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.*
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.)

❶ 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.

❷ 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?”

❸ 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.

❹ 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.

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

❻ 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.

❼ 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.

❽ 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.
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April

5—Just Scratching the Service [p. 11]
The ancient story of Ahab’s compromises in the leading of Israel and the evil influence of his wife Jezebel offers numerous lessons for us today.

12—Focus on Prophets [p. 15]
Even after Elisha was called by God and granted a double portion of His Spirit, he wasn’t guaranteed respect from his peers.

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

26—Seven Dirty Ducks [p. 23]
Naaman, although wealthy and powerful, received healing only when he humbled himself and obeyed God’s “strange” command to wash in a polluted river.

May

3—Pride and Prejudice [p. 27]
In the midst of terror on the high seas and a prophecy of doom and destruction, Jonah experiences the graciousness and compassion of a God he was trying to run from.

10—Heartbreak Hotel [p. 31]
Hosea’s story of rejection and pain of unrequited love from Gomer, his unfaithful wife, and his desperate attempts to deliver her from herself, is also God’s story.

17—Are You Available? [p. 35]
Isaiah reminds us of three elements of receiving a call from God, who we are in order to accept the call, and how not to drop the call when we hear it.

24—Hope for the World [p. 39]
Often some of the brightest and best are called to live in the darkest of times. Isaiah was no exception.

June

7—Recipe for Revival [p. 47]
Hezekiah was a breath of fresh air among the kings of Judah. And his godly choices offered the ingredients for a whole new way of life for God’s people.

14—Not Like Other Gods [p. 51]
Enemy forces tried to convince the Israelites that they were too strong for Israel’s God. But Hezekiah and his people’s trust in the Lord revealed who was the real powerhouse in this battle.

21—Manamojo [p. 55]
The storied lives of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah portray examples of extreme contrast in their loyalty and faithfulness to God. However, they also reveal the varied ways in which God works to save us in seemingly impossible situations.

28—Cleaning House [p. 59]
The same fire that was rekindled in the heart of young King Josiah as he heard the lost and forgotten book of God’s law read to him is still waiting to burn today in the hearts of God’s people—young and old.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Ahab and Jezebel offers a smorgasbord of topics to discuss with students. Evil, selfishness, judgment, idolatry, spiritualism, values, compromise—these are just a few of the themes you could emphasize in this lesson.

Still today the name “Jezebel” is synonymous with evil. Her name means “not exalted” or “impure.” There are certainly many women in our culture today who exert the same kind of evil influence as Jezebel did. You could draw parallels between “pop star” Jezebels today and the Bible character. This discussion would help young people to put contemporary faces on the ancient story.

A point of application that Ellen White brings out in this chapter connects it to idolatry. She writes: “The spirit of idolatry is rife in the world today. . . . Every day adds its sorrowful evidence that faith in the sure word of prophecy is decreasing, and that in its stead superstition and satanic witchery are captivating the minds of many” (Prophets and Kings, p. 210).

Another natural theme that emerges from this story has to do with the perils of selfishness. Ellen White points out that Ahab was “fully controlled by the spirit of selfishness” (Prophets and Kings, p. 204). In a positive twist, the antidote to selfishness is the calling to serve. It is toward this theme that the major portion of the teacher’s helps will be focused.

All in all this study gives you an opportunity to put a dent in the prevailing attitude today that it’s “all about me.” The stories of ancient kings and queens who worshipped idols and self remind us that there is a better way to live. In reality, it’s all about God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the connection between selfishness and misery; conversely they will see the connection between service and joy. (Know)
- Sense the emptiness of a self-absorbed life. (Feel)
- Be challenged to serve. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- The Judgment
- Selfishness
- Values

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

Bring several recent, local newspapers to class. Break the students into small groups. Give each group some of the papers and ask them to search for articles that identify needs in your community. Have each group choose one article and report it to the rest of the
group, defining the need and possible solutions or resources that could help meet this need. On a whiteboard or overhead write the problems and solutions from each group. After the presentations, discuss with all the students the possibility of following up on some or all of the proposed solutions. Could your Sabbath School class help to meet these needs and make a difference in your community?

Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

An employer put the following scenario to potential employees as part of the interview process. Assuming you were applying for the job, how would you respond in this situation?

You’re driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop and see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old lady who looks as if she is about to die.
2. Your best friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect woman/man you have been dreaming about all your life.

There can be only one passenger in your car, and you can’t return to the bus stop once you have left it. To whom would you offer a ride?

You could make a compelling argument for any one of the three. You could pick up the old lady, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first. Or, you could take your best friend because he once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay him back. However, you may never be able to find your dream partner again. How rare is it to find the perfect mate, so why miss out on this opportunity of a lifetime?

[NOTE TO TEACHER: Give the students a couple of minutes to discuss their solution with the person next to them.]

Would you like to hear the correct answer? There were 200 applicants for this job. Only one wrote the answer that the employer was looking for. The candidate who was hired had no trouble coming up with his answer.

He said, “I would give the car keys to my old friend and let him take the old lady to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the woman of my dreams.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

*Ask the students if anyone came up with the same answer. Then share the following in your own words:*

Sometimes our solutions to dilemmas we face in life are not as creative as the applicant’s answer. Too often we cater first to our own interests and show little concern to how our decisions might affect others. And yet, when we think outside the box and put others first, the result is often a win-win solution for everyone. Thinking selflessly is the key.

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. *Circle* the main actors in this story.
2. *Underline* the parts of the story that are essential to understanding it.
3. Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.
4. God reacted to Ahab and Jezebel’s sin in harsh judgment. Discuss what this teaches us about God.
5. What new thing about God have you learned from Ahab’s story? Explain.
6. *Draw a rectangle* around the emotions, actions, and adjectives that enrich this story.
7. What lesson does Jezebel’s life teach us?
8. What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
9. *Put a star* next to the words or phrases that capture the various emotions of this story.

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

Read John 13:1-17 and compare Jesus’ heart to serve with that of Ahab’s greed to get. Which represents a better way to live? Why?

Read Philippians 2:3-8. Ahab clearly did not model the verse that says to “value others above yourselves” (verse 3, TNIV). How might his legacy be different had he lived out the calling of Philippians 2:3-8?

Read 1 Corinthians 13 and compare it to the story of Jezebel. In what ways did Jezebel fail to model true love?
Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Naboth’s refusal of Ahab’s request. It is interesting to note Naboth’s vehement refusal of Ahab’s request to purchase his vineyard. You can sense his horror as he responds to Ahab: “The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers” (1 Kings 21:3, NIV). No man could ultimately sell any part of the parental inheritance; it might be sold or mortgaged until the year of Jubilee, but at that time it would revert to its original owner, if it had not been redeemed before (see Leviticus 25:14-17, 25-28). The Adam Clark Commentary explains: “Ahab most evidently wished him to alienate it finally, and this is what God’s law had expressly forbidden; therefore he could not, consistently with his duty to God, indulge Ahab; and it was high iniquity in Ahab to tempt him to do it; and to covet it showed the depravity of Ahab’s soul.”

Is God any less disturbed by the insatiable greed and materialism that seem so prevalent today? Why do you think God does not seem to act as resolutely today against greedy individuals as He did in the case of Ahab? How do you explain Naboth’s fate? After all, he was simply defending his God-given rights, and yet he was stoned to death.

2. The curse against Ahab. Elijah’s no-nonsense curse against Ahab in 1 Kings 21:21-24 is identical to the curse uttered against Jeroboam and against Baasha (see 1 Kings 14:10, 11; 16:3, 4). We read in 1 Kings 21:27-29, however, that Ahab humbled himself before God. As a result, God explained to Elijah that “because [Ahab] has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.”

Even a feeble act of repentance (as it was in Ahab’s case) moves God to mercy. What does this picture of grace in a most unlikely story teach us about God? Had Jezebel repented of her wrong, do you think God would have responded in the same way toward her? Why or why not?

3. God’s displeasure with Ahaziah. Ellen White offers this commentary on Ahaziah’s sin: “God had cause for displeasure at Ahaziah’s impiety. What had He not done to win the hearts of the people of Israel and to inspire them with confidence in Himself? . . . He had been a very present help to all who sought Him in sincerity. Yet now the king of Israel, turning from God to ask help of the worst enemy of his people, proclaimed to the heathen that he had more confidence in their idols than in the God of heaven. In the same manner do men and women dishonor Him when they turn from the Source of strength and wisdom to ask help or counsel from the powers of darkness. If God’s wrath
was kindled by Ahaziah’s act, how does He regard those who, having still greater light, choose to follow a similar course?” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 211, 212).

How might we be tempted today to seek the wisdom of the world rather than from God?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Invite the students to create a list titled “Top 10 Ways to Stop Selfishness.” When they have finished, have each student read their list. After everyone has had the chance to share their ideas, have the students vote on their top 10 favorites. Compile those into a master list and type it up, photocopy it, and ask them to put it in a place where they can read it often. Challenge them to put the ideas into practice and then discuss the results the following week in Sabbath School.

Summary

Share this story from Kevin Harney’s book, Seismic Shifts:

A little boy sat on the floor of the church nursery with a red rubber ball in each arm and three Nerf balls clenched on the floor between his pudgy little knees. He was trying to protect all five from the other children in the nursery. The problem was, he could not hold all five at once, and the ball nearest to his feet was particularly vulnerable to being stolen. So, whenever another child showed an interest in playing with one of the balls, he snarled to make it clear these toys were not for sharing. . . .

For about five minutes, this little guy growled, postured, and kept the other children away from the balls. Like a hyena hunched over the last scraps of a carcass, this snarling little canine was not in the mood for sharing. The other kids circled like vultures around the kill, looking for a way to jump in and snatch a ball without being attacked and bitten. I honestly did not know whether to laugh or cry as I watched.

Then it struck me: This little boy was not having any fun at all. There was no cheer within 10 yards of this kid. Not only was he unhappy, but all the other kids seemed sad as well. His selfishness created a black hole that sucked all of the joy out of that nursery.

1 As quoted at www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=1ki&chapter=021.

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 Prophets and Kings, chapter 16.

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

I. SYNOPSIS
Chapters 17 and 18 of Prophets and Kings are based on four stories from the life of Elisha. Each story offers worthwhile lessons to explore with your students. Consider focusing on the following themes that emerge from the stories:

1. God uses Elijah to call Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).
   Just as it was in ancient days, so it is today. God needs modern-day Elijahs who will disciple and mentor young people in the ways of the Lord. Moreover, God needs Elishas who are open to God's leading and will forsake everything to follow His calling. Perhaps God is calling you to the ministry of Elijah, and this lesson will be the impetus you need to initiate a conversation with an Elisha in your youth group that you can mentor and disciple in spiritual life.

