Welcome to the experience of teaching from Cornerstone Connections: Real. Solid. Stories.

The following are provided for your assistance:
- A Word About What’s Ahead (student introduction) [p. 2]
- Why the Bible Story Approach? (teacher introduction) [p. 3]
- What Tools Are Provided for Teaching the Stories? [p. 4]
- Complete Scope and Sequence [p. 5]
- Current Year Overview [p. 6]
- Current Quarter Overview [p. 9]

A WORD ABOUT WHAT’S AHEAD . . . (student introduction)

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

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

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

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

Real. Solid. Stories. You will find one in Into the Story in each lesson. Out of the Story will provide you with ways to search for truth you can apply to your life. In each lesson you also will find:
- What Do You Think?—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.
- Did You Know?—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.
- Key Text—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.
- Punch Lines—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.
- Flashlight—a brief snapshot of Ellen White’s input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—The Conflict of the Ages.*
• **Other Eyes** — a couple of quotes from various contemporary or historic sources that may open up a slightly different perspective on the central message of the lesson.

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

**WHY THE BIBLE STORY APPROACH? (teacher introduction)**

There is a tendency to neglect God’s Word because the Bible seems so old and the issues of life today don’t seem to automatically connect with the ancient, inspired text. Trying to read through the Bible can leave young people in a fog. But the Bible was never meant to be read. It was meant to be studied, reflected on, and integrated into life. It wasn’t written to be analyzed as much as it was to be obeyed. It takes effort. If you simply want a story to entertain you, then the Bible isn’t for you.

The Bible is not a novel that grips you, but if you get a firm hold on the message of the Bible with a teachable heart and an eye that seeks God, you will find something more than entertaining. You will discover a message just for you. “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13, NIV). Jesus said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matthew 7:24, NIV).

The Bible is the tool that will be used by the promised teacher—the Holy Spirit. We, the earthly teachers, will be effective as we first let the Spirit teach us. Each of these lessons is built around a specific Bible story. You will lead the students **Into the Story** and help them mine truth for their lives **Out of the Story**. The gems of truth are not already mined for you. You and your students will have an opportunity to dig for yourselves.

“In daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. One passage thus studied until its significance is clear is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained” (*Education*, p. 189).

Welcome to *Cornerstone Connections*.

—The Editors

PS. Don’t forget to check out the reading plan.
what tools are provided for teaching the stories?

(Bolded text helps you review the suggested steps at a glance.)

1. With each lesson in this Teacher’s Guide you will find an Explore section with topics listed that relate to this week’s story. Leadout Ministries has provided a variety of resources for exploring the topic you choose—from discussion questions to illustrations, from reader’s theater scripts to learning activities. Use the resources at leadoutministries.com to create a “program” that is relevant to your group.

2. Begin the actual “lesson” time with the What Do You Think? activity (and the Did You Know? information) in the student lesson. The activities are designed to get your students to think, respond, and share with one another. The rich discussion that can grow out of this exercise is a great entry point. The key question to ask at the end is “Why did you respond the way you did?”

3. Your Teacher’s Guide provides an illustration, along with a short “bridge” thought that will help you lead your students into the Bible passage itself.

4. The heart of the lesson experience is to read the Bible passage, Into the Story, together and to discuss it with the help of your Out of the Story for Teachers questions. Other passages to compare to this one for further mining in the Word are sometimes provided as well.

5. Then share the information about context and background that will make the story become more understandable for you and your students.

6. You are provided with a short guide to help you unpack the other sections of the student lesson with your class. (Your students are also directed to work through one section of their lesson on their own each day by following the instructions in Making It Real.) Encourage them to do this the week before or the week after you discuss the lesson in class, whichever works best for your teaching situation.

7. Each week’s Teacher’s Guide includes a teaching tip in Rabbi 101 that will be helpful for you to keep for future reference. You are also provided an activity and a summary with which to draw the lesson together and close.

8. In each lesson students are provided with a reference to the volume from the Conflict of the Ages Series by Ellen White that corresponds with the week’s story. Students who choose to will be able to read the entire series in four years by following the reading plan.

- Leadout Ministries is a resource created especially for those who lead out in youth ministry at the local church. It is staffed by youth pastors and young people. Leadout Ministries can also be a clearinghouse for the great illustrations, activities, study guides, or other resources that you and your young people have used successfully and are willing to share. Just contact them (troy@leadoutministries.com) with your ideas.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st Quarter</th>
<th>2nd Quarter</th>
<th>3rd Quarter</th>
<th>4th Quarter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adam and Eve</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Genesis 1, 2.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 1 and 2.</td>
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<td>2. The Serpent</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Genesis 3.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 3 and 4.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 5.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 6.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 7, 8, 9.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 10.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 11 and 12.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 14.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 15.</td>
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<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 16.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Jacob</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Genesis 28 to 31; Genesis 32; 33.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 17 and 18.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Israel</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Genesis 34; 35; 37.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 19.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<p>|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 20. |
| 2. The Brothers  | Scripture Story: Genesis 41:54-56; 42 to 50. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 21. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 22. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 23 and 24. |
| 5. Fleeing Slaves| Scripture Story: Exodus 12:34-51; 13 to 15. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 25. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 27, 29, 32. |
| 8. Aaron         | Scripture Story: Exodus 32 to 34. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 28. |
| 9. The Tabernacle| Scripture Story: Exodus 25 to 40; Leviticus 4; 16. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 30. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 33 and 31. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 34 and 36. |
|                  | Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 35. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 37 and 38.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 39.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Balaam</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Numbers 22 to 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 40.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 41.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 42.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Moses’ Death</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 31 to 34.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 43.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Crossing Jordan</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Joshua 1 to 5:12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 44.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 45.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 46.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 47.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Canaan Divided</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Joshua 10:40-43; 11; 14 to 22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 49.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapters 50, 51, 52.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Early Judges</td>
<td>Scripture Story: Judges 6 to 8; 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 53.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Samson</th>
<th>Scripture Story: Judges 13 to 16.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 54.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapters 55 and 58.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 56.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Philistines</td>
<td>Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 3 to 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 57.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. First King</td>
<td>Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 8 to 14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapters 59 and 60.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. David Anointed</td>
<td>Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 16; 17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapters 62 and 63.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fugitive</td>
<td>Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 18 to 27.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapters 64 and 65.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lunatic</td>
<td>Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 29; 30; 2 Samuel 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 68.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Crowned King</td>
<td>Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 2 to 5:5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 69.</td>
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<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 70.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapter 71.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Absalom</td>
<td>Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 13 to 19; 24; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 21; 28; 29.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentary: <em>Patriarchs and Prophets</em>, chapters 72 and 73.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
October

6—Fatal Attractions [p. 11]
Both Samson and the people he is to deliver are not ready to trust God and obey.

13—Prayer Power [p. 15]
Hannah is faithful to fulfill the vow she makes to God in anguish.

20—Eli’s Bad, Bad Boys [p. 19]
Poor parenting ends in national trouble and family tragedy.

27—Turn It Around [p. 23]
The story of the ark shows God as holy, just, yet full of mercy.

November

3—Trading Leaders [p. 27]
God gives Israel the king they beg for, against His better judgment.

10—So Long, Saul [p. 31]
Outer appearances can’t be trusted; power almost always corrupts.

17—Giant Faith [p. 35]
Reckless and childlike trust in God turns human reality upside down.

24—Green-eyed Monster [p. 39]
Saul is out to destroy the very person who wins his battles for him.

December

1—A Sad End [p. 43]
David’s victory celebration is stopped by word of Saul’s final defeat.

8—When Will I Be King? [p. 47]
David hangs on to God even though his path is long and difficult.

15—The Golden Age of Israel [p. 51]
After the long struggle to the throne, David finally unites Israel in prosperity.

22—The Fall and Rise of David [p. 55]
Even after years of complete trust in God, David succumbs to self-sufficiency.

29—Fatal Fallout [p. 59]
David’s moments of self-sufficiency result in painful consequences that affect both his nation and his family.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Like Moses, Judas, or Jezebel, Samson is a Bible character with an oversized reputation whose name immediately evokes stories and feelings. After more than 3,000 years Samson’s name still calls to mind incredible physical strength—and incredible moral weakness. Samson was dedicated to God as a temperate Nazirite, but his love for wine, women, and a good riddle proved his undoing.

Samson’s larger-than-life exploits—slaying Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone, ripping Gaza’s gate off its hinges, or making history as the first recorded suicide pillar-pusher—have inspired painters, filmmakers, and even modern-day comic books. But what does Samson’s story have to teach us today as modern Christians? Is it just a cautionary tale about dating the ungodly or mixing with the wrong crowd? What about Jesus’ own reputation for going to parties with the morally questionable? How should we relate to Samson’s vengeance in light of Jesus’ care for all people?

Perhaps Samson’s tale has the most to say about staying in tune with God. The Bible records several examples of Samson’s prayers—but only ones when he’s in a bind. It appears Samson too often neglected to walk and talk with God on a day-to-day basis when the going appeared relatively smooth, but he was making choices that would doom or deliver him. God’s always willing to answer when we call, no matter how deep a hole we’ve dug for ourselves, or how much the world has beaten us up, but He longs to protect us from sin’s consequences as well. God has incredible plans for each of our lives, and though He allows tragedy to strike that’s beyond human control, He beckons us to walk in His paths.

In this lesson your students can explore such issues as:

- Discovering spiritual gifts.
- Controlling and channeling our passions.
- Respecting parents.
- Standing up for what we believe in against oppressive forces.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God has a plan for their lives.
- Feel the responsibility to live a life of temperance and use their gifts wisely.
- Respond by examining how faithful their own lives are to their heavenly calling.

III. EXPLORE

- Emotions
- Parents (relating to)
- Sex
- Success

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? sec-
tion of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Share how God has led in your life, including any points when you may wish you’d followed God more closely. Also share the role your parents played in shaping your character and guiding your future.

Invite your students to share any questions they may have about how God may lead them. What role do parental expectations play? How can they judge whether following a particular parental advice is the “right” thing to do?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

People often talk about how Samson’s weak character undermined Israel’s deliverance from Philistine oppression, but the Israelites he served were equally to blame for their condition. Ellen White wrote: “Had the Israelites been ready to unite with Samson and follow up the victory, they might at this time have freed themselves from the power of their oppressors. But they had become dispirited and cowardly” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 564).

In his book Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference? (Zondervan, 2006) Philip Yancey writes: “During the darkest days of Communist rule the Poles used to joke there were two solutions to their political crisis, a realistic solution and a miraculous one. In the realistic solution, Our Lady of Czestochowa would appear in the heavens, scaring the Russians into leaving. In the miraculous solution, the Russians would simply pack up and leave on their own. To no one’s prediction, exactly that miracle transpired. . . .

“The city of Leipzig in East Germany had been the scene of a violent protest against Communist rule in 1953, only to have it crushed by force. In four decades violence changed nothing behind the Iron Curtain. But in 1989 Christians meeting in a church where Johann Sebastian Bach used to play the organ began a practice of candlelight prayer marches. Ten thousand, thirty thousand, fifty thousand, then half a million joined the marches in Leipzig, and a million more in Berlin, until finally one night the Berlin Wall itself, the reviled symbol of that Iron Curtain, yielded to a different kind of power and splintered into a million pieces.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We often feel powerless, unable to change the world around us or even the circumstances of our own lives. But what’s worse—to feel powerless, or to have incredible God-given power that we misuse?

Everyone is born with God-given gifts—teaching, art, craftsmanship, organization, administration, music, comedy, charisma. We can use those gifts to create, or we can use those gifts to destroy. History is littered with the wreckage of gifted people—Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Idi Amin—who made big things happen, but left the world a worse place because they used their God-given gifts for evil. History has also forgotten countless people who could have accomplished much, but whose addictions snuffed out their lights that could have shone so brightly. In Samson’s case, his self-destructive habits kept him from completely fulfilling God’s plan for his life.

Out of the Story for Teachers

With your students, read Judges 13, then discuss the following:

1. What aspects or details of the story are new to you?
2. What words or phrases best capture the various emotions of this story?
3. What kind of people were Samson’s parents? Prestigious? Ordinary?
4. What emerges as the central lesson of this story? In other words, why do you think this story is included in the record of Scripture? What other lessons can be gained from this story?
5. How would Samson’s parents have felt about raising such a “special” child? How would such an astonishing revelation prior to his birth have affected how they treated him? How would it affect how they related to the choices he made?

Read the Into the Story section of the lesson, then discuss:

1. What parts of the story are key? (Underline them.)
2. What aspects or details of the story are new to you? (Circle them.)
3. What emerges as the central lesson of this story? Why was this story included in the Bible?
4. What questions does this story raise? Are you comfortable with all of it?
5. What does this story tell us about God?
Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:
Psalm 1; Proverbs 22:3-6.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Egyptian records describe the Philistines as “People of the Sea,” and their ancestry is traced back to the Greek islands, including Crete. Though a few Philistines were known in Canaan as far back as Abraham’s day, they immigrated to Canaan in large numbers around 1200 B.C. The Egyptian king Ramses III recognized the sea peoples as a major military threat and set forth to defeat them. **The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary** says of the ancient sea peoples:

“They overran and destroyed coastal cities of Asia Minor, such as Troy, then the Hittite kingdom, as well as a number of states in northern Syria . . . and marched down the coast of Phoenicia and Palestine in an effort to invade the greatest civilized country of their time, the fertile Nile valley [Egypt]. Among them were the Tjekker and the Philistines, the latter coming in ox-drawn carts with their families. Both tribes settled on the coast of Palestine after the migration of the Peoples of the Sea had ended. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Ramses III met the enemy forces at the Palestinian border, in his eighth year. In a great battle he inflicted a serious defeat upon the would-be invaders, and destroyed their navy when it attempted a landing in one of the channels of the Nile. Although Ramses was thus able to save Egypt from invasion, he was not strong enough to drive the Tjekker and Philistines out of Palestine. Settling down, they controlled the rich coastal region for many centuries” (vol. 2, p. 27).

