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]
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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 will also find:

- What Do You Think?—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.
- Did You Know?—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.
- Key Text—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.
- Punch Lines—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.
- Flashlight—a brief snapshot of Ellen White’s input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—The Conflict of the Ages.*

*PRINTED IN THE USA
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.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
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| 2007     | 1st Quarter     | 1. Adam and Eve  
2. Cain and Abel  
3. Seth and Enoch  
4. Noah  
5. Tower People  
6. Abraham  
7. Isaac  
8. Lot  
9. Rebecah  
10. Jacob and Esau  
11. Jacob  
12. Israel |
| 2008     | 1st Quarter     | 1. God's People  
2. Solomon  
3. Temple Builder  
4. Proud Potentate  
5. Repentant Author  
6. Rehoboam  
7. Jeroboam  
8. Asa, Ahab, Jezebel  
9. Elijah  
10. Evangelist  
11. Coward  
12. The Sabbath  
13. Jehoshaphat |
| 2009     | 1st Quarter     | 1. Jesus  
2. It's Time  
3. Mary  
4. Simeon/Anna  
5. The Wise Men  
6. The Child Jesus  
7. The Voice  
8. Victory  
9. Messiah Found  
10. Marriage Feast  
11. The Temple  
12. Nicodemus  
13. John the Baptist |
| 2010     | 1st Quarter     | 1. The Mission  
2. The Holy Spirit  
3. The Lame Man  
4. Ananias/Sapphira  
5. God's People  
6. Stephen  
7. Paul  
8. Peter  
9. Saul/Barnabas  
10. Gentiles Included  
11. Spreading Good News  
12. The Thessalonians  
13. The Ephesians |
| 2007     | 2nd Quarter     | 1. Israel  
2. Egypt  
3. Egypt  
4. Fleeing Slaves  
5. Unhappy Campers  
6. Chosen Nation  
7. Aaron  
8. Abraham  
9. The Tabernacle  
10. Miriam and Zipporah  
11. Twelve Spies  
12. Korah  
13. The Bronze Serpent |
| 2008     | 2nd Quarter     | 1. Ahab  
2. Elisha  
3. Prophet  
4. Naaman  
5. Jonah  
6. Hosea  
7. Isaiah  
8. Jehovah  
9. Ahaz  
10. Hezekiah  
11. Assyrria  
12. Manasseh  
13. Josiah |
| 2009     | 2nd Quarter     | 1. Samaritan Woman  
2. The Nobleman  
3. The Lame Man  
4. John the Baptist  
5. The Anointed One  
6. Peter  
7. Capernaum  
8. The Leper  
9. Levi-Matthew  
10. The Sabbath  
11. The Disciples  
12. The Centurion  
13. The Demonic |
| 2010     | 2nd Quarter     | 1. The Corinthians  
2. Workers for Christ  
3. Romans/Galatians  
4. Last Journey  
5. Adventures and Trials  
6. Philoemon  
7. Colossians/Philippians  
8. Final Arrest  
9. Before Nero  
10. John the Beloved  
11. Patmos  
12. The Revelation  
13. Church Triumphant |
| 2007     | 3rd Quarter     | 1. Moses  
2. Crossing Jordan  
3. Jewish jackets  
4. Crossing Jordan  
5. Aaron  
6. Moses' Death  
7. Korah  
8. Blessings and Curses  
9. Gibeonites  
10. Canaan divided  
11. Last Words of Joshua  
12. Annual Feasts  
13. Early Judges |
| 2008     | 3rd Quarter     | 1. Daniel  
2. The Dream  
3. Three Hebrews  
4. Nebuchadnezzar  
5. Belshazar  
6. Daniel  
7. Daniel  
8. Daniel  
9. Daniel 10-12 |
| 2009     | 3rd Quarter     | 1. Woman/Jarius  
2. The Seventy  
3. The Disciples  
4. Misunderstandings  
5. Broken Barriers  
6. Jesus Ministry  
7. Who Is Jesus?  
8. Lawyer/Ruler  
9. The Children  
10. Lazarus' Family  
11. Zaccaeus  
12. Mary  
13. James and John |
| 2010     | 3rd Quarter     | 1. First Believers  
2. Seekers  
3. Wycliffe  
4. Luther  
5. Zwingli  
6. French Reformation  
7. English Reformers  
8. French Revolution  
9. American Reformers  
10. William Miller  
11. Prophecy Fulfilled  
12. The Sanctuary  
13. God's Law |
| 2007     | 4th Quarter     | 1. Saul  
2. Samuel  
3. David  
4. David  
5. First King  
6. Saul's Death  
7. Anointed  
8. Fugitive  
9. Fugitive  
10. Crowned King  
11. Incombent  
12. Sinner  
13. Absalom |
| 2008     | 4th Quarter     | 1. Haggai/Zerubbabel  
2. Zechariah  
3. Temple Two  
4. Esther  
5. Queen  
6. Ezra  
7. Nehemiah  
8. Builders  
9. Ploters  
10. Reformers  
11. Jesus  
12. Deliverer  
13. Future Glory |
| 2009     | 4th Quarter     | 1. The King Comes  
2. The Pharisees  
3. The End of Time  
4. Servanthood  
5. The Last Supper  
6. Gethsemane  
7. The Trial  
8. Calvary  
9. Resurrection  
10. Mary Magdalene  
11. The Emmaus Road  
12. By the Sea  
13. Jesus' Ascension |
| 2010     | 4th Quarter     | 1. Renewal  
2. Investigative Judgment  
3. Origin of Evil  
4. Snares  
5. Great Deception  
6. The Papacy  
7. Spiritual Challenge  
8. The Bible  
9. Last Chance  
10. Time of Trouble  
11. Deliverance  
12. The End  
13. The Beginning |
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<td>Scripture Story: 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.</td>
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| 2. Focus on Prophets          | Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 16. |
| 3. The Miracle Worker         | Scripture Story: 1 Kings 19:15–1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 2. |
| 15. Recipe for Revival        | Scripture Story: Isaiah 11; 12; 44. |
| 23. Recipe for Revival        | Scripture Story: 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33. |
| 25. Cleaning House            | Scripture Story: 2 Kings 23; 2 Chronicles 34. |
### 3rd Quarter

Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 34. |
| 2. Storm Warning | Scripture Story: Jeremiah 25; 36.  
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 35. |
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Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 37. |
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 39. |
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| 7. Choose Your Kingdom | Scripture Story: Daniel 3.  
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 41. |
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 42. |
| 9. This Party's Over | Scripture Story: Daniel 5.  
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 43. |
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Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 46. |
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 47. |
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| 13. Jesus (3) | Scripture Story: Malachi 3; 4.  
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 60. |
July

5—Who, Me? [p. 11]
God called Jeremiah to the task of warning God’s people that His patience was running out. Jeremiah wasn’t sure he was prepared for this daunting task. But God had begun preparing him before he was born. Just like He has us.

12—Storm Warning [p. 15]
The warning message became stronger: Disaster is coming. Repent. The king of Judah should have been the spiritual leader of his people. However, he didn’t want to hear a message of warning. Are we ready to hear one?

19—Israel Takes Its Medicine [p. 19]
Discipline, like medicine, is hard to swallow but necessary for healing. However, the stubborn resistance of the human heart makes God’s life-shaping discipline so hard to stomach.

26—Be Swayed and Besieged [p. 23]
A king’s lack of moral courage to act on his convictions causes disastrous consequences for his family and his people.

August

2—Obedience Is Not a Bad Word! [p. 27]
Four young men are taken from their homeland to help rule a foreign country. But can they fulfill their obligations without disobeying their God?

9—God Even Gave the Dream [p. 31]
It’s one thing to interpret a dream; it’s another to have to do so without even knowing what the dream is. That’s where Daniel discovers how strong his faith really is.

16—Choose Your Kingdom [p. 35]
The consequences of striving to live in the kingdom of God while living in a kingdom with an earthly ruler can be fierce—and deadly. Daniel and his friends chose to take them, no matter what the cost.

23—Humility Check [p. 39]
Although the glory of his empire and the success of his rule caused pride in Nebuchadnezzar’s heart, he experienced a “humility check” from God and ultimately submitted his life to the God who would not give up on him.

30—This Party’s Over [p. 43]
Belshazzar learned nothing from his father Nebuchadnezzar’s run-in with God. He disregarded God’s warnings, and his life of pleasure seeking ended in destruction.

September

6—Deliverance [p. 47]
To remain faithful to God in spite of dire consequences doesn’t happen overnight. It takes time—and prayer.

13—Troubling Dream [p. 51]
Most of us would love the opportunity to stand in God’s throne room, peer into the future, and see how the world will end. Daniel had that chance.

20—God Is in Control [p. 55]
When the world reveals trouble, tragedy, and rebellion, the certainty from God’s Word that He is still in control can bring comfort.

27—A Man, Some Kings, and the End! [p. 59]
Earthly kings may rise and fall, but in the end God’s kingdom will prevail, and He will rescue His people.
who, me?

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 1.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 34.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

God called Jeremiah to a special task—and not an easy one. Jeremiah’s role as a prophet would be to warn the people of Judah that God’s patience had finally run out. Like the northern kingdom of Israel just a few generations earlier, Judah would be overtaken by a foreign power and her people forced into exile. For too long the people of Judah had ignored God’s calls to repentance, and now they were going to reap the consequences.

From Jeremiah’s perspective, it was a daunting call. God’s message would not make him popular or well liked. He would have to look forward to rejection and persecution. And as a very young man, Jeremiah didn’t feel able to do the task. He protested that he wasn’t able to carry the responsibility God was handing him.

God assured Jeremiah that he had been set aside for this task from before his own birth. It’s an awesome thought to realize that God knows us and has plans for us even before we’re born, but that was what God told Jeremiah. This week’s lesson asks students to consider what that knowledge means for their own lives. What is God calling them to do and to be?

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Choose to open themselves up to explore and follow God’s plan for their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Faith
- God’s foreknowledge
- Discerning God’s will

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.

After discussing What Do You Think? write the following questions on the board:

- Should Christians be popular with others?
- If we are, is it a sign that we’re not standing up for what we believe?
- If we’re unpopular, is it because we’re being persecuted for our faith—or are we just behaving badly and turning people off?

Divide students into groups of two and three to discuss these questions for five minutes. Bring the group back together, draw everyone’s attention to the questions, and ask for responses.

As you process the discussion with your students, share the following ideas with them in their own words.
Jesus told His disciples to expect persecution, but He didn’t tell them to go out looking for it. Rather, He told them to live the way He lived. That will be very appealing to some people—and bring you into conflict with others.

Our goal as Christians shouldn't be to upset people—although sometimes God's messengers do that, as Jeremiah did. Nor should our goal be to get people to like us—though hopefully lots of people will. Instead, our most important goal should be to discover God’s will for our lives and follow it faithfully, without worrying too much about how others will react.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

One of the best-known legends of all time is that of the famous (though probably fictional) King Arthur of Britain. There are many versions of this story, but in some versions, young Arthur, the son of a king, grows up away from the royal court, not knowing about his royal parentage. Only when the king dies and the land searches for the true heir, does Arthur learn his destiny. When he pulls from a stone a magical sword that can be released only by the true king, he discovers that he is, indeed, the man born to be king.

Though it’s only a legend, this story of the young King Arthur has parallels in many different cultures and times. For some reason we all respond to the story of a young boy or girl who grows up thinking they’re just an ordinary person, but then learns they have a special destiny. It could be royal blood, or magical powers, or the job of saving the world. Whatever the destiny, most people are fascinated with the story of an apparently ordinary person who turns out to be destined to do an extraordinary job.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The fact is that the story of the ordinary person chosen for an extraordinary task is really the story of each one of us. While we may think we’re nobody special, each of us is a child of the King of the universe, and our heavenly Father has designed a special role for each of us to play in His work. As He told Jeremiah, He knows about us even before we are born, and He has a plan for us. While we are free to make our own choices, our lives will be so much more rewarding—and interesting!—if we choose to follow His plan for 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.*

Have two students from the class (asked in advance if necessary) read the roles of Jeremiah and the Lord in Jeremiah, chapter 1. You can join in by reading the narrative parts in between the dialogue.