2. Elisha requests and receives a double measure of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:7-10, 15).
   Elisha's request for a double measure of the Spirit demonstrates a great deal of spiritual maturity on his part. Similar to the request that Solomon made for wisdom, God was eager to reward this longing to have an extra portion of the Spirit. You might focus on this story and use it to engage your students in a conversation about the role and work of the Holy Spirit.

3. The water is healed (2 Kings 2:19-22).
   Ellen White shares this commentary: "The healing of the waters of Jericho was accomplished, not by any wisdom of man, but by the miraculous interposition of God. Those who had rebuilt the city were undeserving of the favor of Heaven. ..." (Prophets and Kings, p. 231). Building on this observation, you might choose to talk about God's healing grace. We are all undeserving, and yet it is freely given by a Father who recklessly, passionately loves each one of us.

4. Elisha is jeered (2 Kings 2:23-25).
   This is an interesting story that raises some sobering questions about respecting spiritual leaders. Dialogue with your class about what this story has to teach us today.

II. TARGET
The students will:

- See that just as God called Elijah and Elisha many years ago, He still calls young people today. (Know)
- Catch a glimpse of God's heart to pour out His Spirit upon every person today. (Feel)
- Have an opportunity to answer God's call. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Discipleship/mentoring
- Spiritual gifts and ministries
- Holy Spirit
- Miracles and the miraculous

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.
police and Ninger was caught while boarding the Cortlandt Street Ferry. Ninger was convicted and served his time before disappearing into anonymity.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Emanuel Ninger is a case of a man with a rare talent that, if used properly, could have benefited society in significant ways. Instead, he employed his gifts illegitimately.

Similarly, you have unique talents. God has gifted you in ways unlike any other person on the planet. Perhaps you can sing. Maybe you can rebuild a carburetor. Or you might be the best babysitter in the state. I don't know what your gifts are, but I know you have special talent on loan from God. Just as God called Elijah and Elisha to a special work, so He is calling you.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following discussion starters to elaborate on each of the four stories.

1. Elisha’s Calling

How do you reconcile Elisha’s request to return home before following Elijah with the following story in Matthew 8?

“When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, ‘Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.’

“Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.’

“Another disciple said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’

“But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead’” (Matthew 8:18-22, NIV).

2. Elisha’s Request

Calvin Seereld once said, “You can have certain creaturely talents which are amazing, often. But if they are misdirected, not in praise to the Lord but in praise to oneself, or in praise of reason, or in praise of the almighty dollar, then the sin has ruined the good creaturely gift God has given us.” Contrast this quote with Elisha’s plea for a double measure of the Holy Spirit. What gifts has God entrusted to you that must not be misdirected?
3. The Healing of the Waters
What stories in the Bible best illustrate for you the healing grace of God?

4. The Jeering of Elisha
Read Psalm 8 and discuss God’s love for all people. How does understanding God’s love for us inform the way we are called to love one another? Is showing love for someone the same as showing them respect? Explain.

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following insights to help bring the text alive.

1. 1 Kings 19:19
When Elijah cast his mantle over Elisha, this was a symbolic act to signify that the power and authority of Elijah, the retiring prophet, were being transferred to the younger prophet. This call of Elisha had made Elijah’s mantle a symbol of the prophetic office; the 50 men who were sons of the prophets viewing from afar in 2 Kings 2:7, 8 shows us a symbol of God’s power (see Exodus 17:9) upon His prophet.

2. 2 Kings 2:9
The NIV Life Application Bible offers this commentary on Elisha’s desire to receive a double portion of God’s Spirit: “God granted Elisha’s request because Elisha’s motives were pure. His main goal was not to be better or more powerful than Elijah, but to accomplish more for God. If our motives are pure, we don’t have to be afraid to ask great things from God. When we ask God for great power or ability, we need to examine our desires and get rid of any selfishness we find.”

Tips for Top-notch Teaching
Earning Respect
One lesson that emerges from the Bible story of the bears attacking the young people highlights the importance of showing respect to elders. It’s one thing to teach students about the importance of showing respect. The truly successful teachers, however, understand that respect is earned. It is the natural and inevitable fruit for teachers who live exemplary lives of integrity. By investing yourself in the lives of students in significant ways outside of the Sabbath School class, you will be earning, not just demanding, their respect. Kathy Mellor, a teacher in North Kingstown, R.I., who was honored by President George W. Bush as teacher of the year, understands the importance of earning the respect of students. The Washington Times reports, “Mrs. Mellor urges teachers to reach beyond the classroom and understand their students’ lives. She is known for setting high but realistic standards and for earning so much respect that students want her at their first Communions and backyard dances.”

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 Prophets and Kings. 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 Prophets and Kings, chapters 17, 18.

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

3. 2 Kings 2:19
The waters of Jericho used to be plentiful and pure but had become tainted and unhealthy. Consequently the plush valley was becoming unfruitful. It appeared as if the curse on the man who was to rebuild Jericho (see Joshua 6:26 and 1 Kings 16:34) extended to blight the land as well.

4. 2 Kings 2:23, 24
The youths from Bethel, the center for idolatry in the northern kingdom, were probably threatening Elisha not to preach against their immorality as Elijah had done. They weren’t just teasing Elisha about his baldness, but demonstrating blatant disrespect for Elisha’s message and God’s authority. They may also have been showing their disbelief in the chariot of fire that had taken Elijah. Notice that when Elisha cursed the young people, he didn’t call out the bears himself. This was an act of judgment by God for their calloused hearts.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Gather the names of older men and women in your congregation who have led rich, meaningful lives for God. Then have your students write to some of these people, asking them to share the ways God has given their lives meaning and purpose. You may want to include a cover letter explaining the reason for the request. Then in the weeks that follow share their responses with the Sabbath School class.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
In closing, remind your young people that God longs to pour out an extra measure of His Spirit upon every one of them. Just as God called Elijah and Elisha so He is calling each of them. Challenge them to use their spiritual gifts to honor God and craft a life of purpose and significance. God can be trusted to equip every one of us to do His pleasure.

Close with this benediction from Hebrews 13:20, 21 (NIV):
“May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

1Fundamental Belief No. 17.
2Fundamental Belief No. 5.
4As quoted at esl.about.com/b/a/080230.htm?terms=earning+respect.
I. SYNOPSIS

Summarizing the heart of this lesson, Ellen White said: “The lesson is for God’s children in every age. When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey” (Prophets and Kings, p. 243). This challenge to boldly pursue the work God calls us to do—in spite of how unreasonable or impossible it seems—is an exciting invitation to put one’s faith fully in Him. When we do this, miracles are often the result.

Second Kings 4 tells of the following miracles: the widow’s oil multiplied, the dead boy raised to life, the poison in stew purified, and the prophets’ food multiplied. To teach about these miracles, it is helpful to understand the context of the ancient world and the popularity of Baal worship. Baal was a false god worshipped by many Israelites. He was the god of rain, fire, and crops; moreover, he required child sacrifice. Elisha’s miracles demonstrate the power of the true God over the domain of Baal. The story of the dead boy being raised to life stands in contrast to Baal’s requirement of child sacrifice and illustrates the priority God puts on the life of a child.

While this lesson is primarily about miracles, there are other topics you may wish to explore with your group. The key text emphasizes that Elisha was a holy man. You could unpack what that means and challenge your students to live similar lives of holiness. The corresponding chapter in Prophets and Kings is titled “A Prophet of Peace.” You could look at this virtue and discuss what peace and contentment look like today.

Another theme that emerges from this study is the topic of kindness. Ellen White comments: “The kindly spirit that enabled Elisha to exert a powerful influence over the lives of many in Israel is revealed in the story of his friendly relations with a family dwelling at Shunem” (Prophets and Kings, p. 237). Whatever direction you take this lesson, clearly God is calling us to do His biddings in the spirit of Elisha.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Consider the miraculous works of God. (Know)
• Sense the possibilities when fully trusting God. (Feel)
• Be challenged to live a life of faith. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Gift of prophecy
• Authority/respect
• Contentment/peace

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.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.
Another stretch of awkward silence ensued until another replied, “Well, if Jesus calmed the wind and the waves, He must be a powerful man!”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Mark Galli follows his story with this postscript: “At this, they all nodded vigorously and chattered excitedly to one another in Lao. Except for me, the room was full of wonder. I suddenly realized that they grasped the story better than I did.”

In what way did the Laotian refugees understand the miracle of Jesus calming the waters better than the pastor?

Do the miracles in the Bible ever seem as if they are from another time and another place, and God doesn’t perform the same kind of miracles today?

How does one retain a sense of wonder for the miracles that occur today?

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.

Divide the students into four groups and have them act out the four miracles in 2 Kings 4 (the widow’s oil, the Shunammite’s son restored to life, death in the pot, and the feeding of a hundred). After you have enjoyed the dramatic sketches of the stories, engage the students in a conversation by using the following questions:

When you see God at work caring for the widow, raising the Shunammite’s son from the dead, and so on, what does this tell you about God? Is the God of the New Testament any different than the God of the Old Testament? Explain. How might these miracles help us keep God’s harsh judgment toward the unrepentant in proper perspective?

Elisha is remembered as a man who performed many miracles to help those in need. Can you think of a better legacy that you could leave? Explain. How do you want to be remembered? How should you live today so that you can be remembered as you want to be?

Sharing Context and Background

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

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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 different words in the Bible that can be translated as “miracle.” However, each word carries with it a unique nuance. Among the most common words we call “miracles” are the following:

1. **Terata—Wonders**
   
   *Terata* is usually translated “wonders” (see Matthew 24:24; John 4:48; Acts 2:43; 5:12; 6:8; 15:12; Romans 15:19). This word indicates the state of mind of those eyewitnesses who experienced miracles. To the witnesses, such a display of power was contrary to their expectations—opposite to anything with which they were accustomed.

   Such miracles, however, were not merely “wonders,” producing momentary amazement. The focus was on their purpose and their inner spiritual appeal. A good example of this is the healing of the crippled man in Lystra (see Acts 14:8-15).