These events likely occurred during the time of Gideon’s peaceful judgeship, around 1200 B.C. About 50 years after Gideon’s death, in approximately 1119 B.C., the Philistines began to oppress the Israelites. The fierce Philistines could easily have conquered the Israelites were it not for divine protection.

Though we often think of the Philistines as simply villains, the Bible reminds us that God has a plan for every people. In Amos 9:7, God says to Israel, “Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? . . . Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtar [Crete] and the Arameans from Kir?” (NRSV). King David, who rose to fame defeating Philistines, had 600 Philistine bodyguards, converts from paganism, who stayed true to him when his son Absalom rebelled against him.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Hand out cards to your students and ask them to write down three to five ways they will work to stay connected with God on a daily basis. They can share them with the class if they’re willing and time permits, but encourage your students to take the cards home.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
and put them on a bedroom mirror or the head of their bed where they’ll see them every day and be reminded to keep their spiritual life in shape.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Application**

Old Testament stories of conquest, sacrifices, and such can seem removed and even irrelevant to Christians today. Ancient rites such as Nazirite vows aren’t generally practiced today, but they have counterparts in spiritual disciplines we should all follow.

Help your students to see how they can apply Old Testament ideas to New Testament principles. Read Numbers 6:1-8 with your students. Then read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. What parallels do your students see between Samson’s story and Paul’s advice to Christians?

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Samson’s story reminds us to use our gifts wisely and to stay faithful to the God who created us. We can’t predict the situations we’ll find ourselves in, but if we’re devoted to God and willing to stand up for truth and justice, He will use us in amazing ways. For that to happen, though, it’s important to not just call out to God when the going gets rough, when we’re trapped with no human way to escape, but to keep focused on God “day in and day out.”

Samson’s story is also a graphic reminder of the perils of temptation and sin. While it’s our duty as Christians to witness to and associate with others no matter their spiritual leanings, we risk spiritual tragedy when we lose sight of God’s plan for our lives. As Paul reminds us, “everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23, NIV). Though we’re not consecrated like Nazarites with such severe restrictions, we should remember Paul’s words: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV).

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 54.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about *Beginning of the End* at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Elkanah had two wives. One was Peninnah; she bore lots of children. The other was Hannah; she had no children. Peninnah liked to mock Hannah and flaunt the fact that she had children and Hannah did not. But even though Hannah had no child, her husband still had a great love for her.

On a certain day, Hannah was sitting by the temple weeping; she was crying out to God and was in deep prayer because she desperately wanted a child. Peninnah liked to mock Hannah and flaunt the fact that she had children and Hannah did not. But even though Hannah had no child, her husband still had a great love for her.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand the power of prayer and the greatness of God’s mercy and graciousness. (Know)
• Feel how much God loves them and that He really is listening when they pray. (Feel)
• Learn how to have a better prayer life and have more trust and faith in Jesus Christ. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Christian education
• Service
• Natural world

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Invite the students to share how they feel about prayer. Ask them to share with everyone any experiences in which God has fulfilled their prayers and if He answered them in the way they expected or in a totally different way. Make sure they know that even if God answers their prayers in ways they hadn’t expected or hoped, they must still be thankful to God for listening to them and responding to their prayers. Read the Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 1; 2:1-11.

Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 55 and 58.
and although we may not get what we want, He always gives us answers. In this story we will see God's amazing power and His love toward Hannah.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- **What purpose might God have had to delay Hannah's childbearing?**
- **If Hannah could have looked back at the whole life of her special son, what might she have learned about God's timing?** (Samuel was Israel's last judge, and the best example of what a judge should be. He was also the first priest and prophet to serve under the rule of a king. He was born “right on time” to be at a very special place in Israel's history.)
- **What are some reasons that you can think of for the polygamy practiced by some at this time in spite of God's clear intent for marriage found in Genesis 2:24?** (Look in **Sharing Context and Background** below for some discussion starters.)
- **At one point Hannah is so discouraged that she is physically ill. But on the way back home she has a different attitude (1 Samuel 1:18). What reversed her depression?**
  1. She prayed to God about exactly how she was feeling, 1 Samuel 1:11. 2. She received encouragement from another person, 1 Samuel 1:17. 3. She resolved to leave the problem with God, 1 Samuel 1:18. This is a good way to approach our own discouragement and depression: pray honestly to God, leave the problem with Him, and rely on the support of godly friends.
- **What is the theme of Hannah's poetic prayer?**
- **In what ways does Mary's song (Magnificat) in Luke 1:46-55 remind you of Hannah's prayer? What do both say about God?**

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

- **Share the following in your own words:**
  Sometimes when we pray we feel that God isn’t listening. We feel as if we’re talking to a wall. But no matter how far away God seems to be, He is always listening to our prayers. God always answers prayers, and although we may not get what we want, He always gives us answers. In this story we will see God’s amazing power and His love toward Hannah.

**Illustration**

**Share this illustration in your own words:**

Rowena had always been taught to pray, but she seldom did. She thought, *If something bad ever happens, I’ll pray for God’s help then.* But years went by, and her life continued in its normal way; nothing exciting or terrible happened, and she was content. Her father had just won a family vacation to Italy, and everyone was quite cheerful and happy.

Finally the day came when they left. On the drive to the airport Rowena’s mother said, “Make sure you pray for a safe trip.” Rowena shrugged it off, thinking, *What could possibly happen?*

It was an hour into the flight when things went drastically wrong. The Fasten Seatbelt sign suddenly lit up. She glanced out the window to see an engine smoking.

“The engine has caught on fire,” said the pilot through the speakers. “We are turning around now to land.”

Relieved that the pilot didn’t sound too worried, Rowena shrugged everything off again. For a moment she thought about praying, but she knew nothing could possibly happen to them.

But she had been mistaken. That night on the news, family and friends watched as information was given about a jetliner crash.

This story is fiction, but the point is very true. And although it ends tragically, we also learn an important lesson from it. It is never the wrong time to pray. We must pray not only in bad situations, but at all times. As we get to know God, we come to trust Him, and then, when we pray it will be because we love Him and love talking to Him, not just to help us out of a bad situation.

**Sharing Context and Background**

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

- **Polygamy in Israel.** “In Israel, as in most of the ancient world, monogamy was generally practiced. Polygamy was not contrary to law or...
morals, but was usually not economically feasible. The main occurrence of polygamy would be when the first wife was barren, but there are several other factors that encouraged the practice, including (1) an imbalance in the number of males and females, (2) the need to produce large numbers of children to work herds and/or fields, (3) the desire to increase the prestige and wealth of a household through multiple marriage contracts, and (4) the high rate of death for females in childbirth. Polygamy is most common among pastoral nomadic groups and in rural farming communities where it is important that every female be attached to a household and be productive. In the Bible most cases of polygamy among commoners occur prior to the period of the monarchy.”—Bible Background Commentary

- **Shame of childlessness.** “Since bearing children was a sign of God’s greatest blessing (Psalm 127:3), the inability to bear children was often viewed as a sign of God’s punishment. Additionally, a woman’s status in the family would be very tenuous if she had not borne children. A barren woman could be and often was discarded, ostracized, or given a lower status. Mesopotamian prayers and legal texts show that these same issues existed throughout the ancient Near East.”—Bible Background Commentary

- **Double portion for Hannah.** “The description of Hannah’s portion is obscure in the Hebrew. Most translations identify it as a double portion (NIV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV), while other suggestions have been ‘only one portion’ (RSV) and ‘special portion’ (NLT). Many of the commentators favor ‘only one portion’ because that sets up the contrast that makes most sense of the context.”—Bible Background Commentary

- **Hannah’s Song (1 Samuel 2:1-10)** “The actions of God were often seen as bringing reversal to the world. This reversal could be in terms of the created world (mountains reduced to dust, valleys lifted up, sun going dark); the social world (the poor receiving honor, as here, the mighty being deposed); or the political world (empires tumbling). This world-upside-down motif was a way of expressing God’s sovereign control. It could be used to convey judgment or reward and came to be connected with the future kingdom of God, where wrongs would be set right and a new order would take shape.” Bible Background Commentary


### III. CLOSING

**Activity**

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

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**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapters 55 and 58.

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Research**

Help the students get involved with the lesson by asking some of them ahead of time to research the cultural setting of a particular Bible story. Some will enjoy this particular type of learning more than others, and they may come up with some interesting background that will bring the lesson to life for the entire class.

In today's world that often does not revolve around an agricultural society, some background about polygamy and childlessness in its cultural context might be helpful for understanding the issues in this lesson. Assign some of the more analytical students to bring information to share with the entire class. It will also give those students a chance to be the “authority” for a while instead of it always being the teacher.

Divide the students into small groups of three or four. Ask each group to make a list of three ways God might answer prayers in ways we don’t expect. Share the lists with the whole group and encourage students to agree or disagree with what others wrote.

Ask if there is anyone who can report an unexpected answer to prayer that they or someone in their family has had.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Hannah had no children; her husband’s other wife, Peninnah, had many. So Hannah prayed to God to grant her a child. She vowed to God that if He answered her prayer, she would give the child back to live the rest of his days for God. She prayed day in and day out unceasingly. She also fasted from food and drink. And in the temple, when Eli thought she was drunk, she responded that she was not, but she was of a sorrowful spirit. She told him of her prayer and her vow to God. Eli then blessed her and she went on her way. God granted Hannah a son, and she praised the Lord. And when the child was old enough, she sent him to live with Eli in the temple to serve God. We must remember that God gave Hannah what she asked for, but she also remembered to fulfill her vow to God.
I. SYNOPSIS
Eli tried to serve Israel faithfully, yet his own children began to sorely affect his leadership. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were not only poor examples of behavior but they belligerently mocked God's law and His presence. Their rebellion was a display of blatant hypocrisy and disregard for true humility. Ellen White observed that the source of the problem was in Eli's parenting practices. In *Patriarchs and Prophets* she summarizes Eli’s failure directly:

“Loving peace and ease, he did not exercise his authority to correct the evil habits and passions of his children. Rather than contend with them or punish them, he would submit to their will and give them their own way. Instead of regarding the education of his sons as one of the most important of his responsibilities, he treated the matter as of little consequence” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 575).

Paul would take the issue a step further and challenge parents to a more proactive style of parenting, saying, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV).

This lesson can be approached from the point of view of students who will one day become parents and adopt parenting styles that need to be guided by God's will and His Word. Furthermore, the story of Hophni and Phinehas could also foster discussion about the impact spiritual leaders have on communities of faith. It might be a good idea to allow the students to read the story and share what they think the central meaning of the passage conveys.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Discover the reality of cause and effect in parenting and leadership. *(Know)*
- Sense a deep conviction for the need of a genuine relationship with God. *(Feel)*
- Decide to become the kind of person today who will one day become a godly parent or leader. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE
- Reverence
- Family dynamics
- Self-discipline

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

**Activity**

Refer the students to the *What Do You Think?* section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Why did you rank the items in the order you chose? If you were to pick what you think is the most important season of development for your relationship with God, what stage would that be, and why?
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A boy sailed his toy boat out on a pond in the park. He imagined the waters rolling up the side of his fearless ship, and the stories of danger and rescue played graphically in his mind. He became so engaged in his play that his boat floated well out of his reach, gradually making a journey away from shore to the middle of the pond. A man sitting on a park bench noted the little boy's predicament and volunteered, "Would you like some help?" The young boy, nodding, replied, "Yes, thanks."

To the boy's surprise, the man walked to the other side of the pond and began throwing rocks at the boat. The rocks fell just short of smashing the boat and sending his toy to a watery grave. The boy yelled, "Hey mister, stop throwing rocks at my boat!" He ran to the other side of the pond while the man continued throwing rocks at his boat. When he got to the other side he began to implore the man to stop when he noticed that his boat was almost back to the other side of the shore. The man was not throwing rocks at his boat but on one side of his boat, causing the ripples to slowly but surely move the boat back in the right direction.

Often discipline and accountability can upset our lives and rock us like a boat on the water. The experience is rarely comfortable, but it is necessary to move us in the right direction. Perhaps this is relevant to more than the obvious connection to parenting. To which other areas of life can this story apply? Our relationship with friends? Teachers? God?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Eli, as Israel’s leader, chose to avoid disturbing the peace with his children. Instead of causing waves of discipline and correction to move his boys back to the right way of living, he left them to float along according to their own whims. Eli’s hands-off approach proved disastrous, but it marks a lesson for young and older about the value of discipline. Read the following story and discover insights into God’s way of dealing with people and how parents should relate to their children.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- As you read this story, what key facts or insights did you notice that are important to this story? (Underline them.)
- What part of this story challenges your view of God? Your view of spiritual leaders?
- Who are the main characters mentioned in this passage and what are some of the weaknesses this story exposes? (Circle them.)
- What other biblical stories does this passage remind you of? Why?
- Read 1 Samuel 2:13-17. They give more insight into the sons of Eli.
- Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What basic truth does it convey about God? What does it say about people?
- What do you think it means when the Bible says about Eli’s sons, “they have no regard for the Lord”? What would this story look like today?
- What lesson emerges from this story that is particularly relevant to young people today?
- To what degree do you think Eli is responsible for his sons’ behavior? At what point do individuals need to own their own choices?
- What are the most effective ways you have been corrected?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:


Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

It is important to remember when you read the stories in 1 Samuel that Israel is moving from a theocracy (being directed by God through prophets and judges) to a kingdom (guided primarily by a king). Even with ample stories of both God’s gracious provision and His unflinching judgment, people such as Hophni and Phinehas still wander away from God but stay close enough to wreak havoc on God’s people.