Then ask students to turn to each passage and read through the highlights of each scene quickly to ensure they are familiar with each story. After looking at all three stories, discuss the following questions:

- In these three stories, what do the people God is calling have in common? How are their responses to God similar?
- What tasks is God calling each person to do? How do you think they might feel about taking on these jobs?
- How do you feel about the idea of God having a plan for your life and job for you to do? Does it make you feel excited, scared, challenged, rebellious—or some other response? Can you relate to anything Jeremiah, Isaiah, or Moses said in these three passages?
- If God does have a plan for our lives, how do we discover it? How do we know that we are on track with His plan and not just following our own desires?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Psalm 139; Isaiah 6; Exodus 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.*

The Bible relates many stories of God calling peo-
ple to serve Him. In many cases—as in the example of Jeremiah in this week’s lesson, or of Isaiah and Moses in the Out of the Story section above—those whom God called questioned the call at first. Moses said he was a poor speaker. Isaiah was a man of “unclean lips.” Jeremiah felt he was too young. Other biblical heroes, though their “call” stories may be less dramatic, felt themselves ill-fitted for the role they were called to play. David was the youngest and least impressive of his brothers when Samuel anointed him as the future king. Esther told Mordecai there was no way she could go before the king and defy his decree. The Bible makes it clear that the greatest heroes of faith didn’t feel like heroes when they were first called.

Maybe that’s the sign of someone who will make a good servant of God—one who initially feels inadequate and unworthy. When Ellen White—a mostly uneducated teenager in poor health—received her first vision, the vision itself was exhilarating, but the idea of sharing what she had seen with others was daunting. “I went to the Lord in prayer and begged Him to lay the burden on someone else,” she wrote in Early Writings. “It seemed to me that I could not bear it. I lay upon my face a long time, and all the light I could get was, ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’”

People who don’t think they’re ready are, in fact, the kind of people God can use. If the task God is calling us to do seems too big for us, we can be assured that His strength and power will be with us. We respond to His call not in our own strength, but in His.

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Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Reading Scripture in Class

It’s important to expose students to reading Scripture in class—perhaps more important than most of the things we do in Sabbath School, since they may not read the Bible on their own. But how do you present passages of Scripture as part of the lesson?

One option is to read aloud to students yourself. Another is to read through a passage assigning a verse at a time to different people to read. Or, as suggested in this week’s Out of the Story section, assign different students to read the spoken words of the characters in the Bible story, while you read the narration that ties it together.

Whatever method you choose, be sure to pick a Bible translation that will be lively and appealing to your group. A dynamic paraphrase such as The Message or The Clear Word can be good for bringing a passage to life and making it relevant to students. If you’re doing an activity where the exact words of a text are important, everyone should have the same translation (have a stack of NIV or NKJV Bibles in your classroom, or make photocopies of the passage in the version you want to use). For looking at a short passage from a few different perspectives, you can ask a couple of students who have different Bible versions to read and compare theirs.

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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.
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

In advance, ask students to provide you with a picture of themselves as a baby or small child (or, if you have contact with the parents of all your students, ask parents to give you pictures so you can scan and print them, then return the originals, without your students even knowing you have them). At the end of the lesson, give each student a picture of him/herself as a baby. If you’re not able to arrange this in advance, have students cut pictures of babies from magazines and ask each one to stick a baby picture on an index card to represent their younger selves.

Write this week’s key text on the board and ask students to copy it onto the back of the picture or card. Tell them to keep it as a reminder that God has a plan for each of their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jeremiah was called by God to do a special task. He knew that it wouldn’t be easy and might even involve danger and persecution. At first, Jeremiah didn’t feel equal to the task. He thought he was too young and inexperienced. But with God’s help and support, he became a powerful messenger for the Lord. He accepted the challenge that was given to him.

God has a challenge for each of us, too. He knew you before you were born, just as He knew Jeremiah. His plan for you doesn’t cancel out your own free will, but He longs for you to put your will in alignment with His so that He can use you to do great things.

Like Jeremiah’s task, yours may involve challenge and difficulty. The things God asks us to do aren’t always easy. But they are always rewarding and always best for us in the long run—and they can provide far more excitement and challenge than a safe, “ordinary” life lived without God. Take up His challenge. Trust His plan for your life.

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 34.

*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

Jeremiah’s call, as we saw last week, was to tell the people and rulers of Judah that God’s patience had finally run out. Time and again the call to repentance had been made, along with warnings of divine punishment if the people did not return to God. Now the message was stronger: Disaster is coming. Judah should prepare to be attacked and overrun by her enemies, because she had refused to listen to the repeated call of God’s prophets.

When Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch prepared a scroll to be read to the people declaring God’s message, the scroll found its way into the hands of the king. As the leader of the nation, the king should have led the way in heeding God’s warning and setting an example of repentance. Instead he made a very public show of his contempt for God’s message, tearing up the scroll piece by piece and burning it in the presence of his courtiers and advisers.

Most of us, like the king of Judah, don’t like to hear words of warning. We’d prefer to think that things are going just fine, even when we’re clearly headed down the wrong path. Though Jesus’ message was one of love rather than of fear, He, like the Hebrew prophets, did warn of God’s judgment and the consequences of our sin. Today, there is still a place for words of warning.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that bad choices lead to negative consequences. (Know)
• Feel God cares enough to give us warnings. (Feel)
• Choose to respond to God’s warnings and change behavior as a result. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Speaking the truth in love
• Obedience
• 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.

Divide the class into groups of three to five students and present each group with one of the following situations. (For large groups, use the same situation with several different groups.) Say: When you get into your groups, read aloud the situation you’ve been given and discuss what you would do in that situation. 

How do you think the different people in this scenario would respond?

• Your group of friends has been close since elementary school, but one in the group is starting
to get into trouble. You know that he’s hanging out with a different group of friends who drink heavily and use drugs, and you suspect your friend is doing the same things. You really care about him and want to help him before he gets in too deep, so a few of you decide to try talking to him about it.

- One of the girls you hang around with has a new boyfriend whom no one in your group likes. He’s jealous, possessive, and has a bad temper. One day your friend comes to school with a black eye. You’ve seen her boyfriend treat her badly before, and you suspect he might be abusing her. You want to raise the subject with her without getting her too upset.

- Your younger sister has been on a diet for months. She thinks she’s making great progress and looking terrific, but you think she might have an eating disorder. She seems too thin to be healthy, and she’s obsessed with losing even more weight. You discuss with your parents how you could help her.

- Several of your closest friends have been making life miserable for a guy in your class. You don’t really like this guy either, but you recognize that he has some problems, including some mental health issues, that make it hard for him to fit in. Your friends seem to take delight in teasing him and making fun of him. You haven’t been joining in, but you haven’t told them that what they’re doing is wrong, either. You believe that as a Christian you need to stand up for this guy, but you don’t want to lose your friends.

After each group has had time to discuss their situation, bring the groups back together and give them an opportunity to report on their discussion and ask the larger group how they might respond. In each case there are two main questions to consider: how would you deliver a message of “warning” to someone you care about, and, if you’re the person getting the warning, how would you respond?

If you have time and your group is comfortable with it, invite a couple of groups to role-play their situation.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

In 2000 U.S. Senator Al Gore ran against George W. Bush for president of the United States. In the closest election result in U.S. history, the two men almost tied for the most important job in the country—but Bush won. Al Gore was left, like any losing politician, to decide what he’d do next.

Rather than immediately prepare for another election, or retire into private life, Al Gore decided to use his role in the public eye to bring people’s attention to what he believed was the most important crisis in the world—the issue of global warming. The documentary he narrated and promoted around the world was called *An Inconvenient Truth*. Gore used the movie to warn people that environmental disaster and human suffering would happen if global warming weren’t stopped.

Regardless of whether or not you agree with Gore’s conclusions about global warming, it’s hard not to admire his dedication. To him, this message is the most urgent thing the world needs to hear today, and as a result he chose to throw his time, energy, popularity, and money into getting that warning out to the world.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Caring for our environment is an important message to get out there. But even more important is the message that we need to live according to God’s Word so that we can live happier lives in the short term and enjoy eternity in heaven with Him. Just as God gave Jeremiah a message of last-minute warning for the people of Judah, He gives His church today a warning for the world: Get ready for His coming. How do we respond to warnings from God’s Word?

**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.*

- How do you think the king of Judah felt when he heard the message in Jeremiah’s scroll?
- In the Bible passage, pick out words and phrases that tell us about the king’s reaction. Why do you think he reacted in this way?
- How do you feel when someone tells you you’re doing something wrong?
- If we have a message of warning for the world, how do we present that in a spirit of love rather than of condemnation? Can you think of exam-
ples in today’s world of people who talk about God’s judgment in ways that are loving—or condemning?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Jonah, chapters 3 and 4—see below for discussion.

Sharing Context and Background

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

It’s interesting to contrast this story from the book of Jeremiah with the story of Jonah and his warning to the city of Nineveh (as found in the book of Jonah, chapters 3 and 4). In both cases, God sent a prophet with a warning of imminent destruction. This is no casual suggestion for improvement—the message is clear. Your city will be destroyed; you have rejected God and He has turned His back on you.

The pagan city of Nineveh, according to the book of Jonah, repented at once upon hearing this message. The king of Nineveh took the leading role in public repentance, even putting on sackcloth as a sign of mourning.

By contrast, Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, upon hearing Jeremiah’s warning, reacted with scorn and mockery. To demonstrate how little he cared about God’s warning, he burned the scroll on which it was written. Jeremiah 36 tells us that although the priests and people initially responded to the call for repentance, the king and his advisers showed no outward signs of fear or repentance. Their reaction, instead, was one of defiance.

Though Jonah gave the people of Nineveh no hint that God’s warning was conditional, upon seeing their repentance God chose to stay His hand and refrain from punishing the Ninevites. Jeremiah’s warnings made it clear that God had already set the wheels in

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Discussing Real-life Situations

When giving students situations like those used in the “Getting Started” section to discuss in small groups, you may want to select the groups yourself to provide some balance. That way you can be sure that most of the students will be in groups where they feel comfortable talking and sharing their views. Before breaking into groups, remind students there are no wrong answers in this type of activity and no one should condemn or shoot down someone else’s response. The goal of the activity is to explore how your students would react if this were a real-life situation. They may not reach a consensus; some students might feel they would react very differently than others in their group would, and it’s OK for this diversity of opinion to be reflected in the group response.

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.
motion for the Babylonian conquest of Judah to occur, yet in Jeremiah 36:7 we see again the call for change, the possibility that God’s wrath can be turned away if the people change their ways.

Two very similar messages presented to two nations and their kings. A pagan nation chose to respond with repentance, while God’s chosen people rejected the message and the messenger. Why? To the people of Nineveh, a message from the God of Israel was something new, something to be taken seriously. To the people of Judah, such warnings were old news. They had become so used to ignoring God’s calls to repentance that they no longer paid attention. We, too, can get so used to hearing God’s warnings that our consciences are no longer touched.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Pass out index cards and pencils to the class. Say: We’ve talked about the warning messages God sends to us and how we should respond to them. Do you think there’s something in your life today that God needs to send you a message about? Something you need to change? On the index card, write what you think God is telling you today and what your response is. Keep this private—take it home with you and pray about it.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jeremiah warned the people of Judah that judgment was coming if they didn’t change their ways. They’d had plenty of warnings, but all those warnings had done was get them in the habit of ignoring God’s prophets. Their hearts had become hardened, and that attitude was demonstrated by King Jehoiakim when he tore up and burned the scroll on which God’s message for the people was written.

God has messages for us today—through His Word, through our consciences, through our Christian friends, parents, and teachers, and through His church. We don’t always respond as we should when we get a warning—sometimes we feel guilty but don’t do anything; sometimes a warning makes us more rebellious and determined to do our own thing. If you’re getting a message about something that needs to change in your life—and you’re convinced because of your study of the Bible that it’s not just one person’s bossy opinion but something God really wants you to do—then you need to set aside some time with God in prayer and ask Him to help you change what you’re doing, so your life will be in line with His will. Remember, God knows best what’s best for us. His warnings are always for our own good!

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 35.

*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

Discipline, like medicine, is hard to swallow but necessary for healing. Zedekiah and Israel were poised to “take their medicine” and enter into captivity for a season determined by God. While their impending bondage to Babylon humbled Israel, they could have accepted the discipline of God and made the best of their situation by cooperating. A contrite spirit would have continued the good favor that King Zedekiah had with the reigning king of Babylon, fostering a strong witness of God’s providence and care. Unfortunately, the human tendency to avoid punishment and seek alternatives becomes an irresistible temptation. False prophets offered a more palatable solution to their impending captivity, claiming: “This is what the Lord . . . , the God of Israel, says: ‘I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the Lord’s house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon’” (Jeremiah 28:2, 3, NIV).

