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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*A special adaptation has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st Quarter</th>
<th>2nd Quarter</th>
<th>3rd Quarter</th>
<th>4th Quarter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2007 | 1. Adam and Eve  
2. The Serpent  
3. Cain and Abel  
4. Seth and Enoch  
5. Noah  
6. Tower People  
7. Abraham  
8. Isaac  
9. Lot  
10. Rebekah  
11. Jacob and Esau  
12. Jacob  
13. Israel | 1. Joseph  
2. The Brothers  
3. Moses  
4. Egyptians  
5. Fleeing Slaves  
6. Unhappy Campers  
7. Chosen Nation  
8. Aaron  
9. The Tabernacle  
10. Miriam and Zipporah  
11. Twelve Spies  
12. Korah  
13. The Bronze Serpent | 1. The Borders Revisited  
2. Balaam  
3. Questionable Neighbors  
4. Law Review  
5. Moses' Death  
6. Crossing Jordan  
7. Rahab  
8. Blessings and Curses  
9. Gibeonites  
10. Canaan Divided  
11. Last Words of Joshua  
12. Annual Feasts  
2. Samuel  
3. Eli  
4. Philistines  
5. First King  
6. Saul's Death  
7. Anointed  
8. Fugitive  
9. Lunatic  
10. Crowned King  
11. Incoment  
12. Sinner  
13. Absalom |
| 2008 | 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 | 1. Ahab  
2. Elisha  
3. Prophet  
4. Naaman  
5. Jonah  
6. Hosea  
7. Isaiah  
8. Jehovah  
9. Ahaz  
10. Hezekiah  
11. Assyria  
12. Manasseh  
2. Approaching Doom  
3. Last King  
4. Captives  
5. Daniel  
6. The Dream  
7. Three Hebrews  
8. Nebuchadnezzar  
9. Belshazar  
10. Daniel  
11. Daniel 7  
12. Daniel 8, 9  
2. Zechariah  
3. Temple Two  
4. Esther  
5. Queen  
6. Ezra  
7. Nehemiah  
8. Builders  
9. Plotters  
10. Reformers  
11. Jesus  
12. Deliverer  
13. Future Glory |
| 2009 | 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 | 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 | 1. Woman/Jairus  
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. Zaccacius  
12. Mary  
13. James and John | 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 | 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. Paul/Barnabas  
10. Gentiles Included  
11. Spreading Good News  
12. The Thessalonians  
13. The Ephesians | 1. The Corinthians  
2. Workers for Christ  
3. Romans/Galatians  
4. Last Journey  
5. Adventures and Trials  
6. Philemon  
7. Colossians/Philippians  
8. Final Arrest  
9. Before Nero  
10. John the Beloved  
11. Patmos  
12. The Revelation  
13. Church Triumphant | 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. Church Triumphant | 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 |
## 1. The Message
The Desire of Ages, chapter 1.

## 2. Countdown to the Savior
The Desire of Ages, chapters 2, 3.

## 3. Servant of the Lord
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 4.

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 5.

## 5. Following Yonder Star
Scripture Story: Matthew 2.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 6.

## 6. Growing Up
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 7, 8, 9.

## 7. One of a Kind
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 10, 11.

## 8. Hard Target
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 12, 13.

## 9. Come See
Scripture Story: John 1:19-51.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 14.

## 10. Party With Jesus
Scripture Story: John 2:1-11.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 15.

## 11. Get Out of My House!
Scripture Story: John 2:12-22.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 16.

## 12. A Slow Burn
Scripture Story: John 3:1-17.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 17.

## 13. It’s Your Turn
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 18.

## 1. Unlikely Missionary
Scripture Story: John 4:1-42.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 19.

## 2. Seeing Is Believing?
Scripture Story: John 4:43-54.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 20.

## 3. Do You Want to Get Well?
Scripture Story: John 5.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 21.

## 4. The King’s Herald
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 22.

## 5. A Tumultuous Homecoming
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 23, 24.

## 6. Fisherman for Jesus
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 25.

## 7. The Day the Devil Went to Church

## 8. Willing and Able
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 27.

## 9. Not Love at First Sight
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 28.

## 10. Front and Center
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 29.

## 11. Jesus Calling
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 30, 31.

## 12. Faith-FULL Soldier
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 32, 33.

## 13. Used-to-Be’s and Has-Beens
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapters 34, 35.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Scripture Story</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
January

3—The Living Message [p. 11]
God has revealed Himself to His people through prophets, the Temple system, and through the written Word. But only Jesus can capture what God is really like.

