6; 22:1-12, NIV)
punch lines

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

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

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

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

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

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

other eyes

“Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds.” —George Eliot, 19th-century English novelist.

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

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

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson you are asked to list some of the sacrifices made by great men and women of history. The Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary has three definitions for the word “sacrifice.” The third definition is striking: “Destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.” When one makes a sacrifice, it is done because one values something else more than the thing they had to sacrifice.

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

Sunday

Read the story of Abraham and Isaac again in the Bible passage for this week. Pay special attention to Genesis 22:3. What person has taught you the most about what it means to sacrifice? What have you learned from them?

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

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

1. 
2. 
3. 

Monday

If you read the Key Text for this week’s lesson you had to say, “Wow, that was a close one!” In the nick of time, God spoke from heaven and stopped Abraham, providing a ram for the sacrifice.

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

Wednesday

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

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

What is promised to those who persevere in trials?

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

We are to trust God with how much of our hearts?

Thursday

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

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

Friday

What does Abraham’s relationship with Isaac teach you about the kind of relationship God wants to have with you?

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

If you want a closer relationship with God, ask Him for it right now.

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 13.

* A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
no laughing matter

flashlight

“The Redeemer of the world declares that there are greater sins than that for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Those who hear the gospel invitation calling sinners to repentance, and heed it not, are more guilty before God than were the dwellers in the vale of Siddim. And still greater sin is theirs who profess to know God and to keep His commandments, yet who deny Christ in their character and their daily life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 165).

Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 14.

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

(Genesis 19:14, NIV)
If a catastrophe was going to happen in your town, rank the following warnings from which you would want given first priority to which you would want given last priority (1-highest; 5-lowest).

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

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

**The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city.** When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ‘My lords,’ he said, ‘please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.’

‘No,’ they answered, ‘we will spend the night in the square.’

“But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.’

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

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

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

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

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

(Genesis 19:1-14, NIV)
punch lines

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

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

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

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

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

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

“The first step in a person’s salvation is knowing their sin.” —Seneca, 1st-century A.D. Roman philosopher.
Sabbath
In the What Do You Think? section this week you had the difficult task of choosing whom you would warn if a disaster was about to happen and you had to choose the order in which the warnings would be given.

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

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

Sunday
Read the Into the Story passage. Few stories in the Bible are quite as scary as this one. There are several turning points in this Bible episode. List some of them below:

1. Two mysterious strangers show up in town.
2. Lot invites them to stay at his house and insists that they do.
3. __________
4. __________
5. __________

When the two strangers indicate that God’s destruction is soon to fall on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot senses the urgency of the moment. Does anyone else in his household “get” it? List two possible reasons why Lot’s wife, children, and other relatives did not feel this sense of urgency to leave Sodom.

1. __________
2. __________

Are you ready to leave all behind to be saved by God?

Monday
Read this week’s Key Text again. This scripture expresses the sad reality of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time that God destroyed them. How did Lot’s sons-in-law respond to his warnings about Sodom’s destruction? Which of the following best describes their attitude at the time.

1. “I don’t care.”
2. “Nothing is going to happen here.”
3. “Come back tomorrow.”
4. “You sound so funny with all your God talk, Old Man.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. __________
2. __________

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

What is preventing you from seeing God?


this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 14.

A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
“After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.’”

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

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

- Kindness
- Honesty
- Attractiveness
- Contentment
- Optimism
- Selflessness
- Courage
- Self-confidence
- Humility
- Creativity

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

INTO THE STORY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Then the man bowed down and worshiped the Lord, saying, ‘Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master.’”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married” (1 Corinthians 7:36, NIV).

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

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

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

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

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

The What Do You Think? activity at the beginning of this lesson urged you to make choices about what attributes are most important to you in a future spouse. Why did you choose the top three you chose? What do you imagine will be the hardest quality to find in a spouse? Why?

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

Sunday

As you read Into the Story, what three insights did you gain from observing some of the details brought out by the Out of the Story questions?