Ellen White declares: “It was especially important that those in captivity should seek the peace of the land into which they had been carried. This, however, was contrary to the inclinations of the human heart; and Satan, taking advantage of the circumstances, caused false prophets to arise among the people, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, who declared that the yoke of bondage would soon be broken and the former prestige of the nation restored” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 440, 441). False prophets could not stomach the discipline of God and fabricated the notion that they could still overcome their enemy.

This week’s lesson focuses on God’s life-shaping discipline and the stubborn resistance of the human heart.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand that God’s plan for our peace and prosperity is real. (Know)
• Deepen their confidence in God’s providence. (Feel)
• Decide to embrace God’s methods for renewal instead of trusting in the shortcuts. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Secularism/worldliness
• Consequences
• Pride

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.

This week’s activity challenges young people to examine how they approach the discipline of God—or
any discipline for that matter. Have the students rank the excuses given in the What Do You Think? exercise and invite them to share their first response. Also, you might have them examine the responses given and connect them to biblical characters that exhibit that behavior.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

After six months of dating, Gina decided to end her relationship with her boyfriend. Steve, feeling crushed and betrayed, overreacted when Gina broke up with him and stormed away. He then consumed half a bottle of aspirin, seeking to regain the affections of his former girlfriend by making her feel responsible for his despair. The school nurse questioned Steve all the way to the hospital as he writhed in pain. In the emergency room he was calmly presented with a couple of options by the doctor: (1) “You can sit here in pain while the aspirin slowly destroys your insides, and you can negotiate through a slow demise experiencing the long-term effects of liver damage,” or (2) “You can let us stick a hose down your throat and pump your stomach with charcoal, causing you to vomit all the toxins you chose to put into your stomach.” The doctor punctuated the lecture with “Please decide soon. I have to set a broken nose, and some kid has the stomach flu. So what’s it going to be?”

Clearly, the medical staff were not actually giving him the option, but they did want him to own his situation and his choice for recovery. (Apparently, they had seen this scenario on other occasions.) Steve endured the trauma of having his stomach pumped and eventually recovered from the broken heart as well. Steve learned to approach his relationships with more balance. But more important, he discovered more effective ways to endure the challenges and disappointments he faced.

How is Steve’s situation like the human approach to God’s ways of growing His children through discipline?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

It’s not hard to see the many flaws in Steve’s response to his problem. Perhaps the first clue is that it was HIS PROBLEM! But instead of embracing what was wrong he sought a different course. Judah and the children of God were faced with another season of captivity. Even though God promised a peaceful era of renewal, the false prophets and king sought to opt for a more manageable punishment. Read the story and respond to the questions in the Out of the Story section.

**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.*

Invite the students to examine the behavior of the two prophets Hananiah and Jeremiah, and discuss how they depict the human struggle to avoid the truth when it is painful or discipline when it is inevitable. Below are a few key lessons you may want to discuss.

1. God’s discipline may often be uncomfortable, but it is always the sure way to becoming whole. What other examples in Scripture depict people trying to take a shortcut from character-shaping discipline? Read Jeremiah 28:1-15 (especially verses 8-10) and compare the events in that passage to this one.

2. Avoiding the impact of sin only leads to self-reliant behavior. The false prophets minimized their rebellion instead of repenting of it. When people fabricate their own solutions to their sin problem, the problem only gets worse. When in your life have you been tempted to downplay your own sin or mistake so as not to face up to it?

3. How you respond to seasons of discipline conveys a powerful witness to others about who you are and especially about the God you serve. Think of people in Scripture who embraced God’s will even though it exposed their weaknesses and challenged them greatly. How did their approach benefit them in the end?

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

This week’s story conveys a message to God’s people as they enter into another season of captivity—this time it’s not Egypt, but Babylon. God’s promise that comes through the prophet Jeremiah is basic: “Take your medicine!” If the Hebrews entered this time with humility and a desire to follow God’s plan, the 70
years would be a time of renewal and influence to others. But in Jeremiah 28 false prophets try to derail the people and offer another “message from God” that is much more palatable.

Remember in Jeremiah 27 that God told Jeremiah to wear a yoke and demonstrate visually the soon-coming discipline of God. God promised everyone that if they humbled themselves under the yoke of Babylon, He would bless them (Jeremiah 27:2, 8, 11, 12).

When Jeremiah checks Hananiah publicly, the false prophet takes the yoke off of Jeremiah and breaks it to illustrate his prophecy. The whole drama is a war of two wills: the will of God and the will of man.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

In the same way God had Jeremiah wear a yoke to dramatize the impending discipline of God’s children, invite the students to pair up and devise an illustration that conveys a message about God’s plan and promise to us today. Or you can ask the students: “If God were to use a visual device to arrest our attention today (such as the yoke in Jeremiah 27–29) what visual symbol do you think would make the greatest impact on people today?” The students can either share an example or describe a symbol that would be effective.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It is hard to face the truth when you are wrong. The people of God had wandered so far from God that the only way to bring them back again was to send them into captivity in Babylon. God’s plan wasn’t to punish them but to prepare them to become the kind of people they were destined to be to the world. The path to become God’s true ambassadors to the world is not an easy road, and the journey often includes moments in which your weaknesses, faults, and even sinful
behaviors are exposed. But God’s grace and mercy are always there to reach you and teach you about the abundant life.

Remember the promise God spoke in Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” If your desire is to embrace this plan for your life, then be willing to receive the instruction and adversity God brings your way to grow you as a child of 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, chapter 36.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
This week’s lesson exposes a major flaw in Zedekiah’s leadership—inaction. His moral courage registered too low on the scale for leaders, and the result was horrendous damage to his family and his people. The options were simple: (1) submit to Babylon’s rule and live in peace for 70 years, or (2) resist and evoke the force of Nebuchadnezzar’s might. Zedekiah heard the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, but unconverted leaders and false prophets threatened him, and Zedekiah would listen to God only in private. Because Zedekiah could not act on his convictions, the great walls of Jerusalem fell, the glorious Temple of Jehovah was sacked and pillaged, and many were killed in the wake of senseless butchery.

As believers in God, there are times when our choices will have consequences, and those consequences are uncertain—even frightening. But far more dangerous is not making the right choice, thinking a better option will emerge. Ellen White states that while he had “no fixed purpose to do evil” he did not have the backbone “to stand boldly for the right” (Prophets and Kings, p. 458). If Zedekiah’s life teaches us anything today it is that God’s Word is to be trusted, even if it doesn’t make us feel safe. Perhaps we will obey God only in the pivotal moments when we practice faithfulness in the ordinary, not-so-pivotal moments.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that loyalty to God will at times be risky, but always right. (Know)
• Sense the peace that comes from exercising your faith in God. (Feel)
• Determine to live publicly our personal convictions about God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Friendship
• Sin
• Evil
• Devil
• 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.

Invite the students to share their responses to the activity on who has influence on your life. You might comment, “Everyone is influenced to a certain degree by all these options (parents, friends, public opinion), but their level of influence is different.”

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
In class at a public university Jamie writhed in his
seat as the philosophy professor mocked Christian faith with snide remarks such as “C’mon people! Any thinking person can see that faith in God is a crutch created by humans who must believe that someone is in control.” He would stare at the class waiting for a response. Some would nod in agreement. Others stared in disbelief. Still others never made eye contact and simply took notes hoping not to be called on to respond. The professor would throw down controversial statements like gauntlets, daring anyone to take him on. The sassy teacher’s diatribes went almost uncontested until Jamie took the challenge, choked down his fear, and spoke up. “Professor, I disagree. In fact, I believe in God, not because I have to but because everything I have experienced gives evidence that God is real.” The teacher had not expected anyone to respond so confidently. Many in the class noticed as well and eagerly waited for the conversation to escalate into an all-out argument. The teacher tried to discredit Jamie intellectually and even intimidate him with questions about proof. Nevertheless, the more cynical the professor became the more the class began to show curious support for Jamie. The teacher moved quickly to change the subject, getting in the last word.

But Jamie’s words struck a chord in a few classmates. As they left the building they expressed their appreciation for the way he stood up to the teacher. They were believers as well, and were equally uncomfortable with their own inability to respond.

During the next few weeks many students gained the moral courage to share their convictions in class. This surprised the professor so much that he noticeably toned down his bitter rhetoric.

When in your life have you witnessed someone boldly take a stand for God, not knowing how others would respond? When have you ever had to make your loyalty to God clear to others?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In every age the opportunity comes to believers to take a stand and boldly remind the world that God’s Word is real, right, and true. Whether it’s speaking up for God in a class or bravely obeying God’s Word when others are sure to laugh and ridicule you, there is a time to stand. Most of the time it’s risky and even frightening. Read the story about how Zedekiah heard the word of God from Jeremiah to submit to Babylon’s rule and not trust the Egyptians to save them. But popular opinions froze him in fear, and the people paid the price.

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.

- This week’s passage from 2 Chronicles 36 is a summary of the events of Jeremiah 37, 38, and 39. Read through these chapters to get specific insights into the story.
- In what way was Zedekiah stiff-necked and hard-hearted?
- In what way does Zedekiah’s age factor into his struggle as a king? What are the positives and negatives of being a young leader?

This story is a classic example of how the stubbornness of leaders can cause horrific pain and tragedy for many.

Some might think the destruction of Jerusalem was harsh. Read Jeremiah 38:14-24 and compare the exchange between Jeremiah and Zedekiah to the summary in 2 Chronicles. How does a person become so careful of public opinion, even when the threat of death and shame is near?

- What do you think it means when the Bible says, “The land enjoyed its sabbath rests” (2 Chronicles 36:21, NIV)?
- How would you summarize the key message in this story?
- How does this story affect your perception of Christian leaders? How does it affect your perception of God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Daniel 3; Luke 5:1-6; Acts 4; Matthew 25:14-30.

Sharing Context and Background

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

This week’s lesson is focused on the actions and inaction of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, and his interaction with the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah embraced the call of prophet as a young man (Jeremiah 1:6, 7) and served from about 627 B.C. to
560 B.C. Zedekiah reigned from about 597 to 586 B.C., where he witnessed the final collapse of God's people as they were taken into captivity. The overall context of this story has to do with God preparing His people for His judgment. God's purpose was to use Babylon as a tool to bring discipline to Judah, but God did not chastise His people without offering them grace to be restored. In fact, God clearly mapped the season of renewal, if they should respond with humility and surrender (Jeremiah 3:14-17; 23:5; 31:31; 33:16). By 586 B.C., the tragic refusal to hear God's counsel came to fruition as Zedekiah succumbed to the urging of false prophets and was violently defeated and broken.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary describes the nature of Zedekiah's role in this time of discipline:

"Zedekiah was a puppet king of the Babylonians, yet at the same time a legitimate heir to the throne. He was no doubt required to take an oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, but within a few years violated that oath by entering into an alliance with various neighbor nations against Babylon" (vol. 4, p. 484). Zedekiah seemingly responded to Jeremiah as though he were a true prophet from God as seen in his repeated attempts to seek the man of God out and be advised (37:3, 4; 38:14-16).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary comments further about Zedekiah: "It would appear that Zedekiah's decisions reflect vacillation more than they do outright doubt or unbelief." Perhaps this quality represents the deeper, more pervasive problem of trying to find our own way to salvation and security instead of trust in God’s. Stubbornness always leads to suffering and humility to wholeness. King Zedekiah had the opportunity to obey God and do the right thing, but buckled under the pressure.

**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.
Here is what happened to Zedekiah as described in Jeremiah 39:

- 39:1 Nebuchadnezzar besieges the city.
- 39:2 The walls of Jerusalem are pulled down.
- 39:5 Zedekiah tries to run but is caught and sentenced.
- 39:6 Zedekiah’s sons and the nobles are killed in front of him.
- 39:7 Zedekiah’s eyes are removed.
- 39:15-18 The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah announcing that God has brought disaster instead of prosperity, as the king and the people have chosen. However, Jeremiah and those who were faithful were spared and given help, “because you trust in me, declares the Lord” (39:18, NIV).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Invite students to make a list of scenarios in which they wish someone would be brave enough to stand up for what is right. Prompt their lists with this question: I WISH SOMEONE WOULD STAND UP AND DO SOMETHING WHEN . . .