10—Countdown to the Savior [p. 15]
Although the Jews desired the Messiah’s coming, they misunderstood His mission and purpose. Thus, they missed Him—just like we can.

17—Servant of the Lord [p. 19]
An angel presents Mary with the shocking news that she will bear the Son of God. God can do great things for and through us, too, but He requires our obedience.

24—What You Seek Is What You Get [p. 23]
It has been said that a person finds what they’re looking for. Simeon and Anna looked with anticipation for the coming of the Messiah. They were not disappointed.

31—Following Yonder Star [p. 27]
When the Magi went in search of the Messiah whom they had been studying about, God’s natural Global Positioning System placed them exactly where they needed to be.

February

7—Growing Up [p. 31]
Jesus faced many of the challenges and trials of youth that you face today, but He remained sinless. How did He do it? Can you imagine Jesus as someone whom you might want to know and hang out with?

14—One of a Kind [p. 35]
Just as God created John the Baptist for a holy purpose, He created each of us for a holy purpose. Standing for God will cost us much, as it did John. Is it worth it?

21—Hard Target [p. 39]
After Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, He met each of Satan’s temptations with a clear “It is written.” God’s Word holds the same power for us as we meet our day-to-day temptations and struggles.

28—Come See [p. 43]
The dramatic incident of Philip introducing Nathanael to Jesus captures the coordination between the human and the divine as Christ makes disciples for His kingdom.

March

7—Partying With Jesus [p. 47]
Jesus worked His first miracle at a wedding feast in Cana, turning the water into wine and blessing the joyful celebration with His power. Jesus’ power continues today to transform ordinary things into extraordinary!

14—Get Out of My House! [p. 51]
Instead of having reverence for the house of the Lord, the money changers were using the Temple for their own gain, turning it into a place of greed and materialism.

21—A Slow Burn [p. 55]
Often people feel as if they’re not converted because they haven’t had a “Damascus Road” experience. But the story of Nicodemus reminds us that conversion can be a lifelong journey.

28—It’s Your Turn [p. 59]
John the Baptist could have become jealous when his disciples began following Jesus. But he chose to take joy in Jesus’ success. He realized his role was to prepare the way.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Jesus’ coming to earth—God the Son in human form—was the climax of the long story of Israel’s covenant relationship with God and God’s quest to reconcile humanity with Him. Jesus, the Logos, the Word of God, came to show the world what God was like. This perspective needs to be in place before we even begin to read the Gospels. We must explore every story, every parable, every miracle, every saying of Jesus with the question “What does this tell us about God?”

God had already revealed Himself to His people through prophets, through the Temple system, through the written words of Scripture. But none of these revelations was able to completely capture what God was like. Only Jesus was able to do that; only Jesus is God’s living message to humanity—not just for the 33 or so years He walked the earth, but for us today.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Understand the purpose for which God became a human being. (Know)
• Feel God’s love for humanity expressed in Jesus. (Feel)
• Choose to follow the God they see revealed in Jesus. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Nature of man
• Trinity
• Humility
• Intimacy

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

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

What does it mean to think of Jesus as God’s message to humanity? Hand out 3” x 5” index cards or small pieces of paper with pencils and say: “If God were going to write a message—maybe drop you a note, or an e-mail, or a text message—right now, what message do you think God would have for you? Write it on this card.”

After each student has written their message from God, ask if a few people are willing to share what they wrote. Then ask them to think about how that message connects to what Jesus said or did in the Gospels. In what way did Jesus deliver God’s message to us today?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
Writer Louis Cassels penned a story about a man who simply couldn’t believe in the Incarnation—this idea of God coming to earth as the Man Jesus Christ.
One Christmas Eve he told his wife and children to go off to church without him. He watched them drive away through the snow, reflecting that he just couldn’t believe everything they were preaching at church this Christmas.

As he sat in the living room reading his newspaper through the gathering snowstorm, he heard a thudding noise from outside. He looked out to find a small group of birds, huddled and miserable in the snow. Looking for shelter, they had tried to fly right through the living room window.