1. 
2. 

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

Monday

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

Tuesday

In this week’s Timeless principles: search the Bible for other Bible characters or stories and passages that give insight into the topic of marriage. List the texts in your Bible and read them before you go on a date.

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Insights:

*This week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 15.

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flashlight

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

keytext

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

(Genesis 25:21, 23, NIV)
what do you think?

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

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

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

INTO THE STORY

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

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

" Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path” (Proverbs 23:19, NIV).

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

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

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

OUT OF THE STORY

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

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

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

What does this story teach us about integrity?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What does the story teach us about delayed gratification? (See also 2 Peter 1:5-7; Ps. 27:14; Heb. 6:15)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
### Sabbath

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

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

### Sunday

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

### Monday

Read the Key Text found in Genesis 25:21-23 and commit this passage to memory or write it down and place it someplace where you will see it on a daily basis. Have you ever wondered about the awesome truth that God knows what is ahead and is ultimately in control of the big events of history? The prophet Isaiah said, “For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:27, NIV). Talk to God today specifically about His will for your life and convey your willingness to trust in His will, no matter what compromises might confront you.

### Tuesday

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

### Wednesday

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

### Thursday

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

**Principle:**

### Friday

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

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

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*This week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 16.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
“Up to the time of man’s rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from heaven, so that man could not have communion with his Maker. Yet the world was not left in solitary hopelessness. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication. Had He not with His own merits bridged the gulf that sin had made, the ministering angels could have held no communion with fallen man. Christ connects man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 184).
Rank the following situations in order from the one that makes you feel the worst (number 1) to the one that makes you feel the least upset (number 10).

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

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

The place where Jacob had his dream of the ladder with angels descending and ascending to heaven was named Bethel (see Genesis 28:19). It means "house of God." Later, the name was also applied to the nearby city of Luz. Originally, the name applied only to the location where Jacob stood and not to Luz (see Joshua 16:2). In other references in Scripture, however, Bethel is used as the modern name of the ancient city of Luz (see Genesis 35:6; Joshua 18:13; Judges 1:23). Still today it retains the Arabic form of its name, Beitîn.

What do you think?

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

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

"Laban said, 'It’s better that I give her to you than
punch lines

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

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

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

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

other eyes

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

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

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

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

Sunday

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

Monday

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

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Friday

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

*This week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 17 and 18.

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"There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one’s own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life’" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 207).

And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. . . . The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.’”

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

Busy  Loving  Stressed
Critical  Caring  Noisy
Cheap  Happy  Funny
Dysfunctional  Growing  Outgoing
Clueless  Peaceful  Close
Fractured  Christian  Disconnected
Embarrassing  Conservative

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

“A perfect family would always __________ __________________.”

“A perfect family would never __________ __________________.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Genesis 34:1, 2, 24, 25; 35:1, 8, 16-19; 37:3-5, 23, 24, 26-28, 31-33, NIV)
punch lines

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My paraphrase:

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

Sunday

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

Respond to the questions in the Out of the Story section as they guide you into a deeper understanding of the family issues of this Bible story. What do you think God is trying to say to you in the snapshots you have read?

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

Monday

Read the Key Text for this week and reflect on why this promise is significant. One important reality to consider is that from the promise of a Savior in the Garden of Eden to the time of Jacob, people were waiting for a Savior to come from within their family line—family dynamics are extremely crucial! It must have been frustrating for Jacob to watch the way mistake after mistake marred the family peace and to still believe that God could truly fulfill His promise. But God had made a clear and simple promise (Genesis 35:11, 12). Compare this promise with Philippians 1:6. How can God fulfill this promise in your life?

Tuesday

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

Wednesday

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

Thursday

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

Like Jacob/Like Me

1.

2.

3.

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

Friday

Paul offers a prayer for believers, saying, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:5-7, NIV). As you look at the way you relate to your family members, do you see a message God might have for you in the above text?

Go out of your way this week to be a peacemaker, and God will go with you and bless you!


this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 19.

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