Have them make these lists in pairs or groups of three and read their lists out loud to the class. You may notice some powerful convictions the students have about what is right and what is needed. Invite them to be the kind of person who will stand and remind them that, like Jeremiah, they can trust in the Lord.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Zedekiah was not bent on evil; in fact, he kept reaching out to Jeremiah for insight. He knew what was right and believed he should do it, but not enough to do it. Our world is looking for leadership—people who have a clear sense of right and wrong, of what is true and what is false. And even though some are cynical, the hearts of people are watching and searching for guidance from God. There are many who live their lives with regrets, not about what they did, but about what they did not do. How do you want to live your life as a believer in God? There is the Zedekiah way: Play it safe. Hope for an easy way. Don’t take the risks of being hated or misunderstood. Perhaps you can see the determined look on the faces of Bible heroes who stood in the face of adversity and declared their loyalty to God. Noah. Moses. Elijah. Daniel. Esther. John the Baptist. Paul. The list goes on of people who were faithful. Where is the list of those who remained silent? How about you? Will you be swayed and besieged by inaction, or will you stand and be counted faithful to 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, chapter 37.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity. It is plain that they were from some form of royal Israelite line. They were taken for the express reason of becoming the ruling class in Babylon, and to help integrate Israelites into Babylonian society. As such they were treated with respect and given positions of favor within the kingdom. In fact, the king even gave them food from his own table! But herein lay the trouble. The Babylonian society put a high value on idol worship. Even the names given to the young men had a history of idolatry. Whether the boys knew this or not is not known. However, they were committed to honor God with their lives.

It is a story that is well-known. For 10 days they did not partake of the food given to idols; rather they just ate vegetables and water. After 10 days they were tested, and the text tells us that they did “ten times better” than their Babylonian counterparts.

This lesson points us in the direction of obedience. However, it is not an obedience that is born out of fear of rejection. Rather, it is an obedience that comes from a knowledge of who God is, and the fact that He loves us enough to save us. This is an important fact in teaching this lesson. It is an important fact in life. We obey not to gain favor, but because we respond to the grace given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand the difference between obeying in order to gain acceptance and obeying because they are accepted. (Know)
• Sense that God loves them deeply and wishes to bless them. (Feel)
• Integrate the knowledge of the love of God into their responses to Him. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Obedience
• Grace
• Healthy lifestyle

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 the students which question they marked as the best answer. This exercise was simple in that the correct answer was very clear. They all should have chosen it.

Now lead them in this exercise: Ask them if they would rather climb a mountain with someone they knew or with someone they didn’t. Ask them if they would rather scuba dive with someone that they knew cared about them, or with someone that they were not sure about. Ask them if they would like to skydive with
someone who was trained, or with someone of whose background they knew nothing.

The answers are simple. As is the answer to why we are motivated to obey. Do we do it because we hope God will love us, or do we do it because we know that God does love us?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

There once were two best friends. They went everywhere together and knew each other very well. They shared everything they had and always seemed to know what the other was thinking and feeling. When one would ask the other to do something the other would immediately do it. One day they were apart. One had a test to take, and the other had to go to the beach. Before the first one took his test he asked the second to bring him back some sand.

“Sand?” said the second. “Why?”

“Don’t worry, just do it!” said the first.

So the second friend went to the beach. He played in the water, played on the shore, and generally had a great time. When it came time to leave, he grabbed a handful of sand and stuck it in his pocket.

When he saw the first friend once again, the second immediately said he had the sand in his pocket. He reached into it and found it to be empty! He looked at his friend and apologized profusely, bringing out only a few grains of sand left in his pocket. He hoped his friend would still be his friend after losing all the sand.

The first friend smiled and said, “No problem; it’s not about the sand!”

“What do you mean?” asked the second, puzzled.

“It was never about the sand. It was about whether or not you trusted me!”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It is hard to trust sometimes—especially when you are not sure about the object of that trust. In this story, the young men were sure about who God was and is. It is that much easier to trust when you are sure that the object of that trust is trustworthy.

Obedience comes down to a question of trust in that which we will obey. Daniel and his friends knew this, and they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt who God was.

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.

• Read the story and have the students play the different parts with different voices. It will help make the story come alive.

• Have the students underline where Daniel and his friends took risks and leaps of faith.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Romans 5:19; Romans 16:19; 2 John 1:6.

Sharing Context and Background

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

The Israelites were a conquered people. Because of that, it would have been easy for Daniel and his friends to give up hope in a God who could be of service to them. They were away from their homeland, and even though they were living in luxury, they were still essentially slaves. It took a great deal of faith to even believe that God cared for them, let alone that He was watching out for them. In a strange land the God of their fathers could have seemed even more distant than ever before.

However, these young men, obviously learned, knew the God they served. They knew that He had desires for them that went beyond what was convenient for them. They were in a city that was the center of the world, and God was allowing them to have an influence over Nebuchadnezzar, arguably the most powerful man of his age. What a huge responsibility that was placed on their shoulders!

Babylon, in modern-day Iraq, would have been a city of many wonders and great wealth. The hanging gardens were said to be one of the wonders of the ancient world. This is the opulence and grandeur that these young men would have been becoming accustomed to. It would have been amazing, especially compared to their lives before coming to Babylon. They probably would have lived either in a small village or in the small city of Jerusalem. Either experience would have paled in comparison. It would have been easy to think that the gods of the Babylonians might be more powerful than the God of Israel.

However, this was not the case for these young men. They were committed to their God, and this
could have happened only because they studied Him and knew who He was. They found God to be trustworthy again and again. Their responses to Him were coming from a strong understanding that their God loved and accepted them completely.

III. CLOSING

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

Have the students think of five people whom they trust completely. Ask them if they would do what any of those five people asked of them. Then ask them why they would obey. Remind them that the quality of a relationship is often what allows us to obey even strange requests, and remind them that God is ultimately the best one to trust. Pray with them that they might live their lives in response to a God who loves them completely.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

These young men were put to the test and passed. However, they did not enter into risk because they were seeking to be loved by God. Rather they responded to the love that was already displayed by God. Their response became their acts of worship. They were able to respond so boldly because they knew who God was and what He would do. They were not fearful of His response to them because He had already proven Himself worthy of their love. It is a really special relationship that we get to have with God. He loves us, we love Him, and He proves to us His love again and again.

The blessing bestowed upon the young men as

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Sensory Teaching
Anytime that you can give your students the opportunity to use more than one of their senses to learn is a good thing. Some students learn visually, some by hearing, and some by doing. Any activity that you create to give them these sensory experiences will help them learn more quickly and allow that knowledge to have a steadfastness it might not otherwise have had.

Even things as simple as standing up and sitting down have a profound effect on the student. When teaching a story that is this well known, it is good to have thought of ways to help the story come alive for each of the students. From play-acting to drawing or singing, all of these activities will help a student have a hook to hang their proverbial hat on when it comes to the story you are studying.

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.
blessing that God wants to give to us. It is usually more than we can imagine.

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 39.

*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 Scripture portion is the story of Daniel and his reliance on God to give him not only the interpretation of the dream, but the dream itself. This is important for many different reasons: 1. It showed the wise men of the kingdom to be nothing more than charlatans. 2. It proved the power of God to King Nebuchadnezzar. 3. It showed God to be a God of power, wisdom, and grace. This gives us many opportunities for teaching. Especially for a better understanding of reliance on God to meet all our needs. It shows us what faith really is.

What a powerful God we serve! This continually shows us that God is a Deity that not only gives His people escapes from certain situations, but also allows the situations in the first place.

This gives us a great opportunity to talk about things such as the sovereignty of God, the power of His grace, and the strength to be found in faith.

II. TARGET
The students will:

- Realize that God is a God who sets up situations as well as decides their outcome. (Know)
- Understand that total dependence on faith is what God asks of us. (Feel)
- Learn to look for ways to depend more fully on the grace of God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Faith
- Sovereignty of God
- His connection to His people

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.

Invite the students to share how they think they would have felt if they were the wise men of Babylon in this story. Would they have feared for their lives? Would they have tried to convince the king that his request was completely unreasonable? Would they have tried to run away? Could they have had any say in how they were to be killed?

Do the students think that the wise men may have prayed to a God they didn’t necessarily know as a last-ditch effort? Do you think those prayers would have counted?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

The story of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams is much
like the story of another king who was looking for an answer that the wise men could not give. This was the pharaoh in the story of Joseph. This king also wanted information about a dream that seemed more than just a bad reaction to a large meal before going to bed! In both of these stories there was a man who was willing to rely completely on God’s power to get him out of a sticky situation! Sometimes it takes us getting into what seems like an impossible situation in order for us to see the power of God really shine through! Too often we have a tendency to rely on God in the extraordinary circumstances, while not relying on God in the ordinary circumstances. Both of these stories should lead us to the idea that God is a God whom we can rely on no matter what is going on in our lives, because He has all of that in His hands as well.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When we trust in God, oftentimes what seems like it might be ordinary becomes extraordinary. Whether it is discernment we should not have had, or wisdom that comes from beyond us, it is always an exciting adventure to be in the midst of God working. That is something that faith really allows us to do, see God in all His power, working through 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.

• Would you be afraid if you were one of the wise men?
• Have you ever had a conversation with God when you felt as if He were talking back to you? How did you feel?
• How often do you find yourself completely depending on God as Daniel did?
• Do you want to be someone who finds wisdom from what God is telling you?
• How did Daniel give the glory to God and not to himself?
• In what situation could you find yourself giving honor to God, even if you had done something well?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Genesis 41.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Since Nebuchadnezzar was king for two years while his father was still alive, this story actually happened in the fifth year of his reign over the Babylonians. Likewise, it is estimated that it was the fourth year of the captivity of Daniel.

Some have suggested that the word “Chaldeans” was used as a designation for scholars, sorcerers, astrologers, and magicians as well as its ethnic use. Since in the Neo-Babylonian Empire the Chaldeans occupied all high offices, including the priesthood, the ethnic name “Chaldeans” seems to have become a designation for the priestly work and office, which included the work of divination. The term “wise men” originally denoted an ancient priestly class during the time of the Medes and Persians, but came also to mean “one adept in the sciences of astrology, etc.”

It is important to remember that since Daniel and his friends were considered to be wise men as well, it is safe to assume that they were sentenced to death along with the other wise men. As the Lord gave Daniel the dream and the interpretation, He was not only saving Daniel and his friends, but also all of the other wise men in the kingdom.

It is interesting to note that the wise men did not ask for more time. Perhaps they did not ask for more time because they knew that more time was not what would get them the answers the king so desired. Rather, they figured they were just prolonging the inevitable. Daniel, however, asked for more time in order that God might reveal the secrets of the king to him. Daniel, even in asking for this time, showed a great deal of faith that God would provide that which the king so desperately was seeking.

Daniel was brave in teaching Nebuchadnezzar the prophecy. Why? Because it was not necessarily good news that the king was to hear. Rather, it was a message about the power of the one true God. However, the message was so clear that even this idolatrous king was convinced that God was the God above all other gods. He was convinced that there was nothing on this earth that could compare with the power of Daniel’s God.

Do we come into a knowledge of God that is as exciting and earth-shattering as it was for the king? Do we find that God’s power is overwhelming and it
forces us to change our lives when we recognize how amazing God's sovereignty is in this world? King Nebuchadnezzar understood what Daniel was saying in the interpretation of the dream. The message was clear. Nebuchadnezzar realized his place on this earth, and for a moment he became enthralled by the power and might of our Lord and Savior.

III. CLOSING

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

Bring the students into a circle and have them all hold hands. This may seem a bit cheesy, but it will build a sense of community. Ask them each to think of a time when they had to rely totally on God. Then, when you pray with them, ask each one of them to pray for another opportunity to rely on God completely.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
While Daniel learned to rely on God completely, it is often a long process for us to come to the place where we have that same reliance. What can we do to make us more reliant on God? It seems that crisis is a good way to rely on God. However, this lesson seeks to help students realize their need for God and for leaning on their faith regardless of the circumstances. What can we do, as teachers and mentors, to help disciple each young person into a situation where they can more readily see the power of God in their lives, even in the times that are not full of crisis? We can always point them to the characters in the Scriptures who learned to trust no matter the circumstances.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching
“Doing” Bible Study

Students learn by doing; this is knowledge that is pretty common. However, how do you have students “do” a lesson study from the Bible? There is a myriad of ways that they can connect the story to their lives. Anything from drama to song to Scripture reading to role-playing will allow the students to feel as if they are in the midst of the story. Even something as silly as getting them to stand when they are used to sitting makes it possible for them to remember things better than they would have otherwise. This is important as they begin to internalize the Scriptures and apply them to their lives.