In 1 Samuel 2:12 the word the Bible uses to describe the two boys is belial, which means “worthless,” “good for nothing,” or “wicked.” In the New Testament the word morphs some and gets used as a proper name for Satan. The sons of Eli grew to be cor-
rupt, and so the Scriptures claim that they did not know the Lord. The word for “know” is yada, and it conveys knowing intimately someone or something as opposed to simply being aware. This word means “to perceive,” “to understand,” “to have a personal experience with another person.” This might be a good opportunity to discuss the difference between the tendency for people to know about God rather than knowing Him intimately.

The rest of the story of Hophni and Phinehas is tragic but proves to amplify the way God works with His people. In verse 27 a prophet came to Eli and reminded the aged priest (possibly in his mid-90s) about the sacred work of the priesthood. He prophesied: “And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day” (1 Samuel 2:34, NIV). What a sad lesson for Eli and all of Israel to learn. But why is Samuel’s story mixed into the narrative of Hophni and Phinehas? In verse 25 Eli tries to rebuke the wayward young men, but the Bible says: “His sons, however, did not listen to their father’s rebuke.” Hophni and Phinehas were given a chance to repent and turn around, but they closed their ears to God’s call, whereas Samuel was a servant who heard God’s voice clearly and responded.

Perhaps this is an opportunity to ask the students, “Are you listening for God’s voice, or do you resist and block it out?” This is a question more for reflection than for answering; however, it is still one that needs to be asked.

### III. CLOSING

**Activity**

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask the students individually, but anonymously, to make a list of three qualities this story encourages

### Tips for Top-notch Teaching

**Reflective Questions**

Some teachers gauge their effectiveness by the volume of discussion that takes place in their class, and while discussion is good, sometimes carefully crafted questions are better left undisturbed by talk. But top-notch teachers will occasionally ask questions that lead to real change if the students are allowed a little time to quietly reflect.

For example, a question that may not lead to discussion but could lead to life change might be: “Hophni and Phinehas heard God’s voice warn them about the danger they were boldly headed into. Do you ever hear God’s voice calling you to stop or to turn around?” Or another more open-ended reflective question might be: “If God were to get your attention today, what do you think He would say to you?”

### Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
them to hold in high regard. After everyone has had a chance to make their list, post the lists on a wall or a table where everyone can read them and ask, “Did you notice a trend or pattern of qualities repeated? Which ones? Why do you think this is so? Which qualities were unique but caused you to think differently about the story?”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Eli was getting old when his boys, Hophni and Phinehas, were getting set in their evil ways. But Eli missed opportunities to discipline his children, and they simply lived their lives by their own passions and desires. I suppose no parent enjoys correcting their kids; however, faithful parents try to instruct their children in the best ways to live. Hophni and Phinehas were given the chance to stop their self-absorbed behavior themselves, but they did not listen to God’s voice.

God has spoken in His Word, through His Son Jesus, and through the lives of faithful believers over the centuries. But even with many voices calling, it is still possible to close our ears to God’s call. If you are curious about that voice or only a little bit interested, I challenge you to, like Samuel, respond, saying, “I hear You.” God does not impose Himself on us but pleads and woos us toward Him. Maybe, as in the illustration used earlier in this lesson, God is throwing rocks to cause ripples that draw you closer to Him. I hope you will not resist His promptings.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 56.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After a surprising defeat by the Philistines, Israel ordered the ark of the covenant to come into battle with them to secure a victory. Israel was living in rebellion against God, but thought if they had the ark, then God would have to do whatever they wanted. God decided to teach Israel a lesson they would not soon forget. The ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines who also thought they had captured God. God decided to show both Israel and the Philistines that He was God, He was holy, and He was not to be trifled with.

Israel for so long had been doing what was right in their own eyes that they forgot God’s eyes were the only ones that mattered. Because of God’s love for Israel, God punished them so they could be in right relationship with Him. After a series of defeats and plagues, Israel finally learned this lesson and repented of their sin. They made a new commitment to honor and serve God alone.

Several lessons emerge from this story:

• There are consequences to our actions, even though they are not always immediate. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7, NIV).
• God is holy and is to be treated as such. We should worship Him as He tells us to.
• In the midst of judgment, there is always mercy. This is shown when God forgave Israel and then fought for Israel.
• God is a jealous God who requires all of our worship and attention. This is best achieved through a personal and intimate relationship with God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand there are consequences for our actions even though they may not be immediate. (Know)
• Sense the need for repentance and total commitment to God. (Feel)
• Have an opportunity to give up things that can get in the way of their relationship with God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Repentance
• God’s holiness
• Personal relationship with Christ
• Consequences of disobedience to God

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries .com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

As you get the students’ responses, ask the fol-
This was about to come to an end. God was about to show Israel in a way they would never forget that He is holy and He alone is to be worshipped.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Who are the major players in this story?
- Underline the key facts of this story.
- What might have been a reason the ark of the covenant was captured?
- After the ark of the covenant was captured, it was placed in the temple of Dagon, the Philistine god. Each morning Dagon would be on the ground lying prostrate before the ark. What do you think was the significance of this?
- What does this story teach about God?
- What do you think made the people turn back to God?
- What did Samuel tell the Israelites to do to return to God?
- What reasons can you give for Samuel setting up the stone memorial, Ebenezer?
- What gods do you have in your life that you need to put away?
- What do you think is the most important message of this story?
- How will the message of this story change the way you live for God this week?
- Ebenezer means “stone of help.” What would you like God to help you with?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:

- Psalm 78:52-66; Exodus 20:3-6; Galatians 6:7, 8; 1 Peter 4:17; Joel 2:12, 13; Deuteronomy 6:4, 5.

**Sharing Context and Background**

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The story of the ark’s capture is one of the darkest times in Israel’s history. God had been warning of pending judgment for a long time, but it had not come. Israel thought they could do whatever they wanted and get away with it. Even the priests thought this. Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were very wicked. They had not been reprimanded by their father or punished by God, so they had become bold in sin, and the people followed. This is why God...
refused to fight for Israel. They had to learn that God will not share His glory with idols.

The Philistines also learned this lesson after capturing the ark. They put the ark in the temple of their god, Dagon. Dagon was the chief god of the Philistines. The ark was a trophy for them. Placing the ark in Dagon’s temple was a symbol of submission to Dagon.

The first morning, however, Dagon was found bowing in submission to the ark. The temple workers promptly propped him back up, but the next morning Dagon was found bowing in submission again. This time his hands and head were cut off. Hands in Hebrew represented power, and the head represented reason. Dagon lay in submission to God, without power or intelligence. God then showed His power by laying a heavy hand on the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:6). He caused a plague of tumors to come on them.

When they finally sent the ark back to Israel, the men of Beth Shemesh did not respect God enough to follow His orders about how to handle the ark. Not even the Philistines dared to remove the covering of the ark, but these men looked into the ark and God struck them dead.

They got the message. They ordered someone to be consecrated to keep the ark. Soon Israel’s heart groaned for God. They mourned after God. They were sorry for all they had done, and Samuel encouraged them to repent of their sin. He reminded them they must put God first and put the other gods away. God would share Israel no longer.

Through fasting and prayer, God heard them, healed them, and helped them. When the Philistines heard about this big prayer gathering, they came out to fight Israel again. There will always be obstacles to your faith when you try to get on the right path for God. Samuel continued to pray for the people, and God delivered them from the Philistines.

SPECIAL NOTE TO TEACHERS: The New International Version says that 70 men were slain, whereas the King James and New King James versions say 50,070. This may confuse students and spark up a discussion about mistakes and contradictions in the Bible. This is a hard question for even Bible translators and scholars.

The original manuscripts written in Hebrew literally say, “seventy men, fifty thousand men.” Some manuscripts do not have 50,000 in them at all. When presented with this information, different translators approached it differently. The SDA Bible Commentary shares some possibilities: “Some have suggested, ‘He smote seventy men; fifty out of a thousand,’ or ‘He slew seventy men out of fifty thousand men.’ . . . Most commentators agree that only 70 men of Beth-shemesh were slain.”

Ellen White, on translation errors, says, “Some look to us gravely and say, ‘Don’t you...
think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators? This is all probable. . . . God committed the preparation of His divinely inspired Word to finite man. This Word, arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world, bequeathed [given] to them that, by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul would lose its way to heaven.” Translation difficulties may prove discouraging for the students, but assure them God has clearly provided in His Word all they need to make it to heaven.

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III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words. Give each student some clay. Instruct them to make something that young people often put before God. After giving them time to make the sculptures, allow time for the students to share what they have made. Remind students of the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3, NIV). Collect all the sculptures and heap them together. Make a cross from the clay. While you are making the cross, remind students that God should always have first place in our lives.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
This story is a story of revival and repentance. God taught Israel the lesson that He was holy and He alone should be worshipped. He tried telling them. He tried showing them. He tried wooing them. He tried warning them, but Israel would not listen. God allowed Himself to be captured and taken into the Philistine camp. His absence definitely made Israel’s heart grow fonder.

Israel soon understood they could not have God on their terms. It would either be God’s way or the hard way. God, through some unfortunate circumstances, was disciplining them, as a father or mother disciplines the child they love.

God will do the same with us. If we do not learn from Israel’s mistakes, we will have to learn from our own. God will do all that He can to show His love to us and to help us come into a meaningful and real relationship with Him. When we make mistakes or missteps, when we sin against God, we must repent. We must turn around and walk God's way and He promises to hear, heal, and help.

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Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 57.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Samuel was getting old, and his sons were in no way ready to take over leadership positions in Israel. Israel had been a theocracy, but the people were clamoring for the kind of government they saw in the nations around them. Although God knew what the tragic consequences would be, He gave them what they asked for. Therefore, He chose Saul to be their king. While the people of Israel were happy, Saul was not known for making the best decisions. As we read the story we are reminded of what it takes to be a strong and God-centered leader.

We are hoping to use this lesson to bring about a better understanding of God-led leadership and to have the students realize that they are all being called for leadership positions in the kingdom of heaven. By assessing their characters they will take a hard look into what would make them good leaders. As well, they will learn what they can do in order to become better leaders in their realm of influence.

An interesting side note is the fact that while God did not approve of the idea of a king for Israel, He allowed and finally chose the king Himself. This makes for an interesting discussion point during the lesson.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know the story of Saul’s rise to power and what happened then. (Know)
• Get a feeling for what makes a good leader and what makes a bad leader. (Feel)

• Look for leadership opportunities within their scope of influence. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Leadership
• Talents/gifts
• Music
• Feelings (coping with)

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED
Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Discuss what would be the natural outcome of following “man’s plan” as they described it in the What Do You Think? activity. Discuss what might be the consequences of following “God’s plan” as they described it. Then discuss what type of leadership abilities would emerge in middle life for a person who followed either of the plans you have discussed.

What might this activity say about the qualities to look for when voting for a leader?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
“He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one fol-
lowing him is only taking a walk.”—Unknown

As a senior in college I was asked to be a substitute P.E. teacher in the local elementary school. My first day was exciting! I couldn’t wait to be called coach by the little kids I would be teaching. I went to my first class, which happened to be a third-grade class of very excited kids. As I left the classroom with them I made the mistake of going first and assuming that they would stay behind me as we walked to the playing field. I soon learned the very valuable lesson of the quote at the beginning of this story.

Within a few minutes I had third graders bouncing off the walls in the hallways. I had teachers coming out to find out what was happening, and what was so loud. I shouted to get their attention, and then I finally had to use the whistle to get them to listen to me.

I learned something that day—sometimes you have to lead from behind. What that means is this—sometimes it is important to help people get to where they are going by gently encouraging them to move ahead rather than to run before them and assume they are following. This is sometimes a much harder way to lead, but it can be much more rewarding in the end for everyone involved.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Not everyone is born a leader; some of us have to learn how to be effective leaders. Saul was not a very quick learner. From his reluctance to lead, to his misunderstanding of his power and even to his abuse and arrogance of power, Saul did not always do what was best for the people with whose care he had been entrusted.

How do we choose to care for those we are responsible for and to? Do we become prideful and arrogant in this process or do we continue to lead from gentle encouragement with care and love for those we are supposed to be leading? Perhaps an even bigger question is: Do we know where we are going? These are good questions to ponder as we prepare to lead young people to the foot of the cross.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- **Underline** the specific commands God gives the children of Israel in this story.
- What promises does God make in this story?
- **Circle** the texts that indicate God does not approve of this plan to have a king.
- **Highlight** the moments when it seems Saul is reluctant to become the king of Israel.
- **Put a square around** those words that seem to evoke emotion as you read the story. What sort of emotions do they evoke in you? Why do you think that is?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:

1 Thessalonians 2:6b-9; Proverbs 29:18; Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 4:12, 13.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

It is important to remember the Israelites’ state of mind at the time of this story. Besides being jealous of the cultures around them, they were also scared for their future because they knew that Samuel’s sons were not to be trusted. Rather than simply trusting God, they were eager to take matters into their own hands so that they might have a king to judge them. Perhaps it was not even so much that they did not trust God, but they were fearful of what might happen to them.

It is interesting that they would want a king in the fashion of those countries around them. You see, the yoke of servitude to an ancient king at that time was exceedingly heavy. It was not like some of the freedoms that we observe today. It was at times unjust and very authoritarian. But still the children of Israel seemed to want something tangible so they could feel as if they were part of the society around them. Perhaps it was jealousy and envy, or perhaps simply foolish pride that prompted them to ask God for a king.