2. **Semeia—Signs**

   *Semeia* is usually translated “signs.” In 2 Corinthians 12:12 the apostle Paul wrote: “The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance” (NIV). The purpose in these “signs” was to be an indication of the near presence and working of God and proof of the authentic nature of revelation. For example, the “signs” or “miracles” of Christ authenticated His divine calling and His nature as the Son of God. These signs were evident in the work of the disciples (see Mark 6:30). Similarly, the signs and miracles performed by Paul and Barnabas testified of God’s Spirit at work in them (Acts 14:3). Hebrews 2:3, 4 (NIV) puts it like this:

   “This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

3. **Dunamis—Power**

   *Dunamis* is usually translated “power.” Miracles can be considered “powers” in that they show the mighty power of God that was evident in Jesus, “the Great Power of God” (Acts 8:10, NASB). This word suggests that there are higher forces at work in this lower world of ours (see Hebrews 6:5). The plural form, “powers,” is the same word translated “mighty works” (Matthew 11:20; Mark 6:14; Luke 10:13) and “miracles” (Acts 19:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 28; Galatians 3:5).

   These three words are combined in one verse—“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles [dunamesi], wonders [terasi] and signs [semeiois], which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22, NIV).

**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

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

Ask the students to form small groups and discuss the following question: If you had a guarantee that God would perform any miracle in your life right now,
what miracle would you pray for? Covenant with one another in your small group to make each individual request a matter of prayer. Keep one another posted on any answers to prayer.

Summary
Share the following as a conclusion to this lesson:

Dr. Ben Carson tells of facing the seemingly inevitable death of a patient, the father of three children.

Lord, I need a booster here, I remember praying.
You could do wonders for my faith right now.

Within two days, Rob was off the respirator. A few days after Rob went home there was an interesting development. Since I first entered the field of medicine, I have met doctors who have difficulty dealing with unanswerable situations. Often they’ll finally admit, “Well, there’s some explanation, we just don’t understand it.”

One of the neurosurgeons, an especially brilliant man and one who doesn’t acknowledge a belief in God, pondered this matter of Rob for several days. He asked question after question, determined to figure out an answer. None of us could offer an explanation for Rob’s recovery.

“I know, but I think I’ve finally figured it out,” he said. “It’s the mitrochondria at the subcellular level, and they can go into shock.”

I listened to his explanation before I asked him a question. “Tell me, did you ever see such a thing before?”

“No, not really, but . . . .”

“This is a miracle,” I said. “Why not accept it for what it is? They don’t come any more blatantly than this. Rob was gone and now he’s back. This is the only time I’ve ever seen an adult sink to such a low neurological level and then recover.”

As my final statement I said, “We don’t have to explain miracles; all we have to do is accept 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 Prophets and Kings, chapter 19.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

We live in a world that tends to be very casual about the problem of pride. We’re swamped with books on how to achieve wealth, beauty, happiness, and success, but there aren’t many bestsellers with titles like Seven Steps to a Less Glamorous Life or How to Land the Lowest Job. Don King, the boxing promoter, captured our culture’s attitude toward humility when he said, “Sometimes I amaze even my own self . . . and I say that humbly.” Let’s face it—our culture is quite ambivalent about this humility deal.

This casual attitude toward pride, however, is not biblical. Listen to Scripture: “The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full” (Psalm 31:23, NIV). “Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure” (Psalm 101:5, NIV). “The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished” (Proverbs 16:5, NIV). “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6, NIV). “And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” (Daniel 4:37, NIV).

Given the clarity with which the Bible speaks against pride, the story of Naaman offers an ideal opportunity to engage your students in a conversation about the importance of humility. While there are other directions you could take this lesson (obedience, self-image, witnessing, etc.), the issue of pride seems to be a worthwhile focus. In the end, William Barclay was right in his summation: “Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come.”

II. TARGET

The students will:
• See the serious, self-destructive nature of pride. (Know)
• Sense the benefits of humility. (Feel)
• Be challenged to confess pride and walk humbly with God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Obedience
• Humility
• Self-image
• Witnessing/sharing
• Faith/evangelism

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

Ask students to shout out names of celebrities and athletes whom they perceive as arrogant. List the names on a whiteboard or a poster board. The list may contain names such as Donald Trump (real estate tycoon), Terrell Owens (wide receiver in the National Football League), Rush Limbaugh (radio talk show host), etc. Next, make a list of characteristics that the
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Like this student (who, by the way, did get accepted at NYU!), Naaman had lots and lots of skills. He was larger than life with hordes of talents, money, power, and fame. But Naaman had one other thing that all the power and fame in the world couldn’t fix—a patch of discolored skin. This little spot of leprosy would kill him. Naaman’s only hope for healing came through humbly accepting his limitations and obeying the command to go dunk in a polluted river. Only when he humbled himself before God did he receive healing.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Use the following phrases and discussion questions from the Into the Story section with your students to process the story with them.

Verse one tells us that Naaman was “a great man in the sight of his master.” What makes a person “great” today? Might someone be great in the eyes of the world but pitiful in the eyes of God? Explain.

Another detail in verse one is that Naaman “was a valiant soldier.” In other words, he was not just a keen military strategist; he excelled in the battle. He loved a good challenge. “But he had leprosy,” the verse goes on to say. Do you know of any examples today of people who love any challenge but are brought to their knees by some seemingly small patch of discolored skin? Does God ever allow these challenges to teach us humility? Explain.

Review the reasoning of Naaman’s servants in verse 13. In what other ways might Naaman have responded to them? How open are you to confrontation? In what ways can we grow when we receive criticism with a spirit of humility?

Read verses 22, 23 and describe what kind of person you think Gehazi was when he was a teenager.

What does God’s punishment in verse 27 reveal about God? Does this punishment seem too harsh? Why or why not?

There are many examples of prideful people in the Bible. Take some time to check out each of these verses with your students:

Deuteronomy 8:11-14
2 Kings 20:12-18
2 Chronicles 26:16-21
Esther 3:1-6
How did each person show his or her pride? What was the result of their pride? What do these verses say about pride in our lives?

Here are some additional passages that relate to this lesson:
Psalm 138; Proverbs 16; Proverbs 27; Proverbs 29; Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:3.

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. Naaman's Disease
Leprosy was much like AIDS today. It was one of the most feared diseases in the ancient world. According to Wikipedia.com, leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease. It is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium leprae. If left untreated, there can be progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs, and eyes. Leprosy has affected humanity since at least 600 B.C., and was well-recognized in the civilizations of ancient China, Egypt, and India. In 1995 the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that between two and three million individuals were permanently disabled because of leprosy. Although the forced quarantine or segregation of patients is unnecessary, and can be considered unethical, a few leper colonies still remain around the world in countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In Bible times many lepers were quarantined to death camps. Because Naaman still held his post, his form must have been mild, or he caught it in an early stage. In any case, he would have interpreted the disease as a death sentence.

2. The Maid servant
The name of Naaman’s maid is unknown. While we don’t know much about her, it was her suggestion that brought healing and faith in God to a powerful Aramean captain. We do know that she was an Israelite. For an Israelite to come into contact with a leper was strictly forbidden. If they did there were certain ceremonial washings that Jews had to perform in order to be considered clean again. Yet Naaman’s maid was in contact with a feared leper.

3. Naaman’s Pride
The NIV Life Application Bible connects Naaman's story with this practical teaching on the topic of pride: Naaman, a great hero, was used to getting respect, and he was outraged when Elisha treated him like an ordinary person. A proud man, he expected royal treatment. To wash in a great river would be one thing, but the Jordan was small and dirty. To wash in the Jordan, Naaman thought, was beneath a man of his position. But Naaman had to humble himself and obey Elisha's commands in order to be healed.

Obedience to God begins with humility. We must believe that His way is better than our own. We may not always understand His ways of working, but by
humbly obeying, we will receive His blessings. We must remember that (1) God’s ways are best; (2) God wants our obedience more than anything else; (3) God can use anything to accomplish His purposes.²

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Tell the students that they have been selected to present a seminar to the world church on the topic of humility. Their challenge is to make it as practical as possible so that everyone in attendance will leave the seminar with a clear picture of what they must do in order to grow in the area of humility. Turn the class loose to develop the curriculum and then have them share their practical suggestions on how to be humble.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) says: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Pride is sin. But God will forgive us when we confess our sins. The Bible warns us that pride leads to destruction. Conceit is a cancer to Christians. It ruins friendships, damages relationships, and compromises intimacy with God.

Close with a time of prayer for your students to reflect on any pockets of pride that might hinder their walk with God. After a brief season of solitude, invite the students to ask God for forgiveness—and for strength to take the focus off of themselves and fully on God.

² Adapted from “But I Have Not Yet Gone to College,” Still More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks (Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), pp. 116, 117.


³ As quoted at www.aopa.org/asf/publications/inst_reports2.cfm?article=4737.

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 Prophets and Kings, chapters 20, 21.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Jonah’s story has everything—terror on the high seas, attempted suicide, supernatural rescue, prophecies of doom and destruction, a shocking display of true love—everything, that is, but a tidy ending. There’s Jonah, farther from home than he ever expected, having traveled by ship, fish, and foot, sitting outside Nineveh feeling sorry for himself, letting out the world’s most selfish wail.

And like no other Bible book perhaps save Job (another tale of someone who learns that if you debate God, don’t expect to win), we’re left with countless unanswered questions. How did Jonah’s half-hearted, hellfire-and-damnation street preaching manage to touch the hearts of so many people? Whatever happened to those Ninevites anyway—especially considering that the Babylonians reduced their city to rubble only a few generations later? Why would God send someone so prejudiced to preach to people he so despised? Just how much (and for how long) did the Ninevites change their ways and how much did they ever understand God? Did Jonah ever eat fish again?

We’re left with one answer: It’s a God thing. A God Jonah knew all too well, “a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity” (Jonah 4:2, NIV).

Samuel, Peter, and most of the rest of us: “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

Jonah may be a shrimpy book compared to some in the Bible, but it’s packed with some jumbo themes. As you explore Jonah’s themes with your students, think about such issues as:

- God’s love and care for the most sinful people—and the most ungrateful.
- The importance of seeing others as God sees them.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the core elements of trusting God to do the seemingly impossible. (Know)
- Sense God’s willingness to save the most wicked people—and the most ungrateful. (Feel)
- Choose to seize faith moments as opportunities to grow instead of calamities to avoid. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Prejudice
- Witnessing/sharing faith/evangelism
- Grace
- Purpose (knowing your)

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.
family vacation sounded like a particularly fitting punishment. But her mom just said, “Heather and I have talked and have made some decisions—and frankly, Anna, it’s none of your business.”

Anna grumbled to herself as she put on her slippers. Why did their parents have to let Heather get away with everything?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Self-righteousness. Why are others’ faults so easy to see when our own are invisible to us? It’s hard seeing the world through someone else’s eyes when we’re blind to our own faults.