The man went out and opened his barn door and tried to guide the frightened birds into the barn. But they were as frightened of him as they were of the storm, and they would not follow him, even when he tried to lure them with bread crumbs. He knew that they’d freeze if left outside in the storm, yet he had no way to communicate with them, no way to tell them there was a place of safety. *If only I could become a bird for just a few minutes!* he thought. *Then I could tell them, and they’d understand.*

For the first time the man really understood the story of the Incarnation—that God had to become a human being in order to reach us with the message of salvation. Only by becoming one of us could He lead us to safety.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

*Bridge to the Story*

*Share the following in your own words:*

We all send messages to others all the time. But our messages get through best when we speak to people in the language and format with which they’re most comfortable. You’d probably use different language if you were asking your teacher for extra time on an assignment than if you were sending a text message to a friend inviting her to a party. When it comes to communicating with other species, as the man in the story found, the gap is usually too great to bridge. But God bridged the ultimate gap by finding a way to speak to us in our own language—by becoming one of us and living among us as Jesus of Nazareth.

*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.*

- Reproduce the boxes from Monday’s section of the student lesson on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart at the front of the room. Say: “The Scripture passage we’ve read in John 1 tells us that Jesus came to show us what God was like. As we read in the Gospels the stories of what Jesus did, we are reading the record of God’s message to us, the picture of God’s character in human form.”

- Get the class to suggest three stories from Jesus’ life. Divide the class into three groups and ask each group to read and discuss one of the stories. Ask them to brainstorm a list of what each story teaches us about God. After allowing 10 to 15 minutes for discussion, bring the groups back together and ask each group to report on their story. Write down their findings in the boxes at the front. Discuss what picture of God’s character we get from all these stories.

- Ask: “Would these messages about God’s character have had the same effect if they were passed on through a prophet and written down? What’s the advantage to having Jesus come personally to do these things?”

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Colossians 2:9, 10; Galatians 4:4-6; Philippians 2:5-11.*

*Sharing Context and Background*

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

“Incarnation” is a heavy theological concept for high school students to grasp—and for adults as well! On the surface it seems simple—God taking on human form, coming to earth as a human baby, growing up to reveal to earth’s people what God is like, and how much God loves them.

But when you realize that huge theological battles have been fought, schisms have occurred, and heretics have been condemned over questions such as how Jesus could have both a divine and a human nature, whether He had two separate natures or one that was completely human and completely divine, whether He had the nature of Adam before the Fall or of humanity after the Fall—well, you get the picture. It becomes a little more complicated, and theologians can tie themselves (and each other) into
As you discuss what it meant for God to become man, you may come across questions you can’t answer. That’s OK. You can spend your lifetime studying the answers to questions about the Trinity and the nature of Jesus. But as you think about the heavy theological stuff, don’t lose sight of the big picture. Whatever formulae we use to explain it to ourselves and others, the fact remains that somehow, God made the ultimate sacrifice and became human—and that the purpose of everything Jesus said and did was to reveal God to us, and to be God with us.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask students to take out the cards from the Getting Started activity on which they wrote God’s message to them. Say: “After we’ve talked about how Jesus revealed God’s character to us, do you still think this message that God is sending is what He would like to say to you? Are there any changes you’d like to make to this message?”

After giving them time to add to or change God’s message, ask them to turn the card over and write their response to God. Encourage them to take the card with them and use it in prayer this week.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus came to earth for one purpose—to be “God with us.” When you think of God, don’t picture a distant, remote figure far away on a throne in heaven. Picture Jesus—walking the dusty roads of Galilee, healing and touching sick people, taking little children...
on His lap, telling people about God’s love. That’s what God is like. And that’s what God wants us to do—to carry on Jesus’ work of representing His character by the love we show to others every day.

\*Fundamental Belief No. 7.
\*Fundamental Beliefs No. 2 through No. 5.

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 *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 1.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* 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](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net).
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson is unusual in that it uses *The Desire of Ages* as the source text. Ellen White’s writing in chapters 2 and 3 of that book focuses on the Jews through history and the circumstances at the time of Jesus’ birth. In chapter 2, “The Chosen People,” she sets the scene for the coming Messiah by describing how the Jews had been entrusted to reveal God to mankind, but as they departed from God, they lost sight of their calling and purpose. Although the Jews desired the Messiah’s coming, at the time of His arrival their hope was deliverance from Roman rule rather than the promise of their redemption from sin. “They looked for the Messiah to come as a conqueror, to break the oppressor’s power, and exalt Israel to universal dominion. Thus the way was prepared for them to reject the Saviour” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 30).