It is interesting that even though God knew it was not the best for them, He was willing to allow the children of Israel a chance to decide their own fate. This speaks to the loving kindness of God, as well as to His wisdom. God could have shown His authority by not allowing a king to be put in place. But God often allows us to learn the lessons that arise from the consequences of following a path we think is better than His.
Another important note is that Saul was what one would look for in a king at first glance. It is noted that he was very tall, some even proposing that he was close to seven feet in stature! He was stately and good looking, always a plus in a leader, and seemed to be a great choice for a king. Even though he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, he was still the kind of person people would follow.

Samuel was called a seer at that time, meaning one who received visions from God. This is not to be confused with a more modern interpretation of the word, which means more of a fortune-teller. Samuel was considered the conduit through whom God governed His people.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

The Socratic Method
Most of us have heard of Socrates, the great Greek philosopher. However, did you know there is a particular style of guided questioning that is given his name? This method is used in many law schools as a way of helping students think through a topic logically and arrive at a knowledgeable conclusion without having been “told.”

The basic method is to ask logical, incremental, step-by-step questions pertaining to the story or topic. The teacher does not “tell” or lecture. The teacher needs to think through the logical progression of thought they would like to follow beforehand. However, student answers may make it necessary to adapt the preplanned questions in order to get to the final point the teacher hopes to reach. This method keeps students involved and feeling as if they are discovering truth for themselves.

For most Sabbath School teachers this method may require too much preparation (try searching “Socratic method” on the Internet); however, the basic concept of leading students to learning through sequential questioning can be adapted and bring significant rewards to both students and teachers.

In this week’s story there are many lessons about leadership. Here are some tips as you lead the class to insight through careful questioning:
1. Keep the discussion focused.
2. Keep the discussion intellectually responsible.
3. Stimulate the discussion with probing questions.
4. Periodically summarize what has and what has not been dealt with and/or resolved.
5. Draw as many students as possible into the discussion.

Another important note is that Saul was what one would look for in a king at first glance. It is noted that he was very tall, some even proposing that he was close to seven feet in stature! He was stately and good looking, always a plus in a leader, and seemed to be a great choice for a king. Even though he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, he was still the kind of person people would follow.

Samuel was called a seer at that time, meaning one who received visions from God. This is not to be confused with a more modern interpretation of the word, which means more of a fortune-teller. Samuel was considered the conduit through whom God governed His people.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Have the students write down the name of one or two leaders they would be willing to follow. Then have them write the characteristics that attract them to these leaders. Follow with these questions:

1. Who were the leaders you chose?
2. Why did you choose them? What characteristics do they have that attract you?
3. Do you find yourself with any of these characteristics?
4. How many of these characteristics did Jesus exhibit?
5. What, in your estimation, makes a good leader?
6. Was Saul this type of leader?

Close with a prayer that your students might become great leaders.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

This week was all about leadership. We can look at the leadership of God through Samuel and the leadership of Saul and see whose was better for the children of Israel. We want the students to ask the question “Who am I going to follow?” and, of course, we are hoping their answer will be “God.”

Perhaps young people haven’t had a chance to think critically about what makes a good leader. We all follow intuitively those we trust or see as responsible; but this week, let’s be more intentional about how we approach those we follow and seek to bring some real thoughtful discretion into the process.

Working with young people is always a bit scary in that they are more than willing to be totally honest about themselves and those around them. This is good for the discussion, but will also challenge us as leaders to be the kind of leaders we are speaking about.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 59 and 60.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
so long, Saul

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Saul’s story is a tale of power gone sour. He began with so much promise. Scripture describes him as “an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others” (1 Samuel 9:2, NIV). He was humble (see 1 Samuel 9:21) and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power (see 1 Samuel 10:6, 10).

But a cancer of the soul corrupted Saul, and he succumbed to a spirit of self-sufficiency. He disobeyed God but felt no remorse for his wrongdoing. Instead, he defended himself as if he needed to answer to no one—not even God. Thus Samuel delivered the sobering message: “You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!” (1 Samuel 15:26, NIV). The Bible adds: “The Lord was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:35, NIV).

From that point on, Saul’s life continued on a downward spiral. He battled mental illness. He became pathologically jealous of David and tried to murder him. He got involved in the occult, seeking counsel from the witch of Endor. In the end, Saul killed himself in one crowning act of insanity.

Saul’s story has much to teach us about the perils of arrogance and selfishness. This story also offers a spiritual perspective on depression and mental health. Another topic that emerges from this story involves the perils of dabbling in the occult. Clearly, there are many gems to be mined from the experience of Saul.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Think about the effect of selfishness on one’s spiritual life. (Know)
• Sense the potentially fatal consequences of rebelling against God. (Feel)
• Be challenged to commit fully to God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Selfishness
• Depression
• Mental health

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Read some of the statements from the What Do You Think? section and instruct the students to stand on one side of the room if they agree with the statement or the other side of the room if they disagree. While they’re standing ask for volunteers to share why they answered as they did. Here are some more statements you can use:
• Wearing satanic graffiti is just as evil as playing with a Ouija board.
• Every sin is a manifestation of selfishness.
someone to devour.” Satan wants your soul. And he’s happy to weasel his way into your heart through any method you allow—impure movies, witchcraft, raunchy music, drugs—he’ll destroy you however he can. Play with the devil and your game will get deadly.

The story of Saul illustrates the consequences of playing with the devil. What may have seemed like small compromises ultimately claimed his soul.

Are there any areas in your life in which you are allowing the evil one to gain access to your mind and soul? If so, consider carefully the lessons we can learn from the life of Saul.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

The Associated Press once carried the story of a toddler who found a baby rattlesnake and began playing with it, not realizing that his “toy” was a deadly serpent. The article pointed out that a single drop of venom from a baby rattler is much more potent than the same amount of venom from a fully grown rattlesnake.

The mom discovered her child happily at play, holding the deadly reptile in his hand. Before she could attempt a rescue, however, the snake bit the boy’s arm. Her child was rushed to the hospital and fortunately, survived. But the story could have ended tragically, had the mother not found the child before the venom worked its lethal results.

In the same way, many Christians “play” with sin, thinking it won’t bite. As evangelist Billy Sunday once observed: “One reason that sin flourishes is that it is treated like a cream puff instead of a rattlesnake.”

On the night of October 3, 1998, a snake-handling evangelist named John Wayne Brown, Jr., wasn’t as fortunate as the toddler. He was bitten by one of his own timber rattlesnakes in the middle of his sermon. Though Pastor Brown continued to preach at Rock House Holiness Church, he soon collapsed onstage. The congregation gathered around him—praying and cooling him with an electric fan—but Brown died within minutes.

Brown, 34, was known throughout southeastern Appalachia as having handled snakes since he was 17. He was also known for having survived 22 previous bites. Pastor Brown left behind him five orphaned children—his wife, Melinda, had died from a snake bite during a revival service in 1995.²

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The serpent from the Garden of Eden is alive and well today. First Peter 5:8 (NIV) tells us: “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Satan wants your soul. And he’s happy to weasel his way into your heart through any method you allow—impure movies, witchcraft, raunchy music, drugs—he’ll destroy you however he can. Play with the devil and your game will get deadly.

The story of Saul illustrates the consequences of playing with the devil. What may have seemed like small compromises ultimately claimed his soul.

Are there any areas in your life in which you are allowing the evil one to gain access to your mind and soul? If so, consider carefully the lessons we can learn from the life of Saul.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

The story of Saul is a case study in what happens when a devoted Christian puts selfish interests above obedience to God. Review the highlights of Saul’s story, then facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:

- What strategy did Satan use to take Saul down?
- What similar methods does he use today?
- In what area do you think teens are most vulnerable to Satan’s attacks?

After discussing these questions about the methods of Satan, lead the students in a Bible study on the evil work Satan is doing today.

This can be done by assigning the following texts for students to look up in search of some of the names the Bible uses for Satan: accuser (Revelation 12:10), tempter (Matthew 4:3), enemy (1 Peter 5:8), liar (John 8:44), and evil one (1 John 5:19). It’s important to emphasize that Christ came to destroy the work of Satan (1 John 3:8), that Christ has supremacy over the devil (Colossians 1:18), and that the power of Christ dwelling within through the Holy Spirit is greater than the devil (1 John 4:4).

Another area to explore with the students in this lesson highlights the symptoms of Saul’s mental illness.

Some mental health professionals suggest that there are five basic categories of psychological disorders: anxiety disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, dissociative disorders, and schizophrenia. Gain a working knowledge of these disorders (this shouldn’t take long on the Internet) and describe them to your students. Next, find examples from the life of Saul that illustrate some of these mental challenges.
Discuss how we are all spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental beings. In order to enjoy optimum life we must be balanced and healthy in all of these spheres.

Review the tragic ending of Saul’s life.

Discuss how it might have ended differently. Ask for students to share their opinion as to whether or not there was a key event in Saul’s life that spelled his doom (if so, what was it?); or was Saul’s demise the sum total of many small compromises?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Each chapter in the assigned reading offers rich biblical insights worth exploring. Here is a little background from each chapter you may wish to use to dig deeper:

1. **1 Samuel 15**—Why was God so insistent about destroying King Agag and all of the Amalekites? Was Saul’s failure to obey God in this regard all that significant? It’s helpful to understand that the Amalekites were guerilla terrorists. They survived by attacking other nations and pillaging their wealth and families. They were the first to attack the Israelites when God’s people entered the Promised Land. They continued to raid the Israelites on a regular basis. Thus God knew that as long as the Amalekites were around, the Israelites would never live without fear. Moreover, the idol worship and corrupt religious teachings that the Amalekites practiced threatened Israel’s relationship with God. The only safeguard against this warlike nation was to utterly destroy them.

2. **1 Samuel 28**—Lord Byron said of the narrative of the witch of Endor: “I have always thought this the finest and most finished witch scene that ever was written or conceived, and you will be of my opinion if you consider all the circumstances of the actors of the case, together with the gravity, simplicity, and density of the language. It beats all the ghost scenes I have ever read.” Without question it is a gripping story.

Witchcraft was a practice that the Israelites picked up from the original inhabitants of Canaan. In the Old Testament, the practice of the “black arts” was strictly forbidden (see Exodus 22:18 and Leviticus 20:27) by penalty of death. The New Testament speaks of “seducers,” “seducing spirits,” “unclean spirits, working miracles,” all of which are associated with the works of Satan.

3. **1 Samuel 31**—It’s interesting to note that Saul faced his death the same way he lived his life—he took matters into his own hands. He acted apart from the counsel of God. Sometimes people plan to “fix” their relationship with God while on their deathbed in order to sneak into heaven at the last minute, thus amending a lifetime of sinful indulgences. The reality is, when nearing death, we will most likely respond to God in the same way that we have been responding to Him.

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**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
all along. Challenge the students by saying, “How do you want to face death? That’s how you ought to face life today.”

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Bring a radio and explain how it can provide entertainment, music, news, a weather report, and so on—just by tuning in to different frequencies. The broadcast you receive all depends on the station you’re tuned in to. If you’re not familiar with the options available, you have to scan the stations to find what you prefer. Some options are better than others.

Ask the class how the radio is like spiritual guidance. Explain that there are many spiritual counterfeiters clamoring for our attention. The one we tune in to makes all the difference in spiritual life.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Many young people are following the example of Saul and receiving counterfeit spiritual guidance. Consequently, their soul is at peril. To conclude, read Deuteronomy 18:9-15 as a challenge to tune in to God’s voice. Invite them to experience the adventure of radical obedience to God. When they make this kind of nothing-held-back commitment to God, all of the issues that this lesson addresses (such as depression, selfishness, dealings with the occult, mental health, etc.) will be shaped by the strong hand of God. Only then can a person experience the more abundant life in Christ.


Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 61, 66, 67.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Perhaps no Bible story has captured the imagination quite like the well-worn tale of David and Goliath. In spite of the story’s familiarity for all generations, there are still numerous insights and lessons to be gleaned from it.

Before the epic battle with Goliath we meet David as a humble shepherd. As the youngest of Jesse’s boys and a resident of the small and nondescript town of Bethlehem, David represents the least likely candidate for king. But God measures greatness by a standard different from ours. We consider the outward appearance of a man while God’s concern is the heart.

This lesson offers an ideal template that lends itself to a variety of discussions. For example, David’s experience reminds us of the exciting rewards of recklessly trusting God. Regardless of the giants we face, ultimately God is in charge and we can trust Him. The story also illustrates God’s calling. Just as God called David to a big, bold vision, so He calls each of us to be high-impact players for His kingdom. Another discussion you may wish to facilitate based on this lesson explores the topic of talents and spiritual gifts. In David’s case, it wasn’t that he had some supernatural ability; rather, he had availability to be used by God. Thus God used a very ordinary kid to accomplish some extraordinary things. Still another avenue down which you may wish to take this lesson looks at the issue of competition. David’s story offers a different paradigm for competition and reminds us that in God’s game plan the weak become strong, and those who are in last place rise to the top.

All in all, this lesson is rich with possibilities. The directions you can go with it are endless. Pray that God will guide you to shape this lesson to the specific needs of the young people in your group.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See that God is absolutely trustworthy, in all circumstances. (Know)
- Be asked to experience the joy of feeling unafraid when facing giant obstacles. (Feel)
- Be invited to commit fully to God to be used in mighty ways to build up the kingdom of heaven. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Competition
- Purpose (knowing your)
- Talents/gifts

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:
In the end, character pays. So pay close attention to character.