“How can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3-5, NIV).

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. Underline parts of the story that are new to you. What’s the most surprising part of this story?
2. Highlight the parts of the story where people speak with God or try to send God a message.
3. What themes come out of the book of Jonah?
4. How is Jonah different from other stories in the Bible?
5. How do you think the Israelites reacted when they first heard about Jonah’s visit to Nineveh?
6. What verse(s) do you think sum up the theme of Jonah?

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.

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.

Adventists have traditionally reached people by sharing “the truth”—about the Sabbath, about what happens when we die, about the mark of the beast. While all those truths are found in the Bible, Jonah is one of the Bible stories (such as the thief on the cross or the angels rescuing Lot) about God saving people who had barely heard of many of the beliefs we take for granted.

As you reflect on this with your students, turn to Matthew 24:4-13, where Jesus warns His followers to beware of false prophets and deception. What balance is there between the importance of simply introducing people to Jesus and ensuring that they know enough to avoid being deceived?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Anna got straight A’s, sang in the school choir, and prided herself on being involved in church. Anna’s sister Heather loved playing sports and hanging out with friends, but did the least she could get away with in school. Her parents sometimes talked with Heather about her goals for the future, but Heather assured them she’d figure that out later.

Anna knew her parents didn’t have a favorite, but she was pretty sure that they were just a little more proud of her. She was the one who stayed home to help paint the porch while Heather went to the amusement park with some boyfriend-of-the-week. She was the one who cooked and delivered lunch and dinner when Aunt Margaret broke her leg.

The Saturday night before the annual family road trip, Anna stayed up working on a college application—while Heather stayed out far past her pretrip curfew. When Anna headed to bed she found her mom still waiting up. When Anna tiptoed to the bathroom at 3:00 a.m. she heard a car outside—Heather was four hours late getting home.

When her mom woke her up at 5:00 to start packing the car, Anna blurted out, “Are you going to ground Heather?” Somehow being grounded in the middle of
I say “Jonah,” you say “whale.” And while any good Bible student can tell you that the text says only “big fish,” few realize that Jonah pops up one other place in the Old Testament. Second Kings 14:25 reveals that he prophesied during the wretched 41-year reign of Jereboam II of Israel, around 800-760 B.C.

Nineveh, located near present-day Mosul, Iraq, was a city of great temples and palaces that sat along the river trade routes between east and west. It served as the capital of the ancient Assyrian empire, and much architectural expansion had occurred in the decades before its most famous visitor showed up to prophesy its destruction. Jonah describes it as a “great city of three days’ journey” (Jonah 3:3, KJV), which scholars believe refers to how long it would take to walk around it.

Archaeological records indicate a revival of worship of the god Marduk in Nineveh around the time of Jonah, but neither the Bible nor archaeology suggests the Ninevites all became “Seventh-day Assyrians.” In the story Jonah doesn’t ask the Ninevites to give up their own gods, and the text doesn’t say they accepted Yahweh as their only god. He just asks them to repent of their sins, and however little they may have understood of the Israelite religion, God accepted their repentance and faith in Him as genuine.

The king of Nineveh was convicted that chief among his people’s sins was “violence,” and his understanding of salvation is as keen as anyone’s in the Bible: “Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish” (Jonah 3:8, 9, NIV).

Jesus referenced Jonah in His pleadings to the Israelites to repent of their self-righteousness. When they demanded a sign, He told them that the only one they’d get would be “the sign of Jonah”: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge...
Jonah challenges our preconceptions of God’s judgment, our prejudices about non-Christians, and what’s in our own hearts. It reminds us that there’s no room in heaven for self-righteousness, for only by God’s grace can any of us—“saint” or sinner, preacher or plumber, Christian or Muslim—be saved. We’ll make it to heaven because God loved us and when God came knocking, we opened the door and let Him in.

But as much as we may like to kick self-pitying Jonah around, his belly-bound prayer is one of the most beautiful in the Bible, and reminds us that though our faith falters, God is always listening.

III. CLOSING

Activity
[Use Tips for Top-notch Teaching.]

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

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 Prophets and Kings, chapter 22.

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

I. SYNOPSIS

God loves us to death. His love for us is unending, undying, and unwavering. The story of Hosea demonstrates this kind of sacrificial love. It shows us the kind of love God has for His people. This story and lesson is not just about Hosea’s broken home and heart, but also about God’s. Students should become well acquainted with God’s passionate love for them, God’s pain over sin, and God’s plan to redeem them. God’s passionate love caused Him to pull out all the stops to show Israel how much He cared for her. He was desperate to save and deliver her. Israel, though, had to make the decision to come back. In the same way, God is desperate to redeem and restore His people of today. He anxiously waits for us to give ourselves completely to Him.

As in the time of Hosea, God is often rejected, forgotten, or ignored, and this causes God great pain. He who fixes hearts reveals that He Himself is suffering from a broken heart. God, however, refuses to give up. God vows to fight for His bride.

God’s plan is to redeem His people, as Gomer was redeemed. God leaves us with the promise that He will restore and heal His children. God is willing to do all He can to make our relationship with Him work. God wants to restore and remake us. Relationships, however, are two-way. We must do our part to stay faithful to God and maintain a loving relationship with Him.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand the deep love God has for us. (Know)
- Sense the emotions God feels when we ignore Him. (Feel)
- Choose a friendship with God and choose His way for their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Grace
- God (loving, unfailing, personal)
- Leadership

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

What emotions do you think God feels? Give an example from the Bible when God felt joy. When did God feel sorrow? When did God get angry? For larger classes, have students get into groups of two or three to answer the questions.
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When you were little, did you ever run away?

Share a time when you tried or wanted to run away as a little child. How do you think your parents would have felt if their little child stayed lost? Losing something is not very fun; especially if it is something you love. When that something is someone you love, it can be heartbreaking. Our lesson is about heartbreak—Hosea’s heartbreak and God’s heartbreak.

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 did God tell Hosea to do?
• What do we know about Hosea’s wife?
• How had Israel behaved toward God?
• How did God deal with Israel when she forgot God and did her own thing?
• What emotions do you think God felt when He saw Israel?
• Circle all the words that showed emotions or feelings.
• How would you feel if you were married to someone like Gomer?
• How do you think God feels about His relationship with you?
• What do you think God was trying to tell us through the marriage of Hosea and Gomer?
• What promise did you find in this story?

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

Ezekiel 33:11; Jeremiah 3:12; Hosea 6:1-3; 14:1, 2; 1 Timothy 2:3, 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.

Israel was on the brink of destruction. Israel had disobeyed God time and time again. As a result, they were soon to be led into captivity. Hosea was the last prophet to Israel before it was destroyed. All the prophets before spoke of the ensuing judgment and
the flaming wrath that was to come on all who had turned away from God. In Hosea, God shows His softer side, the deepness of His heart and the depth of His love.

The name Hosea means “salvation” or “savior.” It has the same meaning as Joshua and Jesus. Actually, Jesus is the Greek version of Hosea. Hosea was also the name of Israel’s last king, before it was destroyed as a nation. This name was a promise of salvation.

God instructed the young prophet Hosea to get married. The woman he was engaged to was unfaithful and was a prostitute. Nevertheless, Hosea married Gomer and started a family, but Gomer never let go of her old lovers. She cheated on Hosea more than once, and found herself a slave.

Hosea was heartbroken. He had fallen in love with Gomer, and it seemed as if Gomer wanted everyone but him. God shared with Hosea that this was exactly how He felt about His wife, Israel. God had loved her and provided for her, but she continued to forget all about God. Israel wanted the gods of the world. This broke God’s heart.

God told Hosea to go get his wife back. By the time he found her, even though she was his wife, he had to pay another man for her freedom. The Bible says that he bought her for 15 shekels of silver and 1½ homers of barley. In Hosea’s time, 1½ homers of barley was equal to about 15 shekels of silver. The prophet paid the equivalent of 30 pieces of silver for his wife. This was the price of a slave. This was also what the priests paid Judas for Jesus.

Hosea probably made only 10 shekels a year, so 30 shekels was a large price to pay. Hosea had to pay a great cost to forgive and restore his wife. Hosea’s story points to Christ who purchased us from the slavery of sin with His own blood. God loved us too much to leave us as slaves. Though we hurt Him, He still extends the invitation for us to be in loving relationship with 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 Prophets and Kings. 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.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

**Random Draw**

Allowing the students to participate in reading and answering questions is a great way to keep them involved. Students do not always volunteer for these opportunities; so try calling on students randomly. They are more likely to be alert and more engaged if they do not know when they will be called on. To make this fun, write each student’s name on a small object, such as a card or craft stick, and place them all in a container. After asking a question, draw a name to determine who will answer it. Return the object to the container and mix them up for the next question or duty.
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

God went through great pains to show His love for us. Now give the students a chance to express their love for Him. Have students get in groups of three or four and instruct them to write a six-line love song to God. Each group will work on one song together. When each group has finished, give them time to share their love songs. The songs should be sung for the whole group.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Hosea is a story of love. Hosea fell in love with a woman who did not love him back. In the midst of this pain, God helped him to love again. Though his wife was unfaithful and unloving, God was able to heal their relationship and restore their family.

In the same way, Hosea’s story shows how God feels about us. God loves us to death. God desperately wants us in a loving relationship with Him. This story gives us a glimpse of God’s passionate love for His children. “How can I give you up?” God exclaims. God wants to fight for us. This story also displays the pain we cause God when we walk away from Him, neglect Him, or ignore Him. God has a plan for our lives. Hosea points to Jesus who died to set us free from the bonds of slavery. And because of Jesus Christ, we can be restored into a right relationship with God.


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 Prophets and Kings, chapters 23, 24.

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

I. SYNOPSIS
This lesson is particularly exciting in that we see how Isaiah was called to be a prophet of God. The story is vivid in its telling. We can teach so many great truths from this one chapter. If the chapter were to be summed up in one word, the word would be “calling.” The process of Isaiah’s calling is clear in the text. The vision of heaven, Isaiah’s acknowledgment of his sin, the forgiveness given by the seraph by bringing the coal to Isaiah’s lips, and the call and response of God and Isaiah is a wonderful view into how God calls His people to work for Him.

As you teach the lesson this week, it is important to note these three things: calling, forgiveness, response. These three elements are the backbone of any call from God. For us to be useful to God we have to understand who we are. Moses is a great example of this procedure that God uses when He calls His leaders to a task or a purpose.