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*, chapter 40.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This familiar story can be approached in many ways. The Scripture portion used in the student lesson is the part of the story in which Nebuchadnezzar creates the golden statue formed after the one God had shown him in his dream. Then he demands that all worship this image at his command. Only the three Hebrew youth choose not to kneel in worship. Neither do they want the second chance Nebuchadnezzar offers them, implying that they don’t answer to him and therefore won’t be changing their minds (Dan. 3:16). The fire is heated up. Those carrying out Nebuchadnezzar’s orders die from the heat, but the three young men—having been joined in the fire by Jesus Himself—don’t even smell of fire when they finally come out at Nebuchadnezzar’s command.

The student lesson is focused on the idea that these young men were simultaneously existing in two different kingdoms: the earthly one ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, and the kingdom of God ruled by the King of kings and Lord of lords. They were wisely choosing to give their allegiance to, and to trust, the most powerful Ruler (the one who could actually keep them from smelling like smoke, let alone be killed by the fire), even though they did not know for sure that He would choose to spare them. This allegiance and trust is what will be needed as this type of scenario is replayed near the end of time.

Another interesting theme is the one of forced religion. Nebuchadnezzar tried to force everyone to worship his image—that he had copied from God’s design. And then when he admitted that God was truly more powerful than he was, he tried to force everyone to worship God—which was just as abominable to God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that they function in both a temporal and a spiritual kingdom. Times come when one must choose allegiance to the spiritual kingdom over the temporal—when they conflict. (Know)
- Sense the kingdom of God as a reality in which their lives function. (Feel)
- Create a personal reminder to help them visualize the reality of God’s kingdom. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Adversity/trial
- Worship
- Kingdom of God
- Courage
- Conviction

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? sec-
ness, power, and authority over everything.

A preacher recently preached a sermon on a Bible story that is closely linked to this one—Daniel and the lions’ den. His sermon was titled “Whose Den Was It—Daniel’s or the Lions’?” His premise was that even though the devil is “a roaring lion” seeking to devour us, if we are “with God” in His kingdom, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is with us, and the supreme power in that den when Daniel was in there was God’s power. The lions who regularly resided in that den were, during that period of time at least, residing in a different kingdom. They were not the supreme authority about who got eaten and who didn’t.

This general principle can be applied to the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Just think about the physical reality of the fire. Who was the Supreme Commander to whom the three young men were paying due allegiance—the earthly power who couldn’t even keep his own soldiers from being killed by the heat, or the heavenly Power who didn’t even allow their silk robes to smell like smoke? If the young people can come to consider the sometimes tangible and concrete evidence of the power of God and the reality of His kingdom, they may be able to develop a trust that will see them through similar difficult times ahead of them.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

For many young people who have grown up in a Christian home, this story is almost too familiar to them now. It is intriguing, as a fairy tale is intriguing. They believe it along with the Creation story if they are from a conservative Christian background. But to benefit from the important lessons that they will need in their own difficult times, they should be guided to look at the story from a slightly different angle to get a fresh perspective on the timeless truth of God’s trustworthy...
b. How might God have intervened in Nebuchadnezzar’s self-worship even if there had not been a Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? How likely do you think it is that He would have done that?

c. In whose kingdom does this story take place? (Start your students thinking about the fact that God was ultimately in control. Look at the Punch Lines. From an earthly perspective and a simply physical point of view, it appeared that Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the kingdom of Babylon.)

- Who were the subjects of this kingdom? (Continue the line of discussion from the previous question.)

- To what kingdom did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego belong? (Their ultimate allegiance was to God. Part of the constitution of God’s kingdom is that we are to obey earthly kingdoms as long as they don’t directly violate the law of God, since, in reality, God has the power to set them up or set them down as He sees fit.)

- Why do you think the three said to the king, “We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter”? (While some commentators have considered this an arrogant comment, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary points out that there are other ways of interpreting it. They did not need to defend themselves or to apologize, because the charge against them was true. They, however, did not intend to alter their course of action even though they did not know what the outcome might be.)

- Were they being insubordinate? (Point out that, while respectful, they were making it clear that they were functioning in the framework of another kingdom in which Nebuchadnezzar himself was actually the one being insubordinate.)

- Is it ever appropriate to be insubordinate to the ruler of the kingdom to which you belong? (Discuss the differences between the earthly and the spiritual kingdoms. Remind the students of what Jesus said in Matthew 22:15-22. This might be a good time to use the Rabbi 101 activity.)

Sharing Context and Background

“The fiery furnace was probably a brickkiln. Since all buildings were constructed of bricks, many of them of burned bricks, kilns were numerous in the vicinity of ancient Babylon. Excavations show that ancient brick-kilns were similar to modern ones, which are found in that area in great numbers. These kilns are ordinarily cone-shaped structures built of bricks. The unbaked bricks to be fired line the inner walls. An opening on one side of the wall permits fuel to be thrown into the interior. Fuel consists of a mixture of crude oil and chaff. A tremendous heat is thus produced, and through the

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.
the furnace, and their song of thanksgiving to God for deliverance. . . .)

“Few biblical stories have been as popular as this tale of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It is a story about the God of Israel who is more powerful than Nebuchadnezzar or any of his gods. It is a story of religious persecution and divine deliverance. More important, it is a story of a religious faith that does not surrender, a faith that endures even in the face of martyrdom” (Mills, Watson and Wilson, Richard, gen. ed. Mercer Commentary on the Bible [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995], pp. 712, 713).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

This is a repeat of the activity suggested for the students to do in the Friday portion of their lesson. If you have a class in which most of the students study their lesson each week (either before or after it is taught), this is a good time to compare and share ideas about this activity.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The more we talk with God, study His Word, and actually test Him out, the more real His kingdom becomes to us and the more we trust Him. As we strengthen our “grasp” of God’s kingdom, the hold that the earthly kingdom has on us loosens. The more this can happen in our lives, the more prepared we will be to live in the reality of God’s kingdom, even when it is in conflict with the one we see all around us.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is a good example of respectful noncompliance with an earthly kingdom when it is necessary for the glory of God and His kingdom.

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 41.

*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.
I. SYNOPSIS

Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed on several occasions the sovereign hand of God, and throughout those experiences responded with wisdom and submission to God’s plan. Over time, the glory of his empire and the success of his rule caused pride in his heart to surge. Again, the king was given a dream that portrayed a tree growing full and rich, but being cut down and devastated at the word of a heavenly Messenger. Clearly the message depicted a person whose glory would change to shame. This seven-year season of madness would end with an unmistakable reality—his kingdom was not only temporary, but granted at the will of the Sovereign Lord. The entire chapter is what seems to be a personal testimony from the king himself offered to the world as a testimony to God’s glory and mercy.

In this week’s lesson, Nebuchadnezzar’s humility check seems to be a foremost theme. But consider the merciful way God offers the king an opportunity to respond and accept the reality of God’s eternal kingdom. There is a soft spot in this great king’s heart. And while he was pagan from birth, the tendency of his heart continually bends toward the God in heaven. Perhaps another angle for this week’s lesson might even be the power of a great leader’s personal testimony. Babylon’s wealth and power is considered one of history’s wonders, and the fact that Nebuchadnezzar, in his wealth and wisdom, ultimately submitted his life to God is quite a statement.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Deepen their understanding of God’s plan to establish His kingdom on earth. (Know)
• Experience a sense of God’s compassion and desire for everyone to trust in Him. (Feel)
• Choose to check their pride and embrace the humility which ultimately brings people to greatness. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Pride
• Confessions/repentance
• Learning from failure/mistakes

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.

Invite the students to share the person they ranked “hardest to humble.” If they had a chance to speak truth to someone they thought was extremely powerful in the world today, who would they choose and what would they say?
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 words and themes seem to be repeated in this passage?
- As you read this story, highlight what you think is the key thought in this passage and why.
- Underline all of the words Nebuchadnezzar used to describe himself through this experience (good and bad).
- Read Daniel 4:10-18, list the specific points of the king's dream, and write what you think each part means.
- How does Daniel respond to the king's request and the meaning of the king's dream?
- What other stories in Scripture does this event remind you of, and why? How are they similar and how are they different?
- What one word would you use to describe the essence of this story? Why?
- What do you think is the message in this story for...
  - Leaders?
  - Believers (like Daniel)?
  - Young people today?
- In what ways do you see God's mercy and grace revealed in this strange story?
  Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Acts 4; Daniel 1–3; Matthew 24.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Nebuchadnezzar was a mighty world power, but much like Napoleon, learned that he was but a speck in God's great world. But Nebuchadnezzar discovered that although he was really very small, the God of heaven chose him to work out His plan. The king of Babylon had a choice in the way he responded to God's mighty hand. Read the story as told by Nebuchadnezzar himself and witness the choice this great king made.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

God is in control, but sometimes great and mighty leaders fail to see this truth. Napoleon, at the very height of his military career, mused over his accomplishments when one of his staff asked him if he thought God was on their side in the war. Napoleon smirked and chided, "God is on the side that has the heaviest artillery." What Napoleon was really saying was: "God does not enter into the equation. The one who wins is the one who is stronger and better, and even if God exists, He has nothing to do with the victory or defeat." Napoleon was famous for his arrogance and for the high opinion he had of his own opinion. But his tone eventually changed.

During the Battle of Waterloo Napoleon was surprisingly defeated (surprising to him), and he lost not only the fight but his leadership of the mighty empire he built. Some years after the war, while he was exiled on St. Helena, he quoted the words of Thomas à Kempis, who said, "Man proposes, God disposes."

In this world great leaders have come and gone, but God's hand is guiding and shaping events according to His plan. If people are not mindful of God's power they can easily become impressed with their own. The pattern throughout history is that when powerful people pay too much attention to their power, they soon come to a destructive end. Think about other world leaders in history, and examine their attitudes and their ending. Then think of some powerful people in history who had a clear sense of God's power and worked with a humble attitude. How hard is it to be powerful and be humble at the same time?

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 event of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream is a timeless story of the conflict between God's reign and the tentative rule of man. The first dream of Nebuchadnezzar's reign found in Daniel 2 comes at the beginning of his leadership, whereas the dream in Daniel 4 emerges at the end of his time as ruler in Babylon. Nevertheless, the central issue of God's sovereign rule is the same.

The structure of chapter four is interesting in that the story begins and ends with what some scholars claim as songs of praise. Sandwiched in the middle is the personal testimony of a king who conveys frankly the story of his pride, fall, and submission to the rule of God. Zdravko Stefanovic states: "The chapter was
intended to be an open letter that was to be read publicly throughout the Neo-Babylonian Empire” (Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 148 [Pacific Press, 2007]). Stefanovic adds: “The main event in the chapter is left undated, yet the context of the story, described in the king’s own words, betrays the era of ‘Nebuchadnezzar the builder’—the second phase of this king’s reign, which was characterized by great building projects, mostly in the city of Babylon. Most commentators agree that the chapter should be dated to the closing years of Nebuchadnezzar’s long reign” (Stefanovic, p. 148). Clearly, the problem with pride is one that monarchs and mainstream people throughout history continually struggle with.

Part of getting perspective on the significance of the king’s dream in chapter 4 has to do with understanding the timing of the other events in the book of Daniel. The events in chapters 1–3 occurred in the first part of the Babylonian captivity, whereas the dream that came to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 occurs toward the end of his 42-year reign. In verse 4 it says that the king was “at rest” which “indicates that the king was now in undisturbed possession of his kingdom” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 788).

One interesting facet in this story has to do with speaking truth to power. In ancient times it was common to flatter their sovereign leaders instead of telling them the truth. Clearly, anyone hearing this dream of the glorious tree being cut down and broken is going to sense the doom in the dream. Even the king himself knew it was bad because the text claims: “I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me” (Daniel 4:5, NIV). But the group of “experts” did not offer an interpretation either because they did not know or they knew all too well and didn’t want to be the ones to hand such bad news over to the king. Notice that the King James Version translates it a little differently:

- “but they could not interpret it for me” (NIV).
- “they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof” (KJV).

Herein lies the salient quality of a prophet: A man or woman called by God to speak for God.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Invent a Parable

This lesson includes a message coming in from God in the form of a dream. Heavenly wisdom often comes in the form of a parable because of the way symbolic stories teach. Parables are simple, powerful tools for teaching. In fact, one of the best ways to get young people to learn is to give them a concept and have them invent a parable that teaches the concept effectively. It is no wonder that teaching might be the greatest form of learning.

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.
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Invite students to think of an important lesson that needs to be taught in the world today and couch it in a parable. Have them divide into groups of two to four to devise a story that teaches, and introduce the parable, saying, “I was asleep when I received a dream. . . .” Have the students share their dreams and invite the others to interpret. Or, if there is not much time, challenge the students to modernize this story in Daniel 4 as if it were to happen today.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The most important part of Nebuchadnezzar’s story is also the most important part of our story: what we think and say about God in the end. Notice Nebuchadnezzar’s last words recorded in history:

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” (Daniel 4:37, NIV).