The reason David was chosen to be the king of Israel was because of his character. David’s oldest brother, Eliab, was the obvious choice for king. When Samuel saw Eliab he thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord” (1 Samuel 16:6, NIV).

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

When God looks at your heart, what does He see?

Out of the Story for Teachers

In the introduction of William Bennett’s The Book of Virtues he writes: “Moral education—the training of heart and mind toward the good—involves many things. It involves rules and precepts—the dos and don’ts of life with others—as well as explicit instruction, exhortation, and training. Moral education must provide training in good habits. Aristotle wrote that good habits formed at youth make all the difference.” Bennett then points out that one of the ways youth learn virtues is through stories.

The Bible is rich with such stories, and perhaps there is no better story for illustrating character and virtue than that of David.

- After reading the Into the Story section, have the students identify David’s virtues (e.g., courage, faith, integrity, patience to practice delayed gratification, etc.) that emerge from the text. As they call out these traits, write them on a chalkboard or a large page of newsprint paper.
- Next to the list of character qualities have students share the physical attributes (height, nice smile, chiseled stomach, etc.) they look for in someone they’re interested in dating. Read this paraphrase of 1 Samuel 16:7: The Lord does not look at this list (point to the list of physical attributes); man looks at this list, but the Lord looks at only this list (point to the list of David’s virtues).

Other questions to facilitate discussion around the text:

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:
The story is told of an aging emperor. To choose his successor, he called all the young people in the kingdom and said, “I’m giving each of you a seed. Go home, plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from this seed. I will then judge the plants and choose the next emperor!”

A boy named Ling received a seed. He went home and got a pot and some planting soil. He planted the seed and watered it carefully. Every day he nurtured the seed. In a few weeks Ling’s friends talked about their blossoming plants. Ling kept checking his seed, but nothing grew.

A year went by and all the youths of the kingdom returned to the emperor’s palace with their plants. Ling arrived with only a pot of dirt.

Ling marveled at the variety of plants grown by all the other youths. They were beautiful, in all shapes and sizes. The kids all snickered at Ling’s pot of dirt.

The emperor surveyed the room and commented, “What great plants, trees, and flowers you have grown.” Then the emperor spotted Ling at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered Ling to the front.

The emperor explained, “One year ago I gave everyone a seed. I told you to plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds that would not grow. All of you, except Ling, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Ling was the only one with the character to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he’s the new emperor!”
• Why has the story of David and Goliath held such a strong appeal for kids?
• In light of David’s calling, how do you explain other stories in the Bible (e.g., anointing Saul, calling Peter, using Rahab, etc.) when God chose people who had less than sterling characters?
• Look at David’s story from the perspective of his spiritual gifts (for a list of the spiritual gifts see Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 27-31; and Ephesians 4:7-13). What were David’s spiritual gifts? Ask the students to identify spiritual gifts they share with David and spiritual gifts they see in themselves but not in David. Invite students to affirm the gifts they recognize in one another.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

There are three primary stories in this passage. The following commentary fleshes out each story:

1. Samuel Anoints David—The act of anointing David was a customary practice in ancient times. The anointing service set every king and high priest apart for God’s service. In this story David was anointed in secret; it was not until later that he was anointed in public (2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3).

2. David Serves as a Musician in Saul’s Service—First Samuel 16:14 records: “Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him” (NIV). Saul committed the unpardonable sin when he rejected the Spirit of God. It was not that God withdrew from Saul; but rather Saul rebelled and refused to listen to the promptings of God’s Spirit. Read Psalm 139:7 and discuss this part of the story in light of our free will.

Temporary relief came to Saul through the music of David. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: “as Saul listened to David’s music his wicked feelings of self-pity and jealousy left him for a time, only to return with double power as time went on” (vol. 2, p. 531). As Saul kept rejecting God’s guidance, he became like the demon-possessed man of Christ’s parable in Luke 11:24-26 in which the last condition of such a soul is considerably worse than the first state of the soul.

3. David and Goliath—In his book David: A Man of Passion & Destiny pastor and author Charles Swindoll suggests that there are four lessons that emerge from the story of David and Goliath:

A. Facing giants is an intimidating experience. With the passage of time it’s easy to skim David’s story and forget how scary it must have been to engage in combat with that brute.

B. Doing battle is a lonely experience. No one can fight for you. Nobody faces the same Goliath that you do. It’s a lonely battle, but it enables you to grow up and trust God.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

• Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

• Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

• Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
C. Trusting God is a stabilizing experience. David brought the giant to his knees with one stone. We don’t know for sure, but we can surmise that David overcame any jitters because he was stabilized by his trust in God. If you try to win your spiritual battles in your own strength, you’ll lose. But when you battle after spending sufficient time in prayer, it’s amazing how stable you can be.

D. Winning victories is a memorable experience. As we remember the victories of the past we can march confidently with God into the future.2

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Allow for a quiet time of reflection to close the lesson. Ask students to write two letters. The first is a letter from God to themselves that begins with “Dear ________, Just as I had a great calling for My child David, so I am calling you to . . .” The second letter is their response to God.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Ellen White reminds us: “The education and training of the youth is an important and solemn work. The great object to be secured should be the proper development of character, that the individual may be fitted rightly to discharge the duties of the present life and to enter at last upon the future, immortal life. Eternity will reveal the manner in which the work has been performed.”3

With that sobering perspective in mind, use the story of David to challenge and inspire young people to carefully consider character issues. Remind them that God has not changed. Just as God anointed a young person with a sterling character in ancient times, so He continues to call young people with character to impact the world today. Each student studying the story of David should ask, “Do I have the kind of character that God can use?”

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 62 and 63.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
I. SYNOPSIS
This week’s lesson explores the complicated relationship between two of God’s anointed leaders, Saul and David. David’s conquest of Goliath and the subsequent routing of the Philistines by the Israelites made David quite popular among the Israelites. But, to be sure, not everyone can enjoy and appreciate the successes of others. This seemed to be one of Saul’s chief failings.

Ironically, it was David’s loyalty and ability to get the job done—no matter what the mission given him by Saul—that led Saul to promote him (1 Samuel 18:5). His service to King Saul was so exemplary that the people serenaded him with song: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (verse 7, NIV).

Inspired by Satan, Saul concluded that David desired his throne, and from that moment on Saul looked for opportunities to kill David. Were it not for the intervention of God, Saul’s javelin would have killed David (verse 11). Ironically enough, his efforts were undermined from within his own house. Saul’s son, Jonathan, developed a covenant of friendship with David that was stronger than his familial ties, and he protected David.

In the succeeding chapters we have a front-row seat to Saul’s personal destruction. His jealous hatred of David was so unquenchable that when he found out Ahimelech the priest had housed the fleeing David, he ordered the killing of Ahimelech, his household, and 84 other priests at Nob. The favor of God at work in the life of David seemed to bring out the worst in Saul.

In spite of Saul’s jealous rage, David refused to harm him for he was still God’s anointed, and David would not allow feelings of revenge to cloud his respect for God.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Know that pride, and its twin, jealousy, are precursors to destruction. (Know)
- Become aware of the peace that comes from obedience to the will of God. (Feel)
- Seize opportunities to trust God in the most difficult challenges of life, instead of following their own inclinations. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Giving
- Adversity/trials
- Stress
- Courage

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED
Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.
Invite the students to make a list of things people get really jealous about. Then ask: What motivates people to become jealous of others?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A questioner wrote Dear Abby confused about the actions of her sweet little grandmother. Here’s what she wrote:

“About six months ago, my husband and I asked my 19-year-old cousin, Danny, to live with us. He had hit a rough spot in his life, and had been doing drugs, drinking, and feeling suicidal. Since living with us, Danny no longer has these feelings and is no longer drinking or doing drugs. We are trying to help him find his direction in life.

“Recently, my grandmother, who adopted Danny when he was 10 after his mother died, went to my mother’s house where my husband and I were visiting for the weekend, and began yelling at us. First she accused us of not loving Danny and claimed we are trying to ruin his life. Then it escalated, and she was screaming at us because we didn’t ask her permission before inviting Danny to come live with us. (He was already out of her house and living with my uncle at the time.)

“She also claimed Danny was ‘better off doing drugs and drinking’ and being ‘home’ than he is with us because she wasn’t ‘mean’ to him like we are!

“Abby, where do you think all my grandmother’s hostility and anger came from? It’s the first time I’ve ever had a confrontation with her.”

Abby’s response: “Assuming that your grandmother is in her right mind and not a substance abuser herself, I can only conclude that her motive was jealousy.” Even sweet grandmothers are not immune.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes our actions can have a profound effect on others. In our lesson for this week Saul’s envy of David pushes his bravest and brightest military tactician into a life on the run filled with trials, hardships, and stress.

Because indulged sin tends to grow worse, Saul’s descent into self-destruction gains considerable momentum with each effort to kill David. He plows through warning after warning, blinded by his own pride and jealousy. Not once but twice, David spared his life, and the sheer magnanimity of the act cuts him to the heart; but a few hours later he is undeterred. Saul’s rejection of God’s restraints leaves him in a free fall, and his only path forward is down.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

• Underline the verses in which significant shifts occur in the story.

• Is there anything particularly startling about the relationships among the main actors in the drama? Identify one motivation behind each of their actions.

• Are there places in the story in which the Spirit of God can be seen, or His presence felt? Draw a star by those spots.

• If this passage of Scripture was all that we knew of these characters, what might we conclude about the way each of them lived their lives?

• Circle the “minor” players in the narrative. Who are they, and how do they affect the thinking of the main character?

• There are gender issues at play in this story. How do the women and men relate in this episode, and what are the effects of their interaction?

• What lessons are there to be learned from this biblical episode?

• Who in the narrative most exemplifies the character and spirit of Jesus?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 15:1-17; Romans 8:18-27; 1 Samuel 20:1-4.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Compare and Contrast. While reading the story of Saul’s fall from grace and David’s rise to the throne, it is helpful to consider the differences in their responses to difficulties right from the beginning. Saul, king and commander in chief of Israel’s defense forces, endures the daily insults
of Israel and their God by Goliath. David, on the other hand, is offended and motivated to vindicate God’s name and character. Saul is offended by the praise heaped on David; David is humbled by it. When Saul offers David the hand of his eldest daughter, Merab, in marriage, he responds: “Who am I . . . that I should become the king’s son-in-law?” (1 Samuel 18:18, NIV). Saul, in fact, was planning to have the Philistines murder David (verse 17) in battle.

Saul grew more and more fearful of David with each missed assassination. Why? “Because the Lord was with David but had left Saul” (1 Sam. 18:12, NIV). When God does not guide the life, our decisions become an exercise in force rather than faith.

2. The Friendship. Few biblical friendships carry the depth of emotion as the friendship between Jonathan and David. Many writers tend to focus on David’s vulnerability in this story, but consider Jonathan’s circumstance for a moment. Jonathan was a prince, an heir to the throne of Israel, and was no weak warrior. With his armor-bearer alone he once slew 20 Philistines on a half-acre plot of land in close combat. He, too, heard the people chanting David’s name after he killed Goliath and led successful military campaigns for his father. He saw how the women of the city fawned over David. Jonathan could have easily formed an alliance with his father and killed David, but he chose not to. This choice meant that he would probably never see the throne of his father, Saul. He knew that David would be king, possibly taking his place, yet he was undeterred in his love for David. Jonathan was one of the most selfless persons in all of Scripture.

3. Far From Perfect. During his life as a fugitive, David made some bad decisions under major duress—one being when he traveled to Nob to see Ahimelech, the high priest (1 Samuel 21). “He [Ahimelech] inquired what had brought him there. The young man was in constant fear of discovery, and in his extremity he resorted to deception. David told the priest he had been sent by the king on a secret errand, one that required the utmost expedition. Here he manifested a want of faith in God, and his sin resulted in causing the death of the high priest. Had the facts been plainly stated, Ahimelech would have known what course to pursue to preserve his life. God requires that truthfulness shall mark His people, even in the greatest peril” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 656). Not only did Ahimelech die, but just about all other members of his family and 84 other priests.

4. A Quiet Death. The death of Samuel is mentioned briefly in 1 Samuel 25:1. The chapter does not elucidate the ceremony that ensued. It states only that the people “assembled and mourned for him” (NIV), then they buried him at his home in Ramah. In the death of Samuel per-
haps there was an opportunity for Saul to reflect. This was the man who had anointed him king, who pointed out his faults and warned him to obey God. Of course, this was also the man who told him that God had taken the kingdom from him because of disobedience. The kingdom was lost, but Saul needn’t lose his eternal life. One can only wonder what he thought as he led the funeral service for Samuel.

### III. CLOSING

**Activity**

*Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.*

Give each student an index card and a pencil. Make the statement that Saul’s pursuit of David is very similar to Satan’s pursuit of us. He is constantly looking for ways to harm us physically and spiritually. Ask the students to make two lists. The first is a list of the snares that Satan tries to use to trip us up. The second list should consist of the safeguards that God has given us to help us avoid imminent destruction.

After the students have finished, ask them to share some of their answers. Ask a volunteer to pray, thanking God for His protection each day.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

To the average onlooker, the stories in God’s Word often seem like . . . well . . . just stories. While this view may be pervasive, once one begins to dig around in the narratives that make up the Old Testament in particular, one cannot help noticing their universal principles.

Some years ago in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—and in cities around the world—a group of teens killed one of their friends, in large part because they were jealous of him. They were actors in a play whose plot has been playing out for centuries. Saul’s unwillingness to obey all that God commanded him inevitably led to his losing the throne of Israel, and to his oppression of Israel. Unrestrained pride and arrogance led him to persecute a young man who brought him nothing but accolades.