Students at this age are always looking for identity, and this story gives a great example of how one becomes defined by what they do for God when He calls them. It is a great source of comfort for students to understand that God is in need of their hands and feet to do the work He has for them.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Listen more closely to God and seek to do His will. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Forgiveness
- Calling
- Response

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

Have the students list all the different ways they are connected to one another—all the ways they are available to one another. Cell phones, instant messaging, and those types of things count as they continue to find ways to connect and be available to other people. Once this is done, ask them how they are connected to Christ. Give them all a piece of paper and have them write a conversation that they would have with God on a cell phone with text messaging. The responses might be pretty funny with all of the abbreviations they use. Share these with each other and talk of how we are connected and available to God.
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:
The author was working in the yard one day. His 4-month-old daughter was in her chair next to him. He decided he needed to run down the street in his car to do something, so he called his wife and told her he was taking their daughter with him. They got into the car and drove to the downtown area, which was real close. On a busy street, the car died. It was a hot day, and with no air-conditioning the baby was getting uncomfortable very quickly.

The author jumped out and tried to find someone with a cell phone. He had forgotten his at home. He asked a few people, who looked at him strangely. Then he grabbed his daughter and ran into a store to use the phone. They wouldn’t let him use it. He was worried about his car and his daughter, but very little could be done. He finally found someone who would let him use the phone! He called his house, but his wife didn’t pick up the phone. Trouble!

After a while, he was finally able to reach her and get things going again, but he learned something that day: it is good to be connected. It is good to know that you can get hold of someone who will be available to you when you need them, and you can be available to them as well.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:
Sometimes it seems as if we are all alone and there is nothing we can do for God. However, the story of Isaiah shows us that all we need is the desire to be available to God so that He can forgive us and use us as He sees fit. However, if we don’t connect we don’t know that He is calling us.

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 are the most important verses in this story?
- What is the process God uses to call His people to work for Him?
- What does this story tell us about God?
- What does this story tell us about us?
- What does this story tell us about our relationship with God?

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. When God calls us to partner with Him to make the world understand Him more, it is often through God’s preemption that it is initiated. In other words, God comes to us first. We call this “provenient” grace. It means that He moved first. Acts 9 has a great example of this in the calling of the apostle Paul. While he was still persecuting Christians he was called into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. After the light from heaven shone on him Saul/Paul immediately realized who he was in the eyes of God. It seems like a theme that when a person encounters God they also encounter themselves as they really are. We have lots of ways to justify and rationalize the things we do and the people we are. However, God sees through all of that into the depths of our souls. The Bible tells us He knows the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30); therefore, it is safe to say that God knows us. When we see ourselves as God sees us it is often a powerful reminder of how unworthy we are to be so loved by God.

3. In every person that God calls there is a time for response. That is when we decide whether or not we are going to receive the call of God and do as He asks, or if we are going to ignore the call of God and go about our business. In the Bible we see examples of those who have decided to ignore the call of God on their lives for various reasons (“the rich young ruler” comes to mind). In fact, Moses did all that he could in order to ignore the call of God; he even tried to give the call to his brother, Aaron, whom he believed to be much more eloquent than himself. But when God calls, either we say no or we say yes and accept the blessings God has for us in our lives.

4. Once you have responded to the call of God in your life in a positive manner, be prepared for your life to change rapidly. There are literally
hundreds of examples of this in the Bible. Here are a few: Moses, Abraham, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Paul, the disciples, and the list goes on and on and on. Are you ready for your life to change in a way that you never imagined? Say yes to God and you can find out what He has for you.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Bring the class together for some time in prayer. During the prayer, make sure that you allow for some silent interaction with God. The students rarely get to be in complete silence with no distractions, so this will be a nice time for them to listen to what God is wanting from them. After the students have had a few moments of silent prayer, have them reread Isaiah 6:1-8. Give them a few minutes to read, then ask: “If you were called by God as Isaiah was, how would you have reacted? What were some of the sights and sounds you experienced in the throne room? How would experiencing that make a difference in how you live your life?” Close with a word that directs them to stay connected with God through the week.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words: Calling, forgiveness, response. These are the strong themes to hit in today’s lesson. There are many examples of how we are called and forgiven and put to work by God in the Bible. The list in this lesson is by no means exhaustive. Do your own biblical search and

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Making Things Practical

It’s easy to speak of spiritual concepts and never let the rubber hit the road when it comes to our understanding of God. It is important to relate things as simply as possible. However, simple and simplistic are not the same thing. Plain, everyday language with illustrations from the students’ lives makes the lessons more appealing and more understandable. Young people are very intuitive and willing to go where you lead them, as long as you know where you are headed first. A good rule is this: if it is hard to explain, you probably haven’t spent enough time interpreting the concepts.

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 Prophets and Kings. 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.
find those whose story you most resonate with when it comes to calling. Know that every student is looking for validation and identity, and when they do what is being asked for them by God they can truly find the contentment that their heart so desires. You can add to that process by making them aware of the fact that God is calling them for a specific purpose in the world and in salvation history.

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 *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 25.

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

I. SYNOPSIS

It is a cruel act of fate that some of the best and brightest are called to live in the darkest of times. Yet, it is darkness that makes one appreciate light. As dark times go, the period in which Isaiah prophesied was one of the darkest in the history of Judah.

Isaiah’s ministry was preceded by the sad events of the demise of Uzziah, a faithful follower of God for most of his 52-year reign, whom God afflicted with leprosy because he presumed to minister in the holy sanctuary, an honor reserved for priests. Uzziah was followed by his son Jotham who did what was right in the sight of God. But in spite of these two largely positive reigns, Judah continued to decline—as did Israel in the North. Neither Uzziah nor Jotham destroyed the evil shrines worshipped by the people in the high places, for instance.

As you teach the lesson, keep in mind that Isaiah’s message is twofold. His first concern is that the people be reconciled to God, that they put away all known idolatry and sin. Second, Isaiah wants the people to catch the vision that so energized his life in Isaiah 6. He wanted to give the people hope during the difficult days of Assyrian threat by painting for them the picture of the coming Messiah, a picture so compelling that they would yearn for His appearing and live out their belief in Him from day to day.

The students must know that Isaiah’s call to repentance and obedience, and promise of redemption through Jesus Christ is the same for us today. God’s message of salvation can transform our lives and make us a spectacle of godliness such as the world has never seen. Through Isaiah God desired to remind His people of their special status as light-bearers to the world. We too are called to shine for Jesus so that others might be saved.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that as spiritual descendants of Abraham, they are called to give the world an example of godliness. (Know)
• Experience the joy that flows from accepting their place in God’s divine plan. (Feel)
• Look for opportunities to share the blessings with which God has entrusted them. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Hope
• The remnant and its mission
• Christ (life, death, resurrection)

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.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 a follow-up to the What Do You Think? activity,
he will give decisions for the poor of the earth” (verses 3, 4, NIV). In a very real sense, these traits should have been on display in the lives of God’s people in Judah and Israel—to please God and to give the world a picture of who He is. They were not, but there was reason to hope—Jesus.

**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 parts of the two Scripture passages that catch your attention.
- Is there anything in Isaiah’s description of Jesus that strikes you as odd? Why does he specifically choose to highlight certain elements of Jesus’ character? What message was God communicating through the prophet’s description?
- Isaiah is first and foremost a prophet of redemption. **Circle** portions of the second passage (Isaiah 44:1-5) that show God’s redemptive power.
- God promises to “pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground.” Then He says, “They will spring up like grass in a meadow” (Isaiah 44:3, 4, NIV). Who is the “they” spoken of here by God?
- Who was the audience for these messages from Isaiah? What relevance might these messages have for us today?

*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. God’s Eye on the Heathen.** Though Israel did not understand how much God cared for the heathen, a careful survey of God’s promise to Abraham would have brought it to their attention. Genesis 12:2, 3 states: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (NIV).
Instead of focusing on the fact that they were blessed in order to be a blessing, Israel basked in their divine favor instead of sharing it.

2. Turbulent Times. It can be argued that Isaiah prophesied during some of the most tumultuous times in Judah’s history. God was angry at His people’s apostasy: “Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies” (Isaiah 1:13, NIV). More than that, however, Judah was under mortal threat from Sennacherib and the powerful Assyrians, who in 722 B.C. had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. This conquest scared King Hezekiah so much that he stripped the Temple of all its treasures and sent them to the Assyrian king in hope of appeasing him (2 Kings 18:13-16). It did not work. When all hope failed, Hezekiah sought out Isaiah for a word from the Lord (2 Kings 19:1-7). It was against this backdrop that Isaiah called Jerusalem to repentance and encouraged Hezekiah to resist Assyria by exercising faith and trust in God.

3. Anointed Aristocrat. Unlike most biblical prophets, Isaiah was not born into poverty. He did no menial labor. He was the son of Amoz, a nobleman, who many scholars believe had distant royal lineage. Isaiah, of all the Bible’s prophets, had unparalleled access to the halls of power. He prophesied under Kings Uzziah and Jotham, advised King Ahaz (though Ahaz failed to heed his counsel), and warned Hezekiah of foreign entanglements with Egypt against Assyria. For this reason he is considered the most political prophet in all of Scripture. Isaiah’s ministry shows us that God is willing to use those with influence and status, as well as those with none. All God requires is a willing heart.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Creatively Creative

In any learning environment, whether it be kindergarten or adult, there will be a wide variety of learning styles represented. This is also true of your Sabbath School class. In this lesson Isaiah paints a word picture of Jesus (Isaiah 11). He does so again in Isaiah 53 and in other places.

How Isaiah views Jesus is certainly not how your students might picture Him. Ask the students to create their own picture of Jesus. They may do so by selecting a characteristic of Jesus that they admire, or doing something on His entire life. They may create their picture by drawing, writing, role-playing, singing—whatever best expresses how they think of Jesus. Provide paper, pens, markers, and other items they might need. Ask a few volunteers to share their creativity with the class.

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 Prophets and Kings. 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.
4. Prophet of Redemption. Isaiah’s prophecies helped to guide Judah during turbulent times, but this was by no means the focus of his prophetic ministry. Fueled by his vision of God in Isaiah 6, and the transformation that he experienced by being forgiven and redeemed, Isaiah’s prophetic message is the most spiritually complete of all Old Testament prophets. He spoke of God’s judgment of sin, but pointed to a day when the Messiah would come—a fair king, an honest king, a compassionate king, a sacrificing king, a loving king (Isaiah 11)—who would not only deliver them from their physical enemies but from sin itself. This promise of redemption is echoed throughout Isaiah’s book.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Read the following to your students: “The inhabitants of Judah were all undeserving, yet God would not give them up. By them His name was to be exalted among the heathen. Many who were wholly unacquainted with His attributes were yet to behold the glory of the divine character. It was for the purpose of making plain His merciful designs that He kept sending His servants the prophets with the message: ‘Turn ye again now everyone from his evil way.’ Jeremiah 25:5.”—Prophets and Kings, p. 319.