It has been said: “There are two things sure in this life: (1) There is a God, and (2) you are not Him.” While very few ever feel tempted to claim to be God, we often live our deepest loyalties to ourselves. Perhaps this thoughtful king learned a lesson for us all: no matter how great, powerful, smart, or whatever you become, God will always be God. The most amazing part of this truth is that God loves humanity so much that He goes to some amazing lengths to make sure we know who He is. Our eternal lives depend on our response to God’s great gift of mercy. So, like King Nebuchadnezzar, what would be your final thoughts on the matter? In the same way this whole chapter is a personal testimony—what is yours?

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 42.

*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 instructive that Daniel 4 closes with a humbled King Nebuchadnezzar, newly awakened from a bout of temporary insanity, while Daniel 5 begins with another puffed-up monarch soon to get his comeuppance.

Belshazzar learned nothing from the experience of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar’s run-in with God. This is evidenced not only by the lavish party that he threw for his well-heeled friends and compatriots, but his behavior at the gathering. The party was no doubt “jumping” before he decided to “bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his [grand]father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them” (Daniel 5:2). This act of defiance was the final straw that led God to literally write the end of his kingdom, the fulfillment of which happened that very night.

There are several lessons that your students can glean from this awesome biblical narrative. The story of Belshazzar teaches us that while God may tarry, His judgments are no less sure. There are consequences to our actions. It also teaches that lives dedicated to pleasure-seeking often end in destruction, that sacred instruments of worship are not to be tampered with, that choosing the right friends is important, as is being a positive influence on them, and the importance of speaking truth to power no matter what the consequences or bribes.

Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned, however, is that God is sovereign over all, and we forget about Him at our own peril.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand that our motives and behavior matter to God and are the evidence upon which we are judged. (Know)
• Sense the importance of heeding God’s warning and counsel. (Feel)
• Make a decision to choose activities that will ennoble and uplift them. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Consequences
• Entertainment and leisure
• God (existence of a sovereign)

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.

This activity is meant to get the class thinking about happenings that can severely alter the course of one’s life. After the students have given their responses, ask a volunteer to briefly describe a time in their life when something truly life-changing occurred.

Make the point that life-altering events often come with little or no warning, but the judgments of God
rarely come this way. Belshazzar’s failure to heed God’s warning led to his destruction.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A U.S. Air Force transport plane with its captain and five crew members was flying over Alaska in the mid-1950s when they entered an unusually fierce snowstorm. The navigator contacted an air base only to be told that he had veered several hundred miles off course. Correct coordinates were given to the navigator, who continued to insist that his own calculations could not be that far off. Soon the plane ran low on fuel.

The six men decided to abandon the plane and parachute to safety, but because of the -70 degree Fahrenheit temperature and winds that gusted to 50 mph, they were all frozen within minutes of hitting the ground. A friend of mine was part of the rescue team that discovered and retrieved the bodies three days later. As a result of the navigator’s pride, five other people went to their deaths.

Proverbs 12:15 (NKJV) tells us that “the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” The results may not always be so dramatic, but we must all be careful to seek the counsel of God and wise individuals before making decisions of lasting significance. (Source: Dave McPherson, senior pastor, Maranatha Bible Church, Louisiana.)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

God sends us warnings that we might yield to His Holy Spirit, who alone can give us the strength and power to correct our course. Daniel 5 demonstrates in stark relief the consequences of ignoring God’s warnings. It was no more inevitable that Belshazzar should perish in God’s overthrow of Babylon to free the Israelites, than it was inevitable that Nebuchadnezzar should perish because of his sin of pride. As you prepare to explore this biblical narrative, delve into it with the understanding that God truly is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- The Old Testament is replete with stories of sin and its consequences. What makes the story of Belshazzar’s rise and fall unique?
- The handwriting on the wall spoke of God numbering the days of Belshazzar’s reign. Do you believe that God numbers each of our lives? Is there other scriptural support for this idea?
- **Underline** the parts of the narrative where power and influence are seen.
- **Circle** parts of the story that are new to you, the parts that deepen your understanding of the narrative.
- What parallels can be drawn between what people in Daniel’s time considered enjoyable entertainment and what people do today to entertain themselves?
- What actions of Belshazzar’s do you think especially outraged God? Why did these behaviors upset Him?
- What is Daniel’s chief role in this story? What parallels can be drawn between the role that Daniel is playing in Babylon’s kingly court and our role in society today?
- Pay close attention to Belshazzar’s reaction to the handwriting on the wall. What does his reaction tell us about the power of God to humble the greatest of us in a moment?
- What part of Daniel’s actions can be likened to that of Christ while He ministered on earth?
- Daniel’s reputation for interpretation was well known. How did Daniel prevent this special gift of God from becoming a source of personal pride?
- What parallels can be drawn between what people in Daniel’s time considered enjoyable entertainment and what people do today to entertain themselves?

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. Babylon now. If you want to get to Babylon today you’ll need to go to the nation of Iraq. You’ll need to get on the road to Babylon, the
main Baghdad-Hilla highway. You’ll have to get by several checkpoints of armed guards, not to mention the ferocious traffic that narrows from four lanes to two lanes without breaking speed. After a while you’ll come to the fertile Mesopotamian plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. There you will find a mound with a few mud-brick buildings, all broken down and in much disrepair. This is all that remains today of mighty Babylon.

More than 100 years before its destruction, Jeremiah wrote this: “Babylon’s thick wall will be leveled and her high gates set on fire; the people exhaust themselves for nothing, the nations’ labor is only fuel for the flames” (Jeremiah 51:58). Isaiah added, “She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations” (Isaiah 13:20).

2. Daniel’s contemporaries. The Israelites who were taken into captivity by the Babylonians were not left without comfort and divine instruction. God raised up faithful servants, such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who modeled the behavior they were to adopt while in exile. But even before the captivity, Jeremiah’s voice could be heard weeping and calling the people to repentance. Jeremiah’s ministry continued into the first part of the Babylonian captivity. There were others whom God sent to His people. During the captivity, Ezekiel was a prophet and priest who ministered during this time. He exhorted the stubborn Israelites, warning them of Jerusalem’s impending destruction, and that God expected their obedience and worship while under Babylonian control.

3. Sin against knowledge. Should Belshazzar have known the true God? Absolutely. Here’s what Ellen White says on this point: “Many had...
been his opportunities to know the divine will and to understand his responsibility of rendering obedience thereto. He had known of his grandfather’s banishment, by the decree of God, from the society of men; and he was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion and miraculous restoration. But Belshazzar allowed the love of pleasure and self-glorification to efface the lessons that he should never have forgotten. He wasted the opportunities graciously granted him, and neglected to use the means within his reach for becoming more fully acquainted with truth” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 522, 523).

4. The final straw. The act that doomed Belshazzar and Babylon to infamy was the misuse of the gold and silver goblets from the old Jerusalem temple plundered by King Nebuchadnezzar. Not only did Belshazzar and his guests drink wine from them, they “praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone” (Daniel 5:4). It was after this act of worship that “suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared” (verse 5).

The question of worship has always been at the center of human existence. From the Fall to the end of time, whom we choose to worship is the most important question we must answer. The first angel’s message of Revelation 14:7 commands humanity to respect the God who made everything, and worship Him.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

This week’s lesson urges us to make positive changes before we face the consequences of our behavior, but many teens don’t know how to start. Talk through the following general steps to making lasting change, then ask God to bless the students as they chart new courses in their lives.

1. Decide firmly to make a change and ask God what in your life needs to change.
2. Spend 15 minutes each day in prayer asking God for strength and wisdom to implement your change.
3. Set goals and write them down on paper.
4. Identify one small step you can make toward your first goal and do it. Continue this way each day. Ask someone to help you.
5. When you become afraid, find a Bible promise that fits your need, then ask God to help you.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The rise and fall of Belshazzar makes for fascinating reading. We are tempted to laugh as we picture the awesome scene of a disembodied hand writing on a wall in the middle of a big-time party. We cannot help smiling at the sight of Belshazzar’s knees, knocking violently.

But when we apply the lessons of this story to our lives, our hearts are humbled. Through Belshazzar God is warning us to remember Him in all our dealings, that He alone is sovereign over all and can with impunity bring an end to sin at any moment. God is exhorting us to worship Him and to put away the gods that please and entertain us.

In Daniel 5 God also summons us to the holy calling that He gave Daniel during his prophetic ministry. We are to shine so brightly that when the world is groping in darkness—as Belshazzar and his guests were that fateful night—they will call for us. We are called to be faithful witnesses for 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, chapter 43.

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**PREPARING TO TEACH**

I. SYNOPSIS

Darius the Mede became king of Babylon some-
time after the Babylonians were overthrown by the
Medo-Persians. Darius immediately divided the king-
dom into provinces—each governed by a prince.
There were 120 princes in all, and three governors
were set over them. Daniel was the first of the three
governors selected. And Daniel had a more “excellent
spirit” than all the others. For this reason, King Darius
thought to put Daniel in charge of the whole kingdom.

We get a glimpse of Daniel’s excellent spirit in the
very beginning of his exile from Jerusalem. As a very
young man, Daniel showed his loyalty to God over
man by choosing, along with his three companions,
not to eat from King Nebuchadnezzar’s table, which
was lavish with impure and unhealthful food and drink.
Instead, Daniel asked for the natural food that God
had intended for mankind to eat and water to drink. As
a result Daniel and his friends were stronger and in
better health than those who ate from the king’s table,
and the Lord blessed them with “knowledge and skill
in all learning and wisdom.”

Daniel continued to show integrity throughout his
life and remained faithful to God. Later, when he heard
of the decree that no one in the kingdom was to pray
to anyone except King Darius for 30 days, Daniel’s
trust in God was not shaken. Even in the face of death,
he continued to remain faithful in prayer to his God—
the God of heaven. The Lord honored Daniel’s faithfulness,
and delivered him from the hand of his enemies.

The teacher should discuss the importance of
maintaining a consistent prayer life, which includes
talking to the Lord, as well as listening to His Spirit
speak to the heart. It is this unceasing two-way com-
munication with the Father that will allow us to develop
an “excellent spirit”—one that is obedient to the Lord
in the face of all difficulties and trying experiences.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the importance of being loyal to
  God. *(Know)*
- Trust that the Lord will keep His promises to
  help us in difficult circumstances. *(Feel)*
- Choose to show their love for God by obeying
  His Word. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Prayer
- Integrity
- Emotions
- Persecution

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

**TEACHING**

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? sec-
tion of their lesson. After they have completed it, dis-
cuss their responses.
Have the students divide into small groups of two or three. Each group will discuss the scenarios given in the What Do You Think? section, and write down the group’s responses. After a few minutes let each group take a turn sharing their responses with the class. If the class is not large enough to divide into groups, give class members a few minutes to reflect on the What Do You Think? section and write down their individual answers. Then ask two or three people to share their responses with the class.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of a girl who lost her library book. She searched everywhere but could not find it. “Did you pray about it?” her mother asked. “No,” she replied, but thought to herself, I don’t think God cares about lost library books. She began to clean her room, hoping the book would show up. She remembered the discussion in her Sabbath School class about the universe and how powerful God is. The teacher talked about the speed of light, and said that it would take 20 billion years for man to travel across the whole universe. Sarah thought, If God is that powerful, maybe He can help me find my book.

Sarah searched the rest of the house but still could not find the library book. “Have you asked God to help you?” her mother asked again. Sarah laughed. “God is too busy to keep track of little things like that.” Her mother looked serious. “The Lord cares, even about little things,” she told Sarah. “The Bible tells us that He knows how many hairs are on our heads. He loves you 10 million billion times more than you can imagine. Ask for His help, and maybe the book will show up where you least expect it.” Sarah went to her room and prayed, “Lord, if You are not too busy, please help me find my book.”

Later that evening, Sarah went to her little sister’s room to read her a bedtime story. After the story, Sarah tucked her sister in, and under the covers was Sarah’s library book.—Adapted from Jerry D. Thomas, Great Stories for Kids, book 4, “Ten Million Billion,” p. 30 (Pacific Press Publishing Association).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

God does care about little things. He cares enough to help us with small problems as well as bigger problems. The Lord also cares about the choices we make. Throughout our lives we are faced with choices—choices that shape our characters, choices that determine what our futures will be. Daniel’s choices led him to a position of recognition and authority. Even more than that, Daniel’s choices led him into a trusting relationship with God. Not only did Daniel trust in the Lord, but the Lord could count on Daniel. Daniel was obedient even in the face of death, and the Lord delivered him from death.