In spite of Saul’s behavior—the ugly example of leadership he set—David remained his servant, refusing twice to take his life when the chance presented itself. For his refusal to choose the path of revenge, David was driven from his home, chased into the camp of Israel’s sworn enemies, enduring long nights in the wilderness. There were moments when his faith in God faltered, but David would take his failures to God. It was this practice that differentiated him from Saul.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Word Association**

One of the great opportunities you can use to widen the learning of this week’s lesson is to play a word association game with your students. Here’s how it might work: Place the name of Saul on a chalkboard. Ask the students to shout out words that come to mind when they think of the Old Testament Saul. Write their answers on the board around Saul’s name. Ask the students to do the same with David and Jonathan. This exercise is a great way to gauge the level of knowledge your students have about a given Bible character, thereby allowing you to focus more on information that will be new or previously unconsidered by them.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapters 64 and 65.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about *Beginning of the End* at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.*
I. SYNOPSIS

Victory was in the air. The spoils of victory were everywhere. David, his mighty warriors, and their families all raised their voices in exultation. They had just defeated the pesky Amalekites, who had burned their homes in Ziklag and taken their wives and children captive. The celebration was made even more stupendous because the rescue was quite daring (1 Samuel 30). David and his men were able to destroy the Amalekites and rescue all the captives without any of them being harmed. It was a great military victory, a testament to God’s protection over His people.

While they were celebrating their victory against the Amalekites, another sad saga was coming to an end. Saul, utterly routed by the Philistines, fell on his sword and committed suicide to avoid humiliation at the hand of his enemies (1 Samuel 31). A young Amalekite seeing this took the news to David, along with Saul’s crown and armband (2 Samuel 1), claiming to have been the one who ended Saul’s life.

The young man expected David to celebrate the death of his archenemy. He was deathly wrong. David was so incensed that the young alien would dare kill God’s anointed that he had one of his men kill the young man on the spot. He then wept bitterly at the loss of Israel’s king, and his best friend, Jonathan.

David’s respect for God’s anointed knew no bounds, as evidenced by his lament.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the hardships and trials inherent in serving God. (Know)
- Feel a sense of God’s presence even when we feel alone and tried. (Feel)
- Seek to accept God’s call to love our enemies and those who do us wrong. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Doubt
- Mental health
- Friendship

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

From their answers you may be able to draw some lessons about delayed gratification, trust in God, and perseverance.

Illustration

“Share this illustration in your own words:

The Fence

“There was a little boy with a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, to hammer a nail in the back fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Then it gradually dwindled down. He discov-
done during his lifetime?
• What circumstances surrounded Saul’s death?
What did the Philistines do with Saul’s body?
(1 Samuel 31:7-10). Do you think David had
knowledge of this when he prepared his
lament?
• Do you think David felt relieved that his long
nightmare was finally over?

Use the following as more teachable passages that
relate to today’s story:

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following information to shed more light
on the story for your students. Share it in your own
words.

1. Lowpoint.
Sometimes low moments will come
into our lives, no matter how gifted, talented,
and anointed we are. David experienced one of
these moments when he returned to Ziklag and
found his home and the homes of his men
burned to the ground, and their loved ones cap-
tured and taken away by the Amalekites. Ellen
White wrote: “David seemed to be cut off from
every human support. All that he held dear on
earth had been swept from him. Saul had driven
him from his country; the Philistines had driven
him from the camp; the Amalekites had plun-
dered his city; his wives and children had been
made prisoners; and his own familiar friends
had banded against him, and threatened him
even with death. In this hour of utmost extrem-
ity David, instead of permitting his mind to dwell
upon these painful circumstances, looked
earnestly to God for help. He ‘encouraged him-
self in the Lord.’ He reviewed his past eventful
life. Wherein had the Lord ever forsaken him?
His soul was refreshed in recalling the many evi-
dences of God’s favor” (Patriarchs and
Prophets, p. 692).

2. One Mountain. Two Battles.
In 1 Samuel 28:4 the Bible states: “The Philistines assembled and
came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul
gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at
Gilboa” (NIV). Saul prepared for the final battle
of his life, though he did not know it. Many years
earlier another group assembled on this same
mountain range, down by a spring. “So Gideon
took the men down to the water. There the Lord

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
In the illustration just shared, the father makes the
compelling point that uncontrolled, untempered anger
often leads to decisions that hurt others as well as our-
selves. The temptation to give in to his anger must
have been very powerful for David. Due to the actions
of one extremely powerful person, Saul, he was forced
to make his living in caves and hillsides, fending for
food where he could get it, even camping among
Israel’s enemies. David somehow never gave place to
his anger. Perhaps it was all that David had experi-
enced at Saul’s hand that taught him the patience
needed to rule God’s people.

Out of the Story for Teachers
After you read the Into the Story section with your
students, use the following in your own words to
process it with them.
• After reading the Into the Story Bible passage,
what immediately strikes you, stops you cold,
stands out?
• What did David make the men of Judah do?
Why did he do this? What was he attempting to
teach them?
• What did David mean by the following phrases:
“Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights”
(NIV)
“Tell it not in Gath” (NIV)
“Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved
and gracious” (NIV)
• Was David underplaying the evil that Saul had
told him, ‘Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.’ Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The Lord said to Gideon, ‘With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place’” (Judges 7:5-7, NIV). As we know, Gideon and his men routed the Philistines with God’s help. But the Lord was not with Saul. The Philistines decimated his forces, and Saul committed suicide. Mount Gilboa witnessed two huge battles with two very different outcomes.

3. Watch Your Mouth. In his lament David cries out: “Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon” (2 Samuel 1:20, NIV). Gath and Ashkelon were major cities of the Philistines. David shuddered at the thought that these cities would now rejoice at the expense and sorrow of God’s people. He was urging his people to be discrete in the way they handled this bit of news. Many times we are less than judicious with our statements, especially when they involve some juicy tidbit of information. What does David’s plaintive wail say to us?

4. Thanks for All the Help! After defeating the Amalekites, the Bible says: “When David arrived in Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, ‘Here is a present for you from the plunder of the Lord’s enemies.’ He sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir; to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa and Racal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athach and Hebron; and to those in all the other places where David and his men had roamed” (1 Samuel 30:26-31, NIV). David did not forget those who had helped him. When God blessed him, he blessed others! What a servant! In spite of his flaws, David exemplified the heart of God in his actions.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Divide the class into groups of two or three. Ask each group to come up with two attributes of David, one that made him a great leader, and one that made him a great servant of God.

After a few minutes, ask the students to share their findings with the class. Then ask, How can we develop similar attributes in our lives? Close with a prayer asking God’s help to make all of you better leaders for Him, but more important, better followers of Him.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

• Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

• Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

• Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The book of 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul, quite a horrifying scene. How could someone who had been given so much—good looks, a royal throne, the anointing of God—go astray? His life and death are a stark reminder to us that except we abide in Christ, we can do nothing.

His demise is juxtaposed against the rise of David, God’s handpicked successor to the throne. If we needed any more evidence of David’s fitness for high office, he delivers it in the way in which he handles the death of Saul. God didn’t tell David to hold a special ceremony or to mourn Saul’s death. Upon hearing of Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths, David immediately forgot all the harm that Saul had caused him. All that consumed him was the love he had for both Saul and Jonathan, and the way in which the enemies of God would reproach His name, because they had successfully killed Israel’s king.

When the glory of God supersedes everything else in our lives, we will approach the spirit that David exhibited that day in Ziklag.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

In-class Journal

Consider purchasing some inexpensive journals for your class, or you may ask your students to buy them. Allowing opportunities for reflective journaling is one of the best ways to change the week-to-week dynamics of your classroom. For instance, this week’s topic offers several perfect opportunities for personal reflection. You might ask the students to write about an experience in their life, or in the life of a friend, when, say, a bully got his just deserts. How did they feel when they heard what happened to their nemesis? Or you might ask them to write a paragraph or two about what they’d miss most about their best friend.
when will I be king?

Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 2–5:5.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 69.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

David had been preparing to be king since he was a teenager. Samuel had anointed him and declared him Saul’s successor, but David’s road to the throne was long and filled with challenges. There were high points, such as his victory over Goliath and his friendship with Saul’s son Jonathan. There were long years of low points, when David and his band of followers lived as outlaws in the hills, fugitives from an angry king. Even after Saul’s death, David did not have an easy path to the throne. For many years he fought to win his claim to the throne of all Israel.

Through it all, David trusted God. He trusted that God’s promise for his life would be fulfilled, even when it seemed least likely. He remained open to God’s leading even in difficult times. And his faith was finally rewarded. At the age of 37, having spent his entire youth and young manhood in a quest for the throne, he became king of the united 12 tribes of Israel, and began the most successful reign in the history of the Jewish monarchy.

This week’s lesson focuses on how we, too, can trust in God’s promises and God’s plan for our lives even when the road is long and difficult. High school-aged Christians will be able to relate to the young David being anointed by Samuel, with a sense that God has a calling and a purpose for their lives. But when that purpose seems a long way from being fulfilled, and faith grows weak, how do we hold on and keep trusting God? That question is at the core of David’s story this week.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Know that David’s experience of trusting God through difficult times can be an example for them.
• Feel confident that God has a plan for their lives.
• Choose to trust in God’s plan even when it seems difficult or impossible. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Trust
• Patience
• Perseverance
OR
• Forgiveness of others
• Selflessness
• Perseverance

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Invite students to share stories of times they had to wait for something. Encourage them to begin with trivial experiences if that’s what they’re comfortable
with—waiting in line at a store or a doctor’s office, waiting for Christmas or birthdays as a child, etc. If the discussion doesn’t automatically go deeper, ask: Have you ever had to wait for God to answer a prayer? Are there prayers you are still waiting for God to answer? How does it affect your faith when you wait for God to help you with a situation and it seems you don’t get a response right away?

Remind students that David’s journey from anointing to becoming king of all Israel probably took as much as 20 years. In our world of instant gratification, especially with the short-term vision of youth, it’s hard to imagine waiting that long for God’s purpose in our lives to be worked out. But it’s comforting to remember that God will prevail even if the difficulties we’re in right now seem overwhelming.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

World mythology is filled with stories of princes and kings, princesses and queens, who had to wait many years for their destiny to be fulfilled. The legend of King Arthur tells of a young boy raised in obscurity, not even knowing he was secretly a king’s son. When his father died, Arthur demonstrated his right to the throne by being the only man in the kingdom able to pull a magical sword out of the stone in which it was embedded.

Yet such stories exist not only in legends, but in real life, too. Queen Elizabeth I of England, daughter of Henry VIII, spent her childhood and youth in a state of uncertainty. Depending on her father’s marriages and the changing politics of England, Elizabeth was sometimes recognized as heir to the throne, and other times treated as though she were not a royal princess at all. When her half-sister Mary ruled England, Elizabeth spent some time in prison. When Mary died and a messenger came to announce to the 25-year-old Elizabeth that she was finally queen of England, Elizabeth quoted Psalm 118: “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We live in a society in which everything is instant. We get impatient if it takes longer than a minute to microwave our lunch, longer than a few seconds to download a page on the Internet. TV has presented us with a world in which complex problems are solved in 30 or 60 minutes, while the ‘real’ news is compressed into 15-second sound bites. We want what we want, when we want it—right now!

One thing that can never be rushed is the process of growing into the person God has destined us to be. For David, it took 20 years of fighting, running, and hiding before he was crowned king. Other biblical characters experienced the same kind of waiting period before they realized their destiny. We, too, may have to wait to see God’s will worked out in our lives, but that doesn’t mean God isn’t working with us. He always has a plan!

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- After Saul’s death, what obstacles did David still face on the way to the throne?
- How much time passed between Saul’s death and David’s coronation as king of both Israel and Judah? Draw a time line of the events that happened during those years.
- How do you think David felt during the years that he fought a civil war to win power over all Israel?
- How do you think David felt on the day when he was finally crowned king of a united nation? What do you think he might have said to God in prayer on that day?
- What kind of obstacles do young Christians today face in achieving their destiny? What might stand between you and the “throne” God has planned for you? How can you deal with these kinds of obstacles?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The idea of kingship was still a new one for the nation of Israel. In fact, the idea of being a “nation” was pretty new, too! David was only the second king of Israel. Before the time of Saul, Israel was a collection of tribes with no central government. The only real figures of central power and authority were the judges, prophets, and priests that God used to bring His word to the people.
But the Israelites wanted a king. They wanted to be a powerful nation like the countries around them. Although this wasn’t God’s original plan, He allowed the prophet Samuel to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. When Saul proved unfaithful to God, Samuel anointed David—the youngest son of an obscure family, with no connection or claim to the throne—to succeed Saul.

But that promise took years to fulfill. At first David was the younger son who stayed at home while his brothers went off to war. Later he was the young hero who killed a giant; the musician whose playing soothed the king’s nerves; the best friend of the king’s son; married to (and then divorced from!) the king’s daughter; and finally an outlaw on the run, head of a group of desperate men who lived in hills and caves. David’s teens and 20s were filled with narrow escapes, desperate measures, and brushes with death.

Most of us don’t live at that level of excitement, but we can relate to the boy who was anointed by Samuel, looking forward to being king. We all have our hopes and dreams for the future. God assures us that He has a plan for our lives, yet we often don’t see how it’s ever going to be accomplished. From the story of David we can learn about patient faith and trust in God.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Teaching From . . .
Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

Besides being king of Israel, David was known as a poet and musician who composed many of the psalms in our Bible. If you read the Psalms you’ll see that the full range of human experience is represented there—joy, faith, despair, anger, fear. David wrote about the highs and lows of his experience.