Ask the students to make a list of friends they want to see know God. Say a special prayer asking God to share His love through each student.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God in His love and mercy never abandons His children to suffer hopelessly. Long after Israel’s apostasy and idol worship had worn out God’s patience, He still kept on extending offers of forgiveness and redemption.

God loved His people dearly, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham. If He was to bless the nations of the earth through Abraham’s seed, He would have to redeem Israel, and this God did through the blood of His Son Jesus, to whom Isaiah pointed. Through Jesus, God offered redemption to not only His people but peoples everywhere.

What Israel had failed to do—set an example of godliness for the world—God did through Jesus; all who believe in Him take their place as Abraham’s heirs and find their purpose in God’s divine plan to bless fallen humanity. This high calling should be the joy of every Christian heart.

Summary

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What Israel had failed to do—set an example of godliness for the world—God did through Jesus; all who believe in Him take their place as Abraham’s heirs and find their purpose in God’s divine plan to bless fallen humanity. This high calling should be the joy of every Christian heart.

1 Fundamental Belief No. 13.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 9.
I. SYNOPSIS
When Ahaz assumed the throne of Judah following the death of Jotham, the inhabitants of Judah had no idea what they were in for. Under Ahaz’s reign, Judah fell into an apostasy so great that the Temple worship was halted and shrines to foreign gods were established under every spreading tree. The people were encouraged by their king to worship whomever they wanted to, whenever they wanted to. In the Valley of Hinnom, Ahaz even sacrificed his own son in the flames of Molech.

Why did Ahaz fail in such a spectacular way? It is clear from his record that fear played a significant role in Ahaz’s inability to choose the right path. Beset by King Pekah of Israel and King Resin of Syria, Ahaz made a crucial mistake: He went to the king of Assyria for help instead of to God. Isaiah warned him that he had nothing to fear as long as God was with him, but Ahaz would not listen.

The Assyrians did save him, but it came at a high price, for the Assyrians, not content with the treasures from the Temple given them by Ahaz, now eyed the whole kingdom of Judah. Furthermore, Ahaz believed that the gods of the Assyrians had protected Judah, so he promulgated the worship of these gods throughout the realm.

Entreaties were made, but Ahaz did not listen. In so doing he hastened God’s judgments. Today, many of God’s people are trading the seeming insecurity of a “faceless” God for the security of money, fame, friends, spouses, houses, etc. They are making a Faustian bargain.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Understand that obedience to God is an act of worship and it is best to do so even when we are apprehensive. (Know)
• Embrace God’s call to place no other gods before Him. (Feel)
• Ask God to show them what in their lives must go to make room for Him. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Humility
• Growth/transformation in Christ
• Decision-making
• How to witness
You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.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.

The answers to the What Do You Think? activity are as follows: 1. b; 2. a; 3. d; 4. e; 5. c.

Invite the students to share other current and former leaders—political or not—whose dastardly acts
then those in leadership roles bear a greater responsibility for their choices than do those who follow them. What makes the difference? In a word—influence.

A leader’s influence has the potential to make or break an organization. And when that leader operates out of fear rather than assurance, he or she is dangerous. In the case of Ahaz, his fear of destruction coupled with a broken connection to God led to open apostasy.

**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.

- Ahaz comes to the throne at an early age—20—the son of a good, though not great, king. What role might age have played in Ahaz’s decision-making?
- 2 Kings 16:3 tells us who Ahaz’s role models were. What was it about the kings of Israel that so enticed this king of Judah?
- Circle places in the story where godly counsel would have served Ahaz well. Ask the students to make a list of possible options opened to Ahaz.
- Consider sharing with your students a time in your life when fear got the better of you. What lesson did you learn from that experience?
- Ahaz took the gold and silver from the Temple and gave them to the king of Assyria. Was this act a type of worship of a foreign god?

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

Matthew 23; Revelation 22:8, 9; Romans 1:18-24.

**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 several players who enter and exit the life of Ahaz. Here are a few more details about them.

1. Tiglath-Pileser. Biblical scholars have traced the reign of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, to the time period between 747 B.C. and 727 B.C. During those 20 years, Tiglath-Pileser was a busy king. Before his kingship, the vast territory of Assyria was held together largely by force, a fix that didn’t work very well. Instead of
attempting to subdue the realm by force, Tiglath-Pileser created a regional power structure that helped to destabilize powerful underlings in outlying regions of the Assyrian Kingdom. He also made several changes to the military structure, forcing conquered peoples to serve as the infantrymen in his army, while native Assyrians held higher positions, such as cavalrymen and charioteers. This simple change enlarged his forces and allowed them to fight year round, as opposed to once per year. He used this power to ruthlessly oppress all surrounding nations that dared stand up to him.²

2. The Prophets. We know that Isaiah prophesied during the reign of King Ahaz, but he was not alone. Ellen White notes: “The prophet Micah, who bore his testimony during those troublous times, declared that sinners in Zion, while claiming to ‘lean upon the Lord,’ and blasphemously boasting, ‘Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us,’ continued to ‘build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.’ Micah 3:11, 10” (Prophets and Kings, p. 322). Hosea was also prophesying during the period in Judah. God through Hosea spoke this pronouncement against Israel: “Put the trumpet to your lips! An eagle is over the house of the Lord because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law” (Hosea 8:1, NIV). Ironically, Ahaz rarely looked for guidance from these anointed men of God, probably because he did not like what they had to say. Are we sometimes like him?

3. Practical Godliness Needed. Micah beautifully captures one of the excuses used by the people of the time to avoid seeking God: “With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?” (Micah 6:6, NIV). Notice the subtle indictment of God: “We are not sure how to please God. He is too hard to serve. Nothing appeases Him,” they seem to say. If you recognize this idea it is because you’ve heard it before. It is the charge leveled at God by Satan. But Micah has a very practical answer for the people’s recalcitrance. “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, NIV). God was not asking for some spectacular sacrifice then, and He isn’t asking for it now.

4. State Religion. Ahaz was able to do something that no other king of Judah had been able to pull off: He made the worship of Assyrian gods the official state religion of Judah. Heretofore, the worship of pagan deities occurred in the “high places” first constructed by Solomon to make his many foreign wives feel at home. These shrines were still around, but Ahaz took pagan worship to epic heights. Whenever humans attempt to institute a single form of

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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 Prophets and Kings. 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.
worship, whether it be Christian or not, what inevitably happens is that true worship is prohibited and false worship is promoted. This is what happened in Jerusalem, and state-sanctioned worship will be the rule of the day before Jesus comes again.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask students to generate on a blackboard a list of “gods” that people worship today. Money, pleasure, homes, etc., are a few everyday gods many worship.

For each of the gods mentioned, ask the students to share what benefits they think these gods bring to the lives of those who worship them. Finally, ask: How might something we like or enjoy become a god in our lives?

Pray, asking God to help us keep Him first in our lives at all times.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The kingdom of Judah descended into open sin under the leadership of Ahaz. Almost immediately after coming to the throne, he was faced with a vexing problem. Two kings had amassed their armies to fight against him, and he simply did not know what to do. Faced with similar odds, many of us might be tempted to lean on arms of flesh instead of on God. And that’s what Ahaz did. In so doing Ahaz introduced for the first time in Jerusalem the worship of Assyrian (Babylonian) gods and deities. This false worship was no sideshow. It became the official religion of the land.

The fearful actions of fearful King Ahaz can teach us much. One lesson we can learn is that when burdened by cares, we should take those cares to God to seek His guidance. Another lesson we can take away from this episode is that influence is a gift from God that has powerful effects for good or evil on those who follow us. We owe the world around us a godly example, but we owe God, and God alone, our worship.

1 Fundamental Belief No. 11.

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 Prophets and Kings, chapter 27.

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

I. SYNOPSIS

Hezekiah was a breath of fresh air among the kings of Judah—a king determined to serve God the way King David had done. He instituted a program of national reform that led to a great spiritual revival. This lesson focuses on two of Hezekiah’s initiatives: restoring the Temple and its services, and renewing the observance of the annual Passover festival.

Before Judah could experience revival, there had to be preparation. Hezekiah called on the priests and Levites to help with the restoration of the Temple and its services. In order to do so, everything that “defiled” the Temple—everything that related to the worship of false gods—had to be disposed of. The people of Judah did the same in preparation for the Passover celebration, throwing down false altars and “high places” to get ready to worship the true God.

When the Passover feast came, it was such a joyous celebration that it ran an extra week—by popular demand. That’s the sign of a real revival—when people just can’t stop worshipping God!

As you discuss this week’s lesson with your class, get a sense of whether they think your church community and/or your youth group is in need of revival. What might revival look like in your context? Remember to keep the focus on the fact that revival within a community begins with individuals making a radical commitment to Jesus. Revival isn’t about going around telling others what they’re doing wrong; it’s about being so committed to Jesus that others will want to share the excitement.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand what steps are necessary to prepare for revival. *(Know)*
- Sense the need for revival in their lives and communities. *(Feel)*
- Commit to doing what they can to make revival a reality. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Worship
- Repentance
- Commitment

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

*Ask: Have you ever been in a church or youth group that you felt was really “on fire” for God? How could you tell? Do you see those same qualities in our church community here? If not, what’s missing?*

*If you have a large class, break into small groups of four or five for this discussion, and have groups report back to the class as a whole. Generate a list of “Signs of a Church on Fire” and write them on a chalk-
students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Underline the specific things Hezekiah did (or instructed the people to do) as part of his plan for reform and revival.
- How do you think people felt about Hezekiah’s reforms? What evidence do you see in the text to tell you how the people responded?
- What might be some modern-day equivalents to the things Hezekiah did? What would have to change in our churches and communities to prepare for a Hezekiah-style revival?

Write three headings on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart: 1. Seeking God’s Will; 2. Sacrifice; 3. Celebration. The student lesson suggests these as three steps in Hezekiah’s revival that we could apply to revival in our church today. Divide the class into three groups and assign one heading to each group. Ask each group to answer the question: Under this category, what are some things we can do to prepare our church, youth group, or community at large to get closer to God?