Chapter 3, “The Fullness of the Time,” centers on the circumstances present when God saw fit to send forth His Son and that the timing of His arrival was as He had ordained. A historical look at the progression of the Jews as His chosen people and a review of the times at Jesus’ birth provides opportunity to look at the circumstances of today’s world and the role of Seventh-day Adventists in revealing Jesus. As we ponder the return of Jesus, her words (on page 32) remind us that “like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God’s purposes know no haste and no delay.”

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize the similarities that exist between the times when Jesus was born and the world today. (*Know*)
- Realize the risk that exists for Seventh-day Adventists to miss the signs of His coming as did the Jews of old. (*Feel*)
- Resolve to be ready for His coming while revealing His character and saving grace. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Prophecies
- Hope
- World issues

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 discuss the similarities or dissimilarities they identified between the Jews of old and the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. One idea is to re-create the continuum on the floor (using masking tape), asking the students to stand on the line according to their response.

Review some of the signs of the coming of Christ compared with conditions or events in the world today.
Ask, without any outward show of response, if any are unsettled or worried about what is taking place in the world and/or their assurance of salvation. Remind your students that Jesus has promised His grace is sufficient.

Make a list in front of the class of what the students suggested regarding what to watch for and pray for.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

I recall a dream I had while a high school student some months after hearing the Adventist teaching about the second coming of Christ for the first time. In the dream I was dazed and walking on a New York City street as a terrified horde of people ran toward me. The buildings were shaking, the ground quaking. As I turned around and began to run with the crowd, I asked a man next to me what was happening. His answer struck fear in my heart: “Jesus is coming!” I turned and looked upward but could see nothing but a skyscraper canyon and an endless stream of panic-stricken people. Then I heard an amazingly loud sound like an air horn amplified to 200 decibels, and I awoke with a start, heart pounding and brow sweaty. Although I was a Christian who believed that Jesus would come again, the immediacy of that dream caused me to wonder why I woke up frightened.

Four years later, then a student at Southern Missionary College, I was walking on campus on a glorious spring day. Suddenly, the silence was shattered by a horn blast-like sound that caused an immediate flashback to that memorable dream. Not knowing what it was, I immediately spun and looked eastward anticipating the sight of the coming King. It was the volunteer fire department signal horn high atop Lynn Wood Hall. I smiled and realized I was disappointed. No pounding heart, no sweaty brow, just an assurance that when He did come, I would be ready to greet my Lord with joy.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

For more than half a century the strains of “Lift Up the Trumpet” have traveled the airwaves as the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry enters the homes of millions of radio listeners. The words of each stanza, and the stirring refrain, bring the promise of Christ's coming home. “Coming again, coming again, Jesus is coming again!” Well, sure, we believe that. We teach that. But what did we do this week that shows we live that belief?

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.

- “Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race” (The Desire of Ages, p. 37). But calamities are part of our post-Eden world. See www.whiteestate.org/issues/calamities.asp for information regarding God’s love and calamities.
- If you live in an Adventist center, discuss with your students the pros and cons about daily life in such circumstances.
- Identify what symbols of Christ are included in an Adventist worship service. Is there a crucifix anywhere in your sanctuary? on your church? Apart from the grape juice and wafer used during Communion, are any other symbols evident? Why or why not?
- Given the Adventist belief that beings exist on unfallen worlds, how does that belief impact topics such as UFOs and the growing regularity of astronomers identifying new planets beyond those in our solar system?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 19:37-44.

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 [Old Testament] prophecies concerning Israel constitute a declaration of God’s purpose with respect to the Jews as the covenant people; these prophecies were strictly conditional upon their cooperation; by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah the Jewish nation withdrew from the covenant relationship and forfeited its special relationship to God under the covenant; the covenant promises and privileges were permanently transferred to the Christian church as the new covenant people, to be fulfilled to the extent that they are applicable under the new historical situation; details dependent on literal Israel retaining its status as the covenant people, resident in Palestine, have lapsed by default; we are dependant upon later inspired writers for a valid application of these [Old

“The invitation to participate in the second coming of Christ is paralleled by other occasions when God Himself has sent His servants at pivotal times in history to offer salvation to humanity. A study of the key elements involved in each of these events will clarify the issues just before the second coming of Christ. “As we study these events, a pattern emerges that parallels the event of the second coming of Christ.