If you were to write a psalm that expressed where you are in your life path and your walk with God right now, what would it say? Take a few minutes to write a short prayer to God that tells what you are feeling and
what you need from God right now. This is not to be shared with anyone unless you want to. When you’ve written your psalm, keep it in your Bible and share it with God in your private prayer time. Remember that whether you feel glad, sad, mad, afraid, imperfect, or alone, it’s OK to tell God what you really feel—just as David did. He is watching, He is listening, and He does have a plan for your life!

Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

David waited, worked, and fought to become king of Israel from the time he was a teenager till he was in his late 30s. He never stopped believing that God had a plan and that God was on his side, even when things got difficult. His faith was eventually rewarded when he sat upon the throne of Israel.

As a young person, you can be assured that God has a plan for your life. As He says to the people of Israel in Jeremiah 29:11, He has plans to give you hope and a future. But those plans may not always seem obvious to you. Sometimes the path in front of us gets dark, and we have nothing but faith to move us forward. When you get discouraged and begin to doubt that God is working in your life, remember David and his long road to the throne. Even in the darkest hours, when he was living in caves and on the run for his life, David was in God’s care, in God’s plan. And so are you.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 69.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about *Beginning of the End* at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
The early years of David’s reign were considered a “golden age” in Israel’s history. After the years of conflict and civil war after Saul’s death, David’s coronation marked the beginning of a period of peace and prosperity. Israel defeated their old enemies, the Philistines. David showed mercy to his defeated enemies, the family of Saul. He established his new capital city at Jerusalem and brought the ark of the covenant back to that city. His eventual goal was to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem, but this was a goal that was to be realized not by David, but by his son Solomon. David’s success as king was due to his faithfulness to God, but success also created temptations for David, just as it does for anyone—the temptation to trust in his own strength rather than relying on God’s power as he had been forced to do during the long, hard years before he became king.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that faithfulness to God is sometimes—though not always—rewarded with success in this life.
• Feel they can trust God with the success or failure of their dreams.
• Respond by thanking God for the blessings He has given and trying to use those blessings to bless others.

III. EXPLORE

• Joy
• Praise
• The Judgment

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of the student lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Divide into groups of three or four and give each group poster board, magazines and catalogues to cut up, scissors, glue, and markers. Ask each group to make a collage that illustrates the concept of “success.” When the groups have finished, discuss their posters. Do the images they chose illustrate success from the world’s point of view or from God’s? Can the two ever be the same? Give examples of people who are successful both by worldly terms and on God’s terms. What opportunities do such people have? What special challenges or dangers might they face?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
A Buddhist parable tells of a rich man who was unhappy with his life. He had lots of money, but had to travel and be away from his family all the time. His life
was very stressful. He envied the lifestyle of his poor friend, who had almost no money but was happily married and content in his home life.

One day he told this to another man, who said, “If you wish your life could be more like the life your poor friend enjoys, why not try giving away some of your money to him?” The rich man immediately gave several hundred thousand dollars to his poor friend. He could easily afford it, but it was enough to transform the poor man’s life.

At first, the poor man was ecstatic. But then he began to worry about where he should keep the money, how he should invest it, and whether it might be stolen. He and his wife, who had previously been so happy together, began to quarrel about how to spend the money. Finally they decided that the money was destroying their peaceful and happy life, and they agreed to give it back.

Blessings—money, success, other good things—can come into anyone’s life, but they don’t necessarily bring happiness unless they are accompanied by the proper spirit. In fact, success can be just as much of a spiritual problem as failure, unless we learn how to deal with it properly.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

A lot of times as Christians we focus on how to deal with hardship, difficulty, and failure. But how do we deal with the good things that happen? Hardship causes some people to lose their faith in God—but so does success! Sometimes when people get ahead in this world, they begin to trust in themselves rather than in God. They may forget to be grateful to God for His blessings, or forget to share their blessings with people who are less fortunate.

We all have hardships and difficulties. But we also have all been given blessings, talents, and abilities. This week’s lesson uses the story of King David’s most successful years to explore how we can respond when God is doing good things in our lives.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Out of the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

Brainstorm with the group about the qualities that you think make a good leader. Write them on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart as the group comes up with ideas.

- Would these be good qualities for a leader today?
- What about for a king in David’s time?
- What differences are there between what was required for a leader then, and what we look for today? What are the similarities?
- Discuss how David’s personal qualities and experience measured up to the list.
- What made David a good king?
- In the light of difficulties David faced on the road to becoming king, what strengths do you think he gained during those years that helped him when he was king?
- How do you think becoming king changed David?
- Look in the Bible passages for evidence to support the group’s answers to those questions.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

When God has blessed us with good things, the appropriate response is gratitude. One of the reasons that King David was a “man after God’s own heart” was that he knew how to respond in joy and gratitude to the good things God had given him. The prayer David prayed after the prophet Nathan told him he was not called to build God’s Temple demonstrates that David realized all his success was due to God. He gave God credit for placing him on the throne and keeping him there.

David’s name is associated with many of the beautiful ancient hymns in the Bible book we know as Psalms. Though David did not write all the psalms, he is believed to have written many of them. The psalms David wrote express the whole range of human emotions, from fear and sadness to hope and gladness. Many of them are beautiful hymns of praise expressing King David’s gratitude for all God had done for him.

There are many other interesting events that take place in the overall biblical passages for this week: 2 Samuel 5:6-25; 6; 7; 9; 10, with commentary in Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70. A few notes relating to other incidents besides Into the Story follow:

King’s ownership of the city (2 Samuel 5:9): “The
title ‘City of David’ may reflect the ancient practice that the capital city became not only the royal residence but the personal estate of the reigning king and his successors . . . much the same way that Omri bought the site for his new capital, Samaria (1 Kings 16:24).”—Bible Background Commentary

David’s activity (2 Samuel 6:14-21): “The verb translated ‘danced’ in verses 14 and 16 is used only in this passage. The use of the word in the related language of Ugaritic shows it to be something one does with fingers, thus suggesting snapping or waving fingers. The verb translated ‘leaping’ in verse 16 is used only here and in a slightly different form in Genesis 49:24, where it is a description of the agility of the arms. In the parallel passage, 1 Chronicles 15:29, the verb translated ‘dancing’ is only used of human activity twice (once parallel to singing and rejoicing, Job 21:11; and once opposite to mourning, Eccl. 3:4). It generally conveys swaying, trembling or vibrating movements. It is possible, then, that David is not involved in dance at all but is swaying his arms and snapping or waving his fingers.”—Bible Background Commentary

David’s action contrasted to normal (2 Samuel 9:7): “Mephibosheth had good cause to be afraid of David. There is wide precedent in Mesopotamian texts for the elimination of all rival claimants to the throne when a king comes to power (compare Baasha’s murder of Jeroboam’s family in 1 Kings 15:29). Such purges also occurred years later as a form of revenge for political opposition or rebellion attempted against previous rulers. For example, Ashurbanipal mutilated, executed, and fed the bodies of his grandfather’s rivals to dogs as part of his first official acts as king of Assyria. David, however, treats Mephibosheth, the only surviving male member of the royal family, as the rightful heir to Saul’s estates. His generosity is coupled with the command to eat at David’s table. In this way Mephibosheth is treated with honor, though some have noted it also keeps him under observation should he be inclined to subversion.”—Bible Background Commentary

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Arts and Crafts
Although many high school-aged youth feel that they’ve outgrown “arts and crafts,” students have a variety of learning styles. Making a collage, as suggested in the opening activity for this lesson, allows those whose skills are more visual than verbal to explore the lesson ideas in their own way. Be sure to provide a variety of magazines to cut up that you know will contain pictures relevant to the subject of the collage. For example, for a collage about success, you might choose business and celebrity magazines that will contain pictures of wealthy and powerful people, as well as mission magazines that will show pictures of people who have found success through serving others.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  *Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

- **Flashlight**
  *Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.*

- **Punch Lines**
  *Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.*
  *Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.*
III. CLOSING

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Read Psalm 63 together as a group. You may read in unison (making sure everyone is using the same translation) or assign a verse at a time for people to read. When the psalm is done, ask: What does this psalm tell us about David’s relationship with God? How did he relate to God in good times and in bad times? What can we learn from David that will help us when we deal with both good times and bad times in our Christian lives?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Every life includes highs and lows. For David, the early years of his reign were a “high” time when he finally experienced victory and success after years of waiting and struggle. These years were a “high” time for Israel, too, as the nation experienced unity, strength, and prosperity unlike anything they had known before.

We all know we need to cling to God during the low times, but what about when things are going well? That’s when we need to praise God for what He has done for us. That’s when we need to share His blessings with others, as David did by ruling Israel justly and showing compassion to the relatives of his defeated enemies. Most of all, our successful times are the times when we need to continue trusting God, recognizing that our success is not our own achievement but a gift from Him. When hard times come again—and they will—we need to know we still have God’s power to rely on.


Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70.

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the fall and rise of David

Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 11: 12.  
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 71.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

David's storied life is characterized by devotion to God. But the praise that would naturally be given to David is quieted by one disgraceful season in his life. On the surface, David's desire for Bathsheba is often used as a starting point in discussing what went wrong as David simply “gave in” to temptation. But murdering the husband of his mistress and arranging a royal cover-up signify a condition in David's heart that goes way beyond succumbing to a moment of weakness. Ellen White claims: “It was the spirit of self-confidence and self-exaltation that prepared the way for David's fall” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717). David's fall was the result of a subtle shift from recognizing God as the source of his success to believing that his royal future was well-deserved. David's misdeeds are clear and well known.

Perhaps the pressing issue in this story is not David's misdeeds, but his missed deeds. David missed the opportunity to repent and surrender his humanness to God and submit to God's power and grace. Lust, adultery, deceit, and pride all find their way into the story of David because those elements were allowed to grow in his heart going unchecked by repentance. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, warned, “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28, NIV). Sin seems to be sinful only when it is discovered in action, but young people need to examine and discuss the source of David's debacle—self. David lost his way before the whole mess became visible to others.

Students need to discover that David's conviction and sincere repentance, which occurred after the fact, is actually the way to avoid such a fall.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand the way sin, repentance, and grace work in our lives. (Know)
• Experience the joy of repentance and trust in God's grace. (Feel)
• Commit to regular repentance and submission to God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Pornography
• Marriage
• Boredom
• Confession/repentance

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

At what point do you think it would be the most difficult to turn around and confess? When do you think it would be easiest? Why?
In groups of two or three, share a hypothetical scenario in which someone actually waited to the most difficult time to confess and repent of something.

**Illustration**
*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Desmond was 6 and fascinated by tools and trinkets, to the point of obsession. While visiting at a distant family member’s house for a reunion, Desmond became fixated on a pocketknife that lay dangerously visible on the countertop. Desmond inched his way closer while family and friends ate and laughed inside the house and out on the patio. The young boy looked around the house to see if anyone was watching because he knew that his parents would not let him have or even play with a pocketknife. Desmond’s grandpa watched his grandson move close, quickly snatch the knife from the counter, and put it in his pocket.

Desmond’s blood was boiling with fear and excitement. He went swiftly into the living room far from where there was anyone to get a closer look at his “good” fortune. Suddenly he heard someone’s footsteps coming to his end of the house, and he froze when he heard his grandpa’s voice calling his name. He quickly hid the knife in an empty vase when his grandpa entered the room, startling Desmond.

The young boy’s hand was still in the vase when his grandpa asked, “What are you doing with that vase, my little man?”

“Nothing,” Desmond said sheepishly. Desmond could not get his hand out of the vase as it was clutched in a fist, and if he let go and dropped the knife, it would make a loud noise that would expose his deed.

Desmond tried to lie by saying his hand was stuck but retracted quickly when Grandpa pulled out a hammer to set his imprisoned appendage free. The room grew quiet, and a noisy clank hit the bottom of the vase as Desmond finally let the knife go.

How might this story reflect a similar experience you have had?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**
*Share the following in your own words:*

Desmond’s story may remind you of moments in which you have tried to avoid guilt through more dishonest behavior. Our story and Desmond’s story mirror a timeless drama in the Old Testament that portrays the horror of sin but magnifies the amazing grace of God.

Read carefully this story-making note of insights that may be new to you.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**
*After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

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

- Circle all the key people mentioned in this story.
- What are some reasons that you think David relentlessly pursued the course he chose?
- What details of 2 Samuel 11:1-17 are new to you?
- Why do you think Nathan confronted David with a parable?
- How might David’s reaction to the story have been different with another approach?
- How would you describe David’s repentance?
- Do you think David sincerely repented because he was convicted of his sin or because he was caught? How do you tell the difference?
- What do you think is the key verse or sentence in this story? Why?
- Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What message(s) does it convey to us today?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:
Acts 13:22; Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 8:12.