If the groups need more guidance, suggest that Group 1 discuss how we can better understand God’s will, as revealed in His Word. Group 2 can generate a list of things we might need to be willing to give up or change in order for revival to come. Group 3 can think of ways we can celebrate God’s presence—joyful ways of worship that will keep people coming back for more, as the people of Judah did during Hezekiah’s revival Passover.

Give groups a few minutes to discuss, then have them report back and write a summary of their ideas under the headings at the front of the room.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Acts 2 (compare the Pentecost revival with that of Hezekiah).

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 history of Israel and Judah was a roller coaster of falling away from God, then coming back to Him. The “revivals” during which the Jews returned to God were usually led by a powerful, charismatic leader who was completely committed to following God and challenging others to do so, too. One such revival, led by John the Baptist, paved the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.
The history of the Christian church has seen the same kind of pattern. As Christians grew lukewarm and unconcerned about religion, God always raised up leaders who were willing to dig deeper into the Scriptures, challenge people to change, and lead a revival. Revival can happen in any church or any community. But it always starts with someone who is willing to place themselves completely in God's hands.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Hand out an index card or small slip of paper to each student. Say: “We've talked today about revival—about what it would be like if our church, our youth group, and our community were totally committed to God as Judah was in Hezekiah’s time. That’s a very big idea, but now I’d like you to make it small and practical. On this slip of paper, write ONE change you’d like to see in your church, this youth group, or this community, that would bring it closer to God. Then write one thing you could do to help make that happen.”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God calls each of us to a renewed and closer relationship with Him. He wants us to be, like King Hezekiah, willing to follow Him all the way, whatever it takes. That kind of commitment will lead to change—
not just in us, but in the world around us. Whether or not you think of yourself as a leader, you do have influence on those around you. Your example of total commitment can help bring about change in your family, your school, your church, your community. If you determine to follow God completely, like Hezekiah did, you can be a positive force for change.

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 *Prophets and Kings*, chapters 28, 29.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.*
not like other gods

I. SYNOPSIS
Jerusalem is attacked by the forces of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. King Hezekiah prepares the city’s defenses for a long siege and cuts off the supply of fresh water outside the city, where the Assyrians will be camped. He encourages his people to place their trust in the Lord. The Assyrians launch a propaganda campaign, reminding the citizens of Jerusalem that Sennacherib’s army has already steamrolled a number of other countries, and none of their gods lifted a finger to save them. Why should Israel’s God be any different?

But Israel’s God is not like other gods—He fights for His people. The story as told in 1 Kings 19 and 2 Chronicles 32 records that 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died mysteriously in a single night—slain by the angel of the Lord. Sennacherib retreated to his own country in disgrace.

Focus this week’s lesson discussion on the fact that we can trust God to care for us. That doesn’t mean that we will never have troubles. God did allow Israel and Judah to be threatened and attacked by foreign armies when it was part of His larger purpose. But He promises to always protect and care for His people, even in the most difficult situations. God is not just an idea or a concept like the gods of the pagans. He is a powerful, personal Being who cares about each of us. Students should leave this study assured that God is trustworthy even when times are tough.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that God has the power to save in desperate situations. (Know)
• Trust God to protect and care for them. (Feel)
• Surrender their current fears and worries to God, trusting Him to provide. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• God’s power
• Trust
• Surrender

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

Have students suggest several different situations in which a person might pray for God’s deliverance. Some ideas to get them started might be:
• Writing an exam
• Moving to a new community
• Speaking out when friends are doing something you believe is wrong
• Facing serious illness
We often face situations in which we can’t see a way out. As Christians, it’s natural for us to cry out to God for help. Sometimes we do our best to meet the crisis, and God helps us in our efforts. Other times, God intervenes miraculously. In today’s story, God miraculously delivered Jerusalem from an invading army—but only after King Hezekiah took a lot of practical steps to prepare the city for an attack.

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.

Discuss the Out of the Story questions with the class, then direct the class’s attention to the Bible texts in the Punch Lines section. If you have a small class, choose one text that class members find inspiring. For a large class, divide into groups and assign one text to each group.

Supply fabric, glue, and fabric paint or markers to each group and have them make a banner of their Bible text. Say: Throughout history, armies have carried banners into battle showing their allegiance to their kings and commanders. These banners we are making today will remind us that we go into battle under the colors of a God who promises to fight for us and deliver us.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Story of Jericho (Joshua 6); story of Gideon (Judges 6; 7); Jehosaphat’s victory

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

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 Prophets and Kings. 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.
over Moab and Ammon (2 Chronicles 20:1-30).

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

Siege warfare, a common tactic in ancient times when cities were surrounded by walls, occurs when an attacking army encounters a city or fortress that won’t surrender and can’t be easily conquered. The attacking army surrounds the city, cutting off supply, reinforcement, and escape routes for the people inside. While waiting outside, the attacking army usually attempts to break through the walls by the use of siege weapons such as catapults. The defenders, inside the city walls, are in a strong defensive position but can hold out only as long as food supplies and morale last. This was the approach that Sennacherib of Assyria used in trying to conquer Jerusalem.

We often talk about “spiritual warfare,” but Satan’s war on Christians is often more like a siege. We may not feel like we’re actively fighting, but there’s an enemy camped outside the walls, ready to attack when we let our guard down, always trying to lower our morale. How can we defend against Satan’s siege? We need to strengthen our defenses—just as Hezekiah strengthened the walls of Jerusalem—by being firmly grounded in God’s Word and surrounding ourselves with Christian influences. We can keep our spirits up and resist the enemy’s morale-sapping attacks by reminding ourselves, as Hezekiah reminded his people, that the Lord will fight for us.

**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

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

Direct the students’ attention to Tuesday’s and Thursday’s portion of the student lesson. In pairs, invite them to share with each other examples of times when God has helped them (or family members or friends) in the past. Remind them that these experiences, along with Bible stories and promises, can build our faith to help us prepare for difficult times in the future.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:* The army of Assyria was a powerful enemy. King Hezekiah and his people must have been terrified as Sennacherib’s soldiers marched toward the city. They did everything they could to prepare, but they also knew that they couldn’t face this threat alone. They needed God’s power.

The same is true for us. Of course, we should do everything we can to be well-prepared to face life’s challenges. But, ultimately, our hope is in the Lord. We can trust Him to care for us and fight life’s battles for us. And the more we trust Him with our problems and challenges, the stronger our faith will grow.

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 *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 30.

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

I. SYNOPSIS

The storied lives of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah portray examples of extreme contrast in their loyalty and faithfulness to God. Manasseh was literally hell-bent on defying God’s leadership and guidance. It was written about Manasseh: “He sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord . . .” (2 Chronicles 33:6, NIV). Even though he experienced a last-minute repentance, the effects of his sin bore fruit in his son Amon.

Amon “increased his guilt” and sinned, causing others to sin boundlessly during his brief two-year reign, but was assassinated by officials of his own court with the support of the people. The depravity of idolatry and self-absorbed behavior prompted the people to choose Josiah, a God-fearing child, to be king. While Josiah was not perfect, he led God’s people faithfully, causing a much-needed reform in Israel.

This lesson arrests many angles for discussion, but consider a few areas of emphasis: 1. God has and will discipline leaders, such as Manasseh, who lead His people astray, in whatever way is necessary to bring about repentance. 2. Leaders don’t always repent but respond to God’s voice by a more earnest rebellion, as Amon illustrated. 3. Many great themes emerge from Josiah’s reign about how allegiance to God while we are young is crucial, or how the cooperation between faithful children and godly elders produces blessings and growth. But another amazing facet of Josiah’s leadership is that he completely changed the direction his father postured before him. As a young person, he personified what it means to “go against the flow.” Josiah led a reformation against the tendencies of his own heritage, against the religious apathy of unconverted leaders, and against the habitual idolatry of three generations of Israel.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Deepen their knowledge of the storied lives of the kings of Israel. (Know)
• Sense the urgency of choosing to be loyal to God while young. (Feel)
• Decide to live deliberately for God and avoid evil. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Sin/evil/devil
• Hope
• The judgment

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.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.
similar challenges, but their lives turned out much different. Read the story and mark the difference and difference-maker moments in their lives.

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.

Identify and circle the three different generations of kings mentioned in this passage.

Briefly describe what the text says about the kind of people they were. (Use only the words and phrases in this passage.)
—Manasseh
—Amon
—Josiah

What are some words or phrases that are repeated in this story?

This story is mostly about... (choose three and explain)
1. Obedience to God
2. Influence of parents/leaders
3. Results of sin
4. Blessings of faithfulness
5. Selfishness and idolatry
6. Moral courage

Some might perceive God’s punishment of Manasseh to be harsh, but the ultimate result was his repentance. Compare the religious experience of these three kings and consider how God dealt with each of them, and how they responded to His promptings. How has God found ways to arrest your attention when you were growing distant from Him?

What do you think is the most difficult challenge for a king/leader?

To what degree do parents shape their children’s faithfulness to God?

Which verse do you think conveys a key lesson or point of this story?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:
Acts 5:29; Daniel 3; Exodus 10; Matthew 18:4; Romans 2:4.

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. Manasseh: From One Extreme to the Other

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
You have heard the saying, “Like father, like son.” There are times in life you hope this saying is not true. Songs and rhymes have been written about Henry VIII, the king of England, at the early part of the 16th century. In 1534 King Henry appointed himself the head of the church so he could sanction his own divorce and remarry another woman in order to produce a male heir. As the king and head of the Church of England, he could essentially do whatever he wanted. As a result he married six wives, and produced a son, Edward. While young Edward had excellent religious instructors, he was a sickly child. But in spite of the uncertainties of his health, Edward was crowned king at the age of 9. During King Edward’s leadership, wise and godly people surrounded him with support, and a spiritual transformation began to take place in England during a relatively brief period of time. Edward VI contracted tuberculosis at age 15. As he lay dying, he prayed fervently for his people:

“O Lord, thou knowest how happy it were for me to be with thee; yet for thy chosen sake send me life and health that I may truly serve thee. O my Lord God, bless thy people and thine inheritance. O Lord God, save thy chosen people of England” (E. Michael and Sharon Rusten, The One Year Book of Christian History, Tyndale, 2003, p. 377).