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 was it about Daniel that impressed King Darius? Name some specific characteristics that might cause the king to trust Daniel to rule the whole kingdom?
• How do you think Daniel responded to the king’s recognition?
• Even though Daniel was a Hebrew captive in a foreign land, he was given a high position in the kingdom. What does this teach us about being faithful to God?
• What was the motivation of the other princes and governors who wanted to bring an accusation against Daniel?
• Think of some life choices we must make that will determine our loyalty to God or to man. Share with the class.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Joshua 24:15; Psalm 50:15; Daniel 6:16; Matthew 22:37; John 15:14.

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. Daniel was an exile from Jerusalem. As we read the first chapter of Daniel we learn that he was one of those who had been taken captive when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Jerusalem. It was somewhere around 70 years later that he was faced with the decision to obey God or to be thrown into the den of lions. Review and discuss the history of the Babylonian captivity of the Hebrews and subsequent events in the life of Daniel that led up to
the lions’ den. (Note: use the following texts to help the class understand the 70-year prophecy of Jeremiah. Around the time that Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den, the Hebrews were at the end of the 70 years: 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21; Jeremiah 25:11, 12; 29:10; Daniel 5:30, 31; 6:1-5; 9:1, 2."

2. Have the class compare and discuss Daniel’s story with the story of Joseph. What are the similarities? (See Genesis 37:18-20, 28; 39:1-23.)

3. We are in spiritual bondage. Everyone in the human race is taken captive at birth. And we are faced with choices—to eat at the king’s table or eat the food God has given, to worship the gods of this world or honor the God of heaven, to give in to temptation or obey the Word of God. Discuss with the class the similarities between Daniel’s experience and our experience as Christians living in a sinful world that is not our home.

4. Each of the kings of Babylon had great respect for Daniel and trusted him. They knew of his loyalty to his God, and witnessed the power of God in his life. (See Daniel 4:18; 5:11-14; 6:3.) King Darius saw an “excellent spirit” in Daniel. Darius not only trusted Daniel, because he was upright and honest, but he admired Daniel as well. Show how loyalty to God can also gain the respect of those who do not know God. Discuss with the class.

5. Even though Daniel had done nothing wrong, the princes of the kingdom set out to find fault in him. When they could find nothing to accuse him of, they made something up. We are sometimes faced with situations where we are treated unfairly or accused wrongly. And in many cases there is nothing we can humanly do to defend ourselves, as in the case of Daniel and Joseph and others in the Bible. What does this teach us about putting our trust in man? How should we relate to those who treat us

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Role-Playing**

1. Role-playing is an effective teaching tool. Have class members act out the story of Daniel and the lions, giving special attention to the reactions and behaviors of Daniel and of the lions before and after the angel came.

2. Divide the class into two groups. Give each group a few minutes to discuss the story of Daniel and the lions. Then have each group retell the story using their school as the setting, and using disciplinary actions for someone who may have broken an “unfair” school rule in an effort to “do the right thing.”

**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.
wrong? Go over the Out of the Story section in the student’s lesson with the class.
6. Daniel knew the importance of prayer. Each day he looked toward Jerusalem and prayed to the God of heaven (Daniel 6:10). By having a consistent prayer life, he developed a close friendship with God. He knew he could trust the Lord in every situation. First Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to “pray without ceasing” (KJV). In your own words describe what this means.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Ask class members to stand and each person to move to another seat. Then ask two people to switch seats. Ask two different people to switch seats. Now (if possible) ask everyone to get up and turn their chairs around to face the opposite direction. (Or ask everyone to stand and face the opposite direction.) Next, have everyone face the front again. Ask someone in the class to describe what they did in this activity. Talk about changes. Everything in life changes, but the Lord remains the same. His Word stands forever and His promises are sure. The Lord also wants to depend on us to remain the same, to remain loyal to Him, even when we are faced with changes or difficult circumstances.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
The Bible says to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37, NKJV). Love is an action word. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 we find a list of some of the actions of love. Our love for God can be seen in what we say and do. When we love others, when we treat others with kindness, we are also showing our love for God. But the greatest test of our love for the Lord is our obedience. Remember the words of Jesus: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15, NKJV). Determine with all your heart to show your love for the Lord by obeying God rather than man.

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 44.
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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

In Daniel 7 God takes Daniel into vision and shows him a troubling dream filled with weird-looking, fear- some creatures. First the lion, then the bear, a leopard, and a dragon-like beast that starts out with 10 horns and later loses three to a little horn with eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks boastfully (Daniel 7:8). Whew!

As Daniel peered through the scene he saw thrones set in place and the Ancient of Days having taken His seat. The scene is a cosmic courtroom, and the books of humanity’s record are open (Daniel 7:9, 10). The vision culminates in a blaze of glory as the fourth beast is slain and the Son of man, Jesus, is “given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him” (Daniel 7:14, NIV), and His kingdom lasts forever.

This chapter of the Bible sets the Word of God apart from all other sacred texts because it points the way to the end of time and the ushering in of God’s eternal kingdom. Your students must know that in Daniel 7 God has allowed them to peer into the future, to get a good look at how the world will end. He wants them to know that just as God through Jesus has saved us from the power of sin, one day He will save us from the presence of sin. Thus, Daniel 7 is more than strange beasts; it is an unveiling of history designed to prepare us to meet God and give us hope as we wait for His soon appearing.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Know that the vision of Daniel 7 is God’s way of letting us know that He will save His people from the presence of sin into a kingdom without end. (Know)
• Trust God with their future lives since He holds the future. (Feel)
• Choose to accept God’s invitation to be ready for His imminent return. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Hope
• Salvation (experience of)*
• Restoration

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.

Share the following answers to the What Do You Think? quiz.

1. Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp. (DEC), maker of big business mainframe computers, arguing against the PC in 1977.
students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- **Underline** the central theme of Daniel 7 as you see it, and prepare to share it in your own words.
- What surprised you in Daniel 7? What made you want to study deeper?
- If prophecy is one of the things that separate the Bible from all other forms of literature, including other sacred texts, how much time should we devote to its study?
- Is there a promise in Daniel 7 that spoke to you of God's love? Which one is it, and why do you think it captured your attention?
- **Place an X** at the points in the narrative where you see God's grace. Is there grace in Daniel 7?
- Some lament the fact that the distinctive prophecies of the book of Daniel are rarely taught or preached. Is that true and if so, what can be done to make these prophecies more engaging to young, as well as older minds?
- Daniel describes God's throne as engulfed by fire. What do you think this imagery is meant to communicate about God?
- What are some of the objections people might raise to “our” Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Daniel 7? Should we respond, and if so, how?
- The little horn of the fourth beast is a religio-political power with eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks boastfully. What power is being referred to here?
- If we are saved by grace through faith, does an understanding of these prophecies matter to our ultimate salvation? Isn’t living the life of discipleship to Christ enough?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The Word of God is marvelously concentrated, designed to help us live victoriously in this life and prepare for the life to come. In Daniel 7 God gives us a prophetic view of the nations that would rise and fall at the end of time, the judgment of the wicked, the salvation of the righteous, and the ushering in of God's everlasting kingdom. The momentous events of Daniel 7 remind us that God is soon to return for His children. The question is, however, “When He comes what will He find us doing?”

**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.*

**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. **Why so cryptic, God?** Much of the writing of the book of Daniel is symbolic. God unfolded for Daniel critical truths about how the future would unfold and usher in His kingdom, but God did so in a manner that was, well, less than clear. There were reasons for this. God did not
want His prophecies to be readily tampered with by nations to which they referred. For instance, in the dream God gave to Nebuchadnezzar found in Daniel 2, the king could not recall the dream, let alone understand its interpretation. By not divulging all the particulars to Nebuchadnezzar, God set the scene for His servant Daniel to carry out His divine will without any interruption by Babylon’s monarch.

God also used symbolic language because through such language He was able to compress huge swathes of time without having to unfold minute details that would inevitably overwhelm His human servants.

2. Understanding the Symbols. If much of Daniel is symbolic, where do we find the key that unlocks the symbols? Why, in the Word of God, of course. Here are some of the symbols found in Daniel 7 and what they mean:

- **Sea** (Daniel 7:2) means multitudes, people, nations (Revelation 17:15).
- **Beasts** (Daniel 7:3) means kingdoms or empires.
- **Lion, bear, leopard, and dragon-like beast** (Daniel 7:3-8) represent four kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Daniel 7:17).
- **Ten horns** (Daniel 7:7, 8) means 10 kings or kingdoms.
- **A little horn** (Daniel 7:8) represents a power that is not political, but spiritual in nature (Daniel 7:24, first part).

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Keeping It Real**

One of the constant struggles that teachers face is how to make what they are teaching relevant and interesting to their students. Not only do the students in the class have a somewhat fractured attention span, but in most cases they will be oblivious to the material.

To make the material you are sharing relevant, use history to give a subject an up-to-date spin. Try the following:

- Locate maps, photos of trinkets, symbols—anything that would communicate a sense of the historical significance of the subject matter.
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable on the history of the subject to make a brief presentation to your class.
- Plan ahead. Give your students an Internet research assignment to find and report an interesting or unknown fact about the subject.
- Ironically, by showing the history of a thing you pique the interest of your young learners who have very little knowledge of history.

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**Eyes like a man** (Daniel 7:8). Eyes indicate understanding or wisdom (Ephesians 1:18).

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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.
Eyes like a man indicates a system based on human, rather than divine, wisdom.

Time, times, and half a time (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:6, 14) works out to 1,260 prophetic days or 1,260 literal years. A prophetic day equals one year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6; Genesis 29:27). *(Source: “Unsealing Daniel’s Mysteries,” a Bible study by Mark Finley for *It is Written*. Copyright 2004-2007.)*

3. Daniel’s struggle. The prophecies in the book of Daniel troubled him greatly. One of the abiding themes in the book, especially the later chapters, is Daniel’s struggle to come to terms with what God is showing him (Daniel 7:28).

Daniel was unsettled because the prophecy of Daniel 7 was not for his time. As the angel Gabriel commanded in Daniel 12:4: “But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.” These prophecies are for times in which we are now living, for the kingdoms they point to have come and gone from the scene, except the kingdom of God. God was speaking to us through Daniel.

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

The prophecy in Daniel 7 reminds us that God will not tarry forever, that His coming is sure. Knowing this, how then should we live? Ask the students to ponder this question by finishing the following two statements:

- “People who are ready when Jesus returns will be found doing . . .”
- “People who are ready when Jesus returns will have given up . . .”

Allow the students to share some of their responses. Then ask for a volunteer to pray that everyone in the class will make preparation for the second coming of Jesus the focus of their lives.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The blessed hope of Daniel 7 is that the God who dwells in the heavens and walks astride through time cares about the plight of puny humans marooned on earth. After reading this chapter, one is left with the question of why God would bother to share an end-time message with a prophet who could neither grasp nor fully understand it.

Truth is, God loves us too much to leave us hopeless pawns in the hands of “powerful” men and women and their kingdoms. Through the prophecies of Daniel, He reminds us that He alone sets the sunrise and sunset of human powers. Whether they be political or spiritual powers, no matter how powerful they speak or how many weapons at their disposal, they have no power over God. When their time is up, He throws them onto the ash-heap of history.

Daniel 7 with its strange beasts reminds us that Jesus is soon to return to earth, that His kingdom will have no end, and all who love His appearing will live forever in the presence of the Ancient of Days.

*Fundamental Belief No. 10.***

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 45.

*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.*
God is in control

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Daniel had a very distressing vision of things to come. Goats, rams, and horns tortured his sleep. A vision of a little horn perplexed and appalled him because this horn trampled the saints of God, defiled the holy sanctuary, and even came against God Himself. He threw truth to the ground and prospered while doing it. Daniel fainted at the thought that this would actually take place. He grew ill over the stress of things to come.

Daniel knew that God’s Word was certain. If God said it, it would surely come to pass—even if God said it thousands of years in advance. God is all-knowing and can predict with great accuracy what will transpire in the future.

The certainty of God’s Word brought both confusion and comfort to Daniel. Daniel was confused at how or why God would allow trouble, tragedy, and rebellion for so long. And though answers were not readily given, Daniel was comforted in the fact that God Himself would war and win against the little horn and bring His people through victoriously. Not only is God’s Word certain, His power is reliable.