**Sharing Context and Background**
*Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

Consider a few insights to common questions on this story:

1. Why was David back home when his men were fighting a battle?

   This story takes place in the springtime, and his soldiers were out fighting the Ammonites while David was lounging around Jerusalem playing king. This fact is a window into the mind of David. Israel wanted a king—a leader. Remember the hopeful claim a king would
bring: “Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:20, NIV). David was no longer the mighty king leading his people to victory but the self-absorbed king who had people do his bidding.
2. Why didn’t Bathsheba resist? Wasn’t she as guilty as David?
   Clearly, Bathsheba was obligated to do whatever the king asked. Perhaps she was flattered by David’s attraction. Either way, the law of God states in Leviticus 20:10 that both David and Bathsheba were guilty: “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” If the husband, Uriah, had discovered the true situation, he would have been allowed under Levitical law to put them both to death.
3. What happened to David’s keen sense of right and wrong?
   Clearly, this story portrays David losing all his moral reference points. In a way, it was as though he was above the law. This is not hard to understand when you look at the prevailing customs of Eastern rulers. The crimes that merited punishment and judgment were not applicable to the king, so leaders did not feel an obligation to restraint or caution. David became comfortable with the idea that he could suspend or live above the laws of God and of the people.
4. Why did David tell Uriah to “go down to your house and wash your feet”?
   Since Bathsheba had become pregnant as a result of her affair with David, the young king thought he could cover his sin if Uriah went and had sex with Bathsheba. The phrase “wash your feet” was a euphemism for engaging in sex. David simply wanted to find another way to obscure his sin without admitting it. But Uriah was a dedicated soldier and leader and would not go home during a time of war and be entertained with distractions. So Uriah, instead of sleeping with his wife, stayed the night on the palace grounds.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Teaching by Storytelling**
   Perhaps the oldest teaching strategy is storytelling. The reason stories are so effective is that they immediately arrest and engage the students. Most of our lives can be described in a series of stories. For example, if you were to tell three stories from your life that were pivotal moments in shaping who you are today, what stories would you tell? When you use stories to teach, remember that the story is often the lesson, and if told or read well, it needs very little explanation. You might read a story and ask, “What do you think this story teaches?” or “Why do you think I chose this story?”

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**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
5. Why did Nathan use a parable?

Prophets have always used dramatic methods to get the point across. Whether it was fire from heaven on Mount Carmel or walking through town with a yoke around the prophet’s neck, the purpose of such an approach was to arrest attention and to emphasize the point.

Also, David had diluted his own thinking so much that he could rationalize anything. When David made a final judgment of the man in the story, he could no longer hide.

David’s repentance is key to this story. If you want to read the song he wrote as a testimony to this event, you can read it in Psalm 51.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Invite the students to create and write a brief parable that would have a similar impact as Nathan’s story had on King David. Students should work in groups of two to four. Invite the students to read the parables and have the other students ascertain what the central message of the story is.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Ellen White comments about how quiet the Scriptures are in praising people for the virtues and skills that they demonstrate throughout the course of their life. In *Patriarchs and Prophets* she asserts: “All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 717). Whether David had vanquished a lion, a bear, or a giant, a passionate song of praise to God was never far from his mind or his lips. But as time wore on and success framed David’s life, the young king failed to recognize God’s plan at work in his life.

His affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband mark David’s glorious rise to greatness with a dark stain of shame. But what makes this story so powerful is how we see the deep and earnest repentance David makes as well as the cleansing power of God’s forgiveness. Do you sense that God is urging you to repent and turn from a course of behavior or a pattern of thinking that is destructive? You can try to ignore it or cover it up, but David would plead with you to be honest with yourself and with God and experience the liberty of God’s promised forgiveness.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Love. Murder. Action. Passion. This week’s stories have everything, in a dizzying drama of intrigue, treachery, and tragedy. The story begins with Amnon, King David’s firstborn son (of his wife Ahinoam), lustfully obsessed with his half-sister Tamar (by Maacah, daughter of the king of Geshur). When Amnon shattered and shamed Tamar by raping her, David was furious, but, remembering his own seduction of Bathsheba, failed to punish his beloved firstborn son for this crime. Tamar’s brother Absalom said nothing but secretly vowed revenge—and two years later, he had Amnon murdered. The death of his firstborn left David heartbroken, while Absalom fled to his maternal grandfather in Geshur.

Now David thought surely some punishment was in order, so he forbade Absalom to return despite longing to see him. Alas, this only made matters worse, for in the two years he was gone Absalom had plenty of time to sulk—and scheme to take his father’s throne. David’s right-hand man, Joab, convinced him to allow Absalom to return to Jerusalem and to eventually reconcile face-to-face with his son. While David brooded in increasing isolation, Absalom did some serious public relations back in the capital city, stealing “the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Samuel 15:6, NIV), convincing them that they’d all be better off if he were king instead of his father.

After four years of winning the masses to his side, convincing them he’d fix their problems because he knew what it was like to be wronged, Absalom declared himself king and rallied the people to his side. King David and his crew fled Jerusalem, everyone started jockeying for influence, and spies and counselors worked both sides. A battle loomed. David’s men defeated Absalom’s army, and though David had begged them to spare Absalom’s life, Joab stabbed him to death as he hung helplessly from a tree. When Joab found David weeping over his son’s death, he told David, “You love those who hate you and hate those who love you. . . . I see that you would be pleased if Absalom were alive today and all of us were dead. Now go out and encourage your men” (2 Samuel 19:6, 7, NIV).

Having won a legendary string of military victories throughout his life, David was tempted to think too highly of himself—so Satan convinced him to make a census of the people for purposes of expanding the army. God’s anger over this prideful denial of His watch-care was as great as it had been for David’s adultery, and God asked David to pick his poison—three years of famine, three months of pursuit by his enemies, or three days of plague. David trusted God more than any man and begged, “Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men” (2 Samuel 24:14, NIV).

As a plague swept the nation, God grieved for His chosen people and told His angel, “Enough! Withdraw your hand” (verse 16, NIV). When David saw the angel standing over Jerusalem at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he prayed for the plague to end, and bought the land where the angel stood, building an altar there. The threshing floor became the site of Solomon’s Temple.

Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 13–19; 24; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 21; 28; 29.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 72 and 73.
Numerous themes emerge from these action-packed, issues-rich stories. These include:

- God offers forgiveness and redemption, but sin still has major consequences.
- The importance of discipline and judgment for sin.
- The value of wise counsel and the importance of seeking God’s will first.
- The perils of power and pride, the need to trust in God.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Understand the consequences of sin. (Know)
- Feel the need to depend on God.
- Commit to depend on God for guidance. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Family dynamics
- Resentment/retaliation
- Parents (relating to)
- Rebellion

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity
Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Public opinion. If any Bible story hinges on public opinion, it’s the rebellion of Absalom. With sex, royal politics, religion, and family all in the mix, everybody’s got a perspective. How would the various people relate to the story? Distribute index cards to your students, and have them consider, either as individuals or groups, how they’d relate to the unfolding drama of Amnon’s rape of Tamar, Absalom’s murder of Amnon and subsequent exile, Absalom’s scheme to steal his father’s crown, and the battle for the throne. Have them share their answers and ideas with the larger group.

The cast are:
Tamar. Used and abused by her half brother, who discards her after raping her. She becomes a “desolate woman” living in her brother Absalom’s house.
Absalom. Sent into exile for avenging his sister’s rape, then never allowed to see his father the king when he returns to Jerusalem; his resentment spurs him to plot to overthrow his emotionally frozen father.
Joab. David’s nephew and captain of David’s army, who tries to get David to see the consequences of his actions—and to snap out of his depression so he can keep the people’s allegiance.
The wise woman of Tekoa, called upon by Joab to weave a fictional tale of woe to convince David to bring Absalom out of exile.
King David. A broken man after acknowledging the depths of his sin with Bathsheba, and watching helplessly as his sons take after his sins and his people reap the tragic results. He is paralyzed by misguided love for his sons and guilt over his own sins, and so does not provide the discipline they deserve or the caring they need.
The people of Israel, watching a king who has lost much of his grip on governing. His ambitious son Absalom has the dashing good looks and charisma David used to charm the people with—is it time for a fresh face under the crown?
Ittai the Gittite. The leader of a group of Philistines who make up David’s personal bodyguards, he’s left everything he knew to side with an Israelite king and has vowed to defend David to the death.
Solomon. The kid brother in the palace, watching as his dysfunctional royal family falls apart and threatens to take the nation with it.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
Don loved college—the social side, at least. Boarding academy had been great fun hanging out 24/7 with some of his best friends, but college meant freedom, too, with no parents or anyone constantly hanging over his shoulder.
Unfortunately, with no one to prod him or remind him of his priorities, Don started spending more and more of his valuable time with his friends playing strategy games on the Internet. Soon Don was going all night, all weekend in marathon game sessions, not stopping to go to the cafeteria for a bite to eat, to the gym for some exercise, or even to hang out with his new girlfriend. He barely studied for his classes, rarely took time to talk with God, and his girlfriend scarcely remem-
bered she was dating anybody. Soon Don was failing most of his quizzes and tests—which was almost OK, since he wasn't really awake for them as it was.

Don finally realized he needed to get his act together, but he had no idea where to begin. English? History? Chemistry? It was all too much to think about at once. He felt overwhelmed. He felt paralyzed. The semester was almost over, and after checking out of reality for so long, he was flunking out of everything—and he just didn't know how to get back on track.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

In this week's lesson everybody's got a story or a message to share—and some are more truthful than others. Joab convinces David to bring Absalom back through yet another proxy tale, this one from a supposed-grieving widow whose parental experience suspiciously parallels David's own. Mephibosheth's steward Ziba slanders his boss to David. Hushai gives bad advice purposely to Absalom. And everyone's reluctant to tell David what really happened to his rebellious son.

Meanwhile everybody's got an opinion. Absalom thinks Amnon deserves death—and he's the deliverer. Joab thinks David needs to get with the program and buck up, lest he win the battle but lose the people. And what about God's opinion? With all the back and forth between people, Yahweh's the odd God out. In the story of Absalom's rebellion, people seek counsel from each other, but God is consulted all too infrequently. And thus events spiral worse and worse, until, facing God's wrath over his census, David realizes God's the only one he can truly trust.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

1. What parts of the story are key? (Underline them.)
2. What aspects or details of the story are new to you?
3. What words or phrases best capture the various emotions of this story? (Circle them.)
4. What emerges as the central lesson of this story? In other words, why do you think this story is included in the record of Scripture? What other lessons can be gained from this story? Refer to the rest of the Scripture story besides the Into the Story section (2 Samuel 13–19; 24; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 21; 28; 29).
5. What parts of this story are surprising or shocking? What parts are perplexing or confusing?
6. In the story of Absalom, how many missed opportunities do you see? What actions or inaction only made things worse?
7. Why was God so upset by David wanting to expand his army?

**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Other Eyes**
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
8. Why did David ask to “fall into the hands of the Lord,” and not those of men?
9. If you could ask God to explain parts of this story, what would you ask?
10. What have you learned from these stories?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:

Read 2 Samuel 16:5-14. What does David’s response to Shimei tell you about his character? About how he felt at that time? Was Shimei right in that David was being punished for being a man of blood, or was he too prejudiced by his own allegiance to Saul? (God didn’t let David build the Temple because he’d been such a violent man, and while David had treated Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth kindly, David permitted the Gibeonites to execute two of Saul’s sons as vengeance for Saul’s murders of their family members.) Why did David, on his deathbed, advise Solomon to execute Shimei as he solidified his kingdom?

Read Psalm 3, David’s prayer as he fled from Absalom. What does it tell us about David’s state of mind at that perilous time? About God’s presence and promises at our darkest hours?

Absalom died hanging from a tree. Read Deuteronomy 21:22, 23: “If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (NIV). Then read Galatians 3:13, about another Son of David who died on a tree: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’” (NIV). How else does Jesus turn curses into blessings?

Read Isaiah 54:1 and reflect on how God might console one such as Tamar. “Sing, O barren one who did not bear; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord” (NRSV).

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The book of Judges ends with a horrific story of a raped and murdered concubine whose death led to civil war. The rape of Tamar, with its ensuing civil war, has numerous parallels to the concubine’s, including the words “Don’t do this wicked thing [nebalah]” (2 Samuel 13:12, NIV; cf. Judges 19:23). Judges’ last words are “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (NIV). A monarchy turned out to be no better—if not worse.

The earlier-written Samuel warns about the consequences of idolatry. Its readers seem to have gotten the message, because Chronicles is written to reassure a people who may be tempted to give up in light of the high cost they’ve paid for idolatry.

In The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Samuel (Pacific Press, 2005), Alden Thompson reflects on the spiritual implications of Absalom’s tragedy: “For a Christian, David’s anguished cry, ‘My son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you’ (18:33), immediately calls to mind the picture of One who did die in the place of His wayward children. . . . What does it mean for God to clothe Himself in human flesh so that the Father dies in the Son—and thus God dies on our behalf and in our place?

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,” declared Jesus (John 14:9). And the Father He revealed to us is not one who angrily demands the death of sinners. Sin itself has already taken care of that. Our God has provided a sacrifice so that sinners might live. The inexorable law of sin, reflected in that vivid Old Testament dictum, ‘Your blood be upon your own head,’ is as true now as it was then and equally deadly. Sin punishes itself. That message is clear enough in the life of David and his family.

“But how in the world do we keep sin from simply leaving a sobbing father over the city gate and a pile of stones over a beautiful body somewhere in the forest? There has to be a better way. God had to come and die
in our place. And He had to live again. Or we are all for-
ever under a pile of stones somewhere in the forest.

“The story of David and Absalom is not the answer. But it is the question. And in the question we begin to sense that answer that is our hope” (pp. 270, 271).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Once everyone is well acquainted with the story, assign small groups of two or three or more to act out different portions from the Bible. Then debrief:

• Are there any true heroes in this story?
• Who are your students’ favorite and least favorite characters?
• What overall theme might the story have?
• Is there anything encouraging in this story?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:
What you sow, you will reap.

If any story demonstrates this tragic truth, it’s the final years of King David. Few in history have started so humbly and risen so high, only to fall so low. Consumed with guilt and having lost much credibility with his peo-
ples, David was never sure what to do, even when crimes hit home and demanded resolute responses.

Paul wrote: “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 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 6:7-9, NIV).

David became weary in his kingship, but Christians are promised a greater kingdom if we endure to the end.

Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 72 and 73.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.