Whom do you know that turned from the destructive patterns of a parent/s and followed God faithfully? Compare them to other people in the Bible who did not follow the footsteps of a parent.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
If the phrase “Like father, like son” is accurate, it is true only in the sense that a parent can significantly shape their children. But does it mean that children are trapped in a vicious cycle repeating the same path as their parents? Of course not! King Edward, while affected by his father’s lifestyle, changed his course and made a new way. The three kings in this week’s lesson are all cut from the same cloth and even faced
Consider Manasseh’s claim to fame as a leader: “Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites” (2 Kings 21:9). In 2 Chronicles 33:6, it says, “He [Manasseh] sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord.” But a few verses later the Bible says: “In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom” (verses 12, 13). Furthermore, Manasseh is one of the kings listed in the proud lineage of the Messiah (Matthew 1). Clearly this man made a last-minute turnaround, going from reckless idolatry to genuine humility. It might be helpful to discuss with the students the impact of amazing conversion stories. In what way are these conversion experiences inspirational? What do they teach about the matchless power of God’s grace? What might be the downside to such stories?

2. Amon: Like Father, Like Sun

The SDA Bible Commentary states that Amon’s name is “identical with that of the Egyptian sun-god Amen. It would appear that Manasseh selected this name for his son to show his regard for that Egyptian deity” (vol. 2, p. 971). The commentary continues by asserting that “Manasseh’s apostasy had left a stamp of evil upon Amon that shaped his life beyond recall” (p. 971). Apparently, the pattern of behaving badly became so deeply ingrained in his childhood that he simply increased his sin over time. After reigning for only two years, he was assassinated by palace officials. Some think this might have been a grudge

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 Prophets and Kings. 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.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Teach by Storytelling

The unmistakable quality of stories is that everyone—young and old—connect with narratives personally. Lists and equations, acronyms and paradigms, and clever sayings may lodge themselves in the mind, but stories evoke the human experience to action. William Barclay says it well when he states: “To teach in parables is to teach in pictures, and most men think in pictures” (William Barclay, The Mind of Christ, p. 95). Another rich quality of storytelling is that stories don’t necessarily tell people “the truth,” but engage the listener in a thoughtful journey through which he/she discovers the truth for themselves. As we teach, we can trust the story to do more than we will ever do by trying to explain. Some teachers simply tell the story or have students read it and ask: “What does this story teach you?” or “What is the central truth of this story?” or even “Why do you think this story is meaningful?”
against the king while others infer that it was a reaction to the horrible direction Amon was taking the nation. Either way, his miserable reign was short (he died at age 24; his son Josiah was 8). Imagine what it must have been like for Josiah. How did he maintain the sensibilities to God while living with such an evil parent? What are some truths you glean from looking at the odds Josiah faced as a believer in God and as a young leader of a nation? 

The more you dig into the details given in Scripture about these three men, the more you marvel at what God can do with seemingly impossible situations.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Fill one bowl with hot water (hot enough to touch but not burn) and another with ice-cold water. Invite the students (or volunteers) to place their right hand in the cold water long enough for it to get a little uncomfortable, then dry the cold hand off and immediately place it in the hot water. Clearly, a cold hand experiences the contrast in the hot water more keenly than if you were to place your room temperature hand directly in the hot water. The students can try it with the other hand to note the difference. You might also make available two other bowls of water (one lukewarm and the other only slightly cool) and note the contrast.

Ask: What are some spiritual truths that this exercise illustrates? (Have them get into groups of two or three to discuss and share their responses.)

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

You are not trapped by your genetic makeup. You, like Abraham (whose father was an idolater), are endowed with the potential to choose God whether your parents have or not. Manasseh was evil, and God rattled him through failure and shame. But he responded in the sunset of his life—although too late to really make a positive difference in the lives of others. Perhaps you know someone who lived a life of rebellion against God for the majority of their life but finally turned to the Savior in the final hour. And like Amon, some don’t repent. This story can easily seem like a sensational testimony of bad guys who turn good or bad guys who stay bad, but maybe this story is more about God’s desire and ability to save the worst of sinners. You might appeal to the students, saying, “Maybe you feel as if you have refused God’s promptings too much to be saved. As long as your heart beats in your chest God can redeem and restore your life. It simply takes a humble response to God’s voice speaking to you now. Let’s pray. . . .” Invite the students to use this story to evaluate their journey with God, gleaning positive attributes of faith they have learned from their parents and asking, “How can I move closer to God and be more faithful to His leading in my life?”

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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 Prophets and Kings, chapter 32.

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

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson has to do with Josiah’s emerging leadership and faithfulness to God’s voice on behalf of Israel. The youthful King Josiah began the process of cleanup in the kingdom, starting with the Temple. It was in the Temple that Hilkiah, the high priest, found the forgotten Book of the Law. This ancient manuscript contained basic, straightforward guidelines that marked the road to freedom and prosperity in God’s revealed will.

The book of Deuteronomy begins with the urgent command to be faithful, offering the promises and blessings of single-minded devotion to God as well as clear and distinct warnings against forgetting or minimizing the importance of God’s law. Then the law gets even more clear with steps and specific rules about the everyday aspects of life as a community of faith—from laws about health to guidelines on worship. This book concludes with another reminder of the importance of uncompromising fealty to God as the utmost priority in life, saying of the law: “For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life” (Deuteronomy 32:47, NASB).

God’s Word is read with a seeker’s heart a new fire of passion for God will light up our dark times.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Discern the magnitude of God’s revealed will in the law. (Know)
- Feel God’s hopeful plea for renewal by returning to His Word. (Feel)
- Value the practice of prioritizing God’s direction in our life. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Courage
- Perseverance
- Leadership
- The occult/astrology
- Adolescence

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

Check the response that fits your attitude about God’s Word the most; then explain why.

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

How do you think your response compares to your peers?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

“I’m not a sensational guy when I speak to young people. One time, though, I couldn’t resist the urge to be edgy. As I began the sermon I announced, ‘Enough of this—this is so ridiculous! What are we all doing here, anyway? What does this Book have to say that’s relevant to us?’ I began ripping random pages out of my Bible, crumpling them roughly and throwing them to the ground. I even had the guts to stomp irreverently on a few crumpled pages beneath my feet. . . .

“Gasps exploded through the chapel like gunshots on a battlefield. Students gazed at me in horror, amazed by my blasphemous treatment of the sacred Scriptures. Older adults in the back of the room began murmuring about how to get rid of me before I inflicted any further damage on innocent young minds.

‘Relax,’ I said finally. ‘Anyone who knows me knows I would never tear up a Bible. I simply took a cheap Harlequin romance novel and put an old Bible cover on it.’ The tension eased a little, but before I lost the crowd’s attention, I posed a question to the squirming group: ‘Which is worse—openly defacing God’s Word or quietly ignoring it day by day?’”


II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:  

Whether you openly defy God’s leading in your life or simply numb yourself to His voice over time, the result is the same. Almost a hundred years of dust caked over the Book of the Law that God passionately instructed the people not to forget. It was simple: keep these words before and live by them and live abundantly, or forget these words and slide into destruction. Israel’s condition when Josiah became king can be described as the “brink of destruction.” But even in light of the oncoming punishment from years of rebellion, Josiah faithfully sounded the call for repentance.

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. Read the story through a few times and make a list of elements of the story that arrest your attention during each reading.

Reading 1 ______________________________________
Reading 2 ______________________________________
Reading 3 ______________________________________

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

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

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

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

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

7. In this story, is there . . . an example to follow? a prayer to pray? a sin to confess? a challenge to embrace? a promise to claim? a truth to believe? an action to take?

8. What questions do you have about the various parts of the story?

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

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

Use the following as more teachable passages that
relate to today’s story:
Revelation 3:3; Hebrews 13:7; Deuteronomy 32:7;
Malachi 4:4.

Sharing Context and Background

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

In this lesson there a few facets of the story that
could be developed further:

1. The first work Josiah initiated had to do with
getting the Temple of God back in shape. During the basic housecleaning, Hilkiah the
priest found the Book of the Law. Some think
this was the written Law that went alongside the
ark of the covenant, and some suggest this was
the book of Deuteronomy. What other seasons
of housecleaning did the Temple go through?
The Jewish celebration of the Feast of Lights (or
Hanukkah) relives the experience where the
Jews fought to get Jerusalem back from their
enemies, secured the Temple, and immediately
began cleaning it. There was only one flask of
oil for the lights in the Temple, but that oil con-
tinued to burn miraculously for eight days. Even
while the city was still a mess, the Temple ser-
vices began and people found themselves in
the presence of God again. Also, consider the
times when Jesus stormed the Temple and
caused serious upheaval (Matthew 21:12-14
and John 2:14-20). But the point of His tirade
was to tear down the walls that obscured the
face of God from the people who came to wor-
ship. It seems as though regular housecleaning
is needed when it comes to worship.

2. When Josiah heard the words of the Book of the
Law it did a spiritual work in the king. It was not
simply hearing new information but hearing a
call to obey God’s Word to experience transfor-
mation. This may not seem like a big event—to
find God’s Word and read it—but remember that
the Word of God had not been read in decades;
maybe even close to a hundred years. The oral
tradition probably continued, but few people at
this time could recall the stories, promises,
commands, and instructions that were written
in the Law.

3. When Josiah heard the Scriptures read to him
he tore his clothes. The tearing of clothing was
a traditional expression conveying a deep sense
of horror and astonishment. It is perhaps the
most emphatic gesture one could make to
show how shocked they were. Josiah showed
his grief on his own account and on account of
the nation. This was an expression of deep con-

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

• Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes con-
vey 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
Prophets and Kings. 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.
viction of sin, and he resolved to renew his commitment to God and the people.

Shaphan read the book in the presence of the king, and the Word of God spread. It had been forgotten and considered to be nothing more than an old, dusty book. As a result of the Book being found and read, the reformation began to spread. Compare this reformation to the reformation that took place as a result of the Dark Ages where God’s Word was obscured in a dead language, known only by priests.

III. CLOSING

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

Make a list of five active ways you can remember to “not forget” or lose sight of God’s Word this week. Invite the students to be as creative yet practical as possible. Have the students debrief, and share their list with the rest of the class.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It is amazing to witness how a young person can respond and lead so thoughtfully a whole nation of people who are disillusioned and stubborn. But the Bible is filled with agents of change! 1 Timothy 4:12, 13 says: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching” (NIV). Note how Josiah did it: 1. Josiah looked at his own life, his evil father, and the desperate scenario of Israel and repented before God. God begins His good work at the point we surrender our own destructive work. 2. Josiah led by doing specific activities that may seem mundane (cleaning the Temple) and discovered that God’s presence found a way to his heart. 3. Josiah fearlessly followed through with clear guidelines and insights from Scripture. Perhaps a much-needed reformation can happen today in your sphere of influence by following Josiah’s example.