Even though the future, and oftentimes the present, seems hard to stomach, Daniel shows us that God is still in control. The fact that God showed Daniel such trouble was coming is reassurance that nothing, not even tragedy, catches God by surprise. Not only does He know about it, He has a plan to rectify it, in His time.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Know that nothing, not even their problems, catches God by surprise. (Know)
• Feel secure in the reliability of God’s plan and power. (Feel)
• Respond to life’s problems by trusting in God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Gift of prophecy
• Sanctuary (Christ’s ministry in heavenly)
• Bible/Holy Scriptures

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.

An alternate activity for this lesson is to pass out index cards to each student and ask them to come up with a definition for the word “vaticinate” (vā-ti-kā-na’t), without the use of a dictionary. After the students have finished composing them, collect all the definitions. Shuffle them and add to the pile the correct definition, which is “to prophesy or foretell.” Read all the defini-
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 was Daniel’s reaction to the vision God gave him?
- Why do you think he responded this way?
- What kingdom did the goat represent?
- What reasons can you give for God using symbols such as goats and horns to describe future kingdoms?
- Daniel’s visions made some pretty bad accusations about some coming kingdoms. If the prophecies were written out in plain language, rulers of those kingdoms would have completely destroyed the Bible and such important prophecy. Sometimes God hides things from us and reveals it at just the right time. Read Daniel 8:26. God told Daniel to seal up the vision. Why do you think He told Daniel to do this?
- The goat had a horn that would start out small but would grow up to the heavens. Underline the things the little horn would do.
- What promises does God make in this passage?
- God promised that the little horn would be destroyed, but not for a long time. Why do you think God would allow the little horn to get away with doing wrong for so long?
- What do you think God means when He says He will reconsecrate the sanctuary?
- Why is the cleansing or reconsecration of the sanctuary necessary?
- What does this passage teach us about God?
- How can we use this knowledge in our lives today?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Daniel 8:26; Psalm 77:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Romans 8:35-39; Isaiah 55:8, 9.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Daniel had a disturbing vision about a ram and a goat. The vision opened with a mighty ram with two horns. He was very powerful. Nothing could withstand him. He conquered to the west, the north, and the south. The ram’s power, however, came to an end...
when a ferocious goat, with a giant horn, came on the scene. The goat trampled the ram and grew to be very great. The goat’s giant horn was broken, but was replaced by four horns. Out of one of the four winds of heaven came a little horn that grew great in power. In prophecy, horns represent kings (Daniel 8:20).

Gabriel told Daniel that the ram with the two horns represented the empire of the Medes and Persians. The goat symbolized the empire of Greece. The great horn represented Alexander the Great. At his death, his kingdom was given to his four generals, hence the four horns. Out of the four winds of heaven came a little horn that did some big things against God and His people.

This little horn symbolized the kingdom of Rome. Rome would not war against just man. It would war against God and His people. This little horn would defile God’s sanctuary, trample God’s people, come against the Prince of princes, and throw truth to the ground. While this horn was doing all of this, the Bible records that he prospered.

Daniel was literally sick. How could God let such a thing take place? Gabriel reassured Daniel that things would be put back into order and the sanctuary would be reconsecrated in 2300 days, which in prophetic time was 2,300 years.

As Daniel continued to study, he realized that the Jews should be freed from Babylonian captivity soon. It was supposed to last only 70 years, but the last vision made it seem like oppression would go on for thousands of years.

Gabriel gave Daniel a clearer understanding that the things he saw were for the end times. Gabriel also shared God’s solution for the problem, the Messiah. He not only shared that the Messiah would come but when the Messiah would come! See Daniel 9:24-27.

God still had everything in His control. Even though there were some rough times ahead, none of these situations would catch God by surprise. He would bring justice in His time. God also promised that the little horn would not get away with his dirt. He would be destroyed—not by man, but by God.

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

*Think-time*

Good things come to those who wait. This is true in life and in the classroom. Studies show that when teachers give at least three seconds of wait-time after a question is asked and after a student answers, great things happen. There are less “I don’t know” answers or no answers at all.

Ask students, “As a result of this lesson, what changes will you make this week?” And then wait at least three seconds in silence giving someone an opportunity to speak. After a student speaks, continue to wait at least three seconds before responding. Students will feel more comfortable and will contribute more in class.

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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.
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give each student a piece of paper and instruct them to write at the top of the paper a situation they want to completely trust God to work out. Below the situation’s description, have them pen a prayer of surrender, letting God know they are going to stop worrying about this problem and place it in His hands. Lead the students in a season of prayer in which each student can share a sentence prayer of surrender aloud.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

We are indeed living in the last days of earth’s history. And though the Bible promises they will be marked with victory, they will not end without a fight. The people of God will experience turbulence ahead. God, our Pilot, does not promise to lead us around every storm, but He does promise to lead us safely through the storm. God’s warning of storms ahead affords us an opportunity to be prepared and affirms that God has prepared also.

God’s Word is certain and His power is reliable. He will bring us out, not only of the trouble in the last days, but out of the problems we face today. “Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice” (Steps to Christ, p. 100).

1 Fundamental Belief No. 18.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 24.
3 Fundamental Belief No. 1.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

As we tackle these texts, it is important to start with the forest before we get to the trees. It is tempting to jump into a word study and attach dates to phrases and be done with the prophetic study. However, it is of paramount importance to be able to have the students see the overarching themes of grace and love that come through in our interpretations of prophecy. It is only in this context that words have impact.

In Daniel 10 we learn that Daniel had a vision that was very troubling to him, a vision that he could not understand, and that left him feeling very distraught. After this vision experience, Daniel began to fast and pray for several weeks—seeking to know the meaning of what he saw. The moment he began to pray to the Lord about the disturbing vision, a heavenly messenger was dispatched to go to Daniel and to reveal to him its meaning. But the messenger was delayed—caught in a battle—and could not get to Daniel right away. After about three weeks, from the time Daniel began to pray for help, the “man” from heaven finally reached Daniel in answer to his prayer.

In chapter 11 the messenger begins to explain the meaning of the vision to Daniel. By this time the kingdom of Babylon had been overthrown by Medo-Persia, and Cyrus was in his third year as king of Persia. The angel tells Daniel that Persia would have three more kings after Cyrus, and then a fourth king would reign, who would be richer than all the others and would use his wealth to gain power. Following this fourth king would come another even more powerful king. This king would not rule for very long, but his kingdom would be divided into four. The divided kingdoms would not be as strong as the first.

For many years to follow, kings, princes, and mighty men would rise and fall in their quest for power. Then a time would come when the sanctuary of God would be defiled by a king who would think to exalt himself above God, and who would persecute those who opposed him. But God’s people will stand for the truth and will teach others to do the same. The work and influence of this king, who thought to set himself above God, will extend to the time of the end.

Finally, as we learn in chapter 12, Michael will appear. Then there will be a great time of trouble on the earth. But God’s people, whose names are written in the book of life, will be delivered.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand that earthly kings may rise and fall, but in the end God’s kingdom will prevail and will rule over the earth forever. (Know)
- Trust the power of God to deliver and save His people from harm. (Feel)
- Choose to serve the God of heaven rather than earthly powers. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Prophecy and its purpose
- Eschatology
- God’s character as revealed through prophecy
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 class members work in groups of two or three. Each group should reflect on the questions in the What Do You Think? section of the student lesson, and jot down at least one Bible example as a response to each question. Have class members supply references for their answers as much as possible. (It would be good for the teacher to have a couple of examples already prepared.) After several minutes, have someone from each group share their responses with the class. Then ask class members at random to share current examples from their own experiences or someone they know that could also serve as answers to the questions in the What Do You Think? section.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Have you ever had to drive somewhere and you didn’t know how to get there, so you had to get directions? Getting directions is pretty easy. If you cannot get them from someone you know, you can go to MapQuest or some other Web site that gives driving directions. Sometimes state troopers will give good directions. Many automobiles are equipped with navigational systems to make it easy for drivers to find their way.

When someone you know gives you directions, it may sound something like this: “Go south on New Life Avenue. Keep straight until you see the Home Depot on your left. Then make a left-hand turn onto Golden Way. Go through three traffic lights and turn right on Preparation Road. When you get to the end of the road, turn left on First Street. Go to the next block and you will see the big white house on the right-hand corner. The address is 1001 First Street.”

Bible prophecy is a lot like getting directions. Prophecy tells us where we are going, which way to go, and what landmarks to look for on the way. It also tells us how to know when we have reached our destination.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We are on our way to meet Jesus. And He has left directions for us to follow. He’s given us a road map. Through the prophets the Lord has given us a clear picture of what lies ahead, what twists and turns we will have to make, what stops we will come to along the way, and what obstacles to look out for. By knowing all these details, we can be prepared and well equipped for our journey.

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.

- Daniel 10:5, 6 gives a description of the “man” who spoke to Daniel. Who could this man be? Ask class members to give a few possible answers and to tell why.
- Discuss the meaning of the “book of life” with the class. Name some other books that are mentioned in the Bible. Tell what purpose they serve. (See Philippians 4:3; Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12.)
- Even though Daniel was a man of God, he was afraid when he saw the vision and when the messenger touched him. What do you think was the reason for his fearfulness?
- There were other men with Daniel when he first saw the vision. These men did not see the vision, yet they were also afraid and ran away. Why do you think they were so frightened if they could not see the vision?
- What does the fearfulness of Daniel and the other men tell us about the power of holy beings? What is the source of their power?
- What should be our response or reaction when we are aware that we are in the presence of God?
- From the moment that Daniel prayed for help, the messenger was sent forth to meet with him in answer to his prayer. Do you think that the Lord responds to us in the same way? Does the Lord always give an immediate answer to our requests?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Exodus 14:13, 14; Zechariah 4:6; Revelation 12:10, 11.
Sharing Context and Background

1. The prophetic books of the Bible, such as Daniel and Revelation, provide unique insight into the fate of the world in light of the saving action of Christ on the cross. The symbolic metaphors, historical allegories, and vivid descriptions of the closing events in these prophetic books stymie all too often those individuals who take the time to study them. And because of this, many of the prophecies found in Daniel, as well as Revelation, are often seen as abstract and mystical, or obtuse and impossible to understand. Daniel 10–12 are probably some of the hardest to comprehend. What do you think is the overall theme of these chapters and what is their prophetic message? Who is the message for? (See Daniel 10:14; 11:31–33; 11:36, 37; 12:1–3. It may be helpful to read these texts in different Bible versions.)

2. When the last-day events of Daniel 10–12 are considered by the reader for their implications of God’s grace, and His purpose and power to deliver His people from the hands of their enemies, these chapters could have a very personal impact. What impact, if any, does Daniel 10–12 have on you personally? How can the message of deliverance be applied to your daily experiences? Is it important for God’s people to understand His grace and experience His deliverance before the end comes, and if so why?

3. The prophecies, such as those found in the book of Daniel, were written to help us remember some specific truths about God:
   (a.) God is in charge;
   (b.) God will fulfill all of His promises regarding salvation;
   (c.) There are only two types of people: God’s...
people and God’s enemies. In the last days, the activities of these two groups will support this division. Discuss the differences between the activities of the people of God and those of His enemies in the last days.

4. In Daniel’s vision (chapters 10–12) the struggle that moves the world to eternity is couched in language that reveals the fact that evil will ultimately have a terrible end. On the other hand, victory always comes for God’s children, because He acts in their behalf. If we claim God’s victory in Christ at the cross, that victory becomes ours. We may not feel it, or see it in the midst of our struggles, but victory for the people of God is certain! Knowing that we have the assurance that God’s people will prevail in the end, why do you think God allows this great controversy between good and evil to continue or to seemingly be prolonged?

III. CLOSING

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

Discuss the following questions with class members as a closing activity. How is God’s character revealed throughout the book of Daniel? What is the significance of using the rise and fall of nations to reveal God’s true character and to demonstrate His power? Other than the nations and rulers that are mentioned in the Bible—specifically in the book of Daniel—does God appoint or select specific people (or nations) to be rulers or in leadership positions in today’s society, such as in the United States or other present-day countries and governments? Tell why you believe the way you do.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

This lesson was written in an effort to give us a broader understanding of the last few chapters of the book of Daniel. It might be helpful to follow up this study with a more in-depth study of the actual time line of the prophecy if you are prepared to do so, and if there are students that so desire. It would not be surprising if students are interested in delving deeper than these few minutes allow, now that they have the theological framework to understand that prophecy points to a God who is true in character and great in power.

Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series.

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