1. In the fullness of time, God acted on His own time schedule to bring about judgment and salvation.
2. The event initiated by God took place when humanity had sunk in sin to its lowest depth.
3. The political, religious, and intellectual leaders of the age were foremost in leading the people into sin and apostasy.
4. Apostasy led to the creation of ‘designer gods’ who fit the mood, the culture, the worldview, and the intellectual thinking of the age. Reliance upon ‘designer gods’ led to the rejection of God and doubt in His message.
5. God chose a messenger to bring His Word of warning and salvation.
6. God’s people received the salvation offered by God because they accepted His Word by faith. Faith is what gave them certainty in the prophecies of God’s Word” (E. Edward Zinke, taken from the devotional message delivered September 30, 1999, at the 1999 Annual Council, found at www.adventist.org/world_church/official_meetings/1999annualcouncil/zinke.html).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask if any students have had a dream about the

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Engaging the Senses

In order to make more real for your students something that happened long ago or will happen in the future, such as the Second Coming, ask your students to engage all their senses as they view a photo, look at a graphic, or form an image in their mind about an event. Ask: “If you were there right now, what are you hearing? Do you taste anything? What do you smell? How are you feeling? Describe what you’re seeing.” In the case of a photo or other graphic it is useful to have them view the image in quadrants so they can focus special attention and likely see more detail.

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 The Desire of Ages. 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.
Second Coming and what their reaction was upon waking. If the thought of the Second Coming causes anxiety or doubt in any of your students, share texts such as 1 John 1:9 that give comfort and confidence. Offer to further discuss God’s saving grace with any who need assurance. Show a graphic of the Second Coming. As if they were seeing the real thing, ask what they would hear, smell, see, feel, or perhaps taste.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

A church friend of mine, with whom I went to public high school, came to me near the end of our senior year and said, “No one found out I am a Seventh-day Adventist.” Upon hearing those words I thought to myself, *How could someone not know you were a Seventh-day Adventist*—especially given public high school mainstays such as cafeteria “mystery meat,” Friday night football games, etc. To me, those words bespoke a fulfilled desire to fit in and not stand out.

As we draw closer with each passing week to the day of His coming, challenge your students to daily live their lives standing on principle, serving those around them, and looking forward in confidence to the Second Coming. The word *advent* is part of our name, chosen to identify our denomination in 1863. We Adventists should reveal Jesus through many ways, including how we live our lives. 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 *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 2, 3.

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

I. SYNOPSIS
The story of God coming to earth as a Man begins with a young girl—probably a teenager—who receives shocking, almost unbelievable news. Mary's fiancé, Joseph, didn't believe in the idea of a virgin birth at first, and the idea is still a stumbling block today for people who find it difficult to accept the story of Jesus as it's presented in the Bible. But Mary's story offers a beautiful lesson in obedience, faith, and trust.

Mary is not overpowered by Divinity without her consent. The angel presents her with the shocking news that she will bear the Son of God, but it's left up to Mary to say, "May it be to me as you have said" (NIV). Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat, says: "The Mighty One has done great things for me" (NIV). God can do "great things" for and through us too, but He requires our obedience.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Know that God chose a poor peasant woman as the mother of His Son. (Know)
- Feel that God has a destiny for each of them just as He had for Mary. (Feel)
- Respond with obedience to God's call in their own lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Obedience
- Knowing God's will for your life

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.

Look at Sabbath's activity in the student lesson. If you have access to a laptop, do the activity together in class, looking through the various works of art that you can access by typing "Annunciation" into Google Images (or a similar image search engine). Or, find some Annunciation paintings in art books you can borrow from the library and bring to class, or print out color copies of paintings found online. As students look at the images, ask, "How do you think this artist viewed Mary? What did the artist think about angels? What details in the picture stand out to you?"

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
When Lana got pregnant at 16, she felt people staring at her wherever she went. She stopped going both to school and to church. Her parents were supportive, but her boyfriend had dumped her and wanted nothing to do with either her or the baby. A few friends stuck by her, but far more were quick to gossip about her behind her back. Lana figured her life was pretty much over. She believed abortion was wrong and...
couldn’t imagine giving her baby up for adoption, so she was determined to keep the baby and raise it herself. But she couldn’t see how she’d ever finish high school, go to college, get married, or even have a fun night out with her friends.

Three years later, Lana’s world looked very different. She had just finished high school by taking courses part-time. It had taken a lot longer, but she was proud of what she’d accomplished. She began applying to colleges. No, she wasn’t dating and out having fun with her friends as much as she’d like, but she did have a core group of friends who supported her. She’d also made friends with a few other young moms who could relate to what she was going through. She even felt comfortable enough to start going to church again so she could take her little boy to Sabbath School. She found people there kinder and more helpful than she’d expected. And her 3-year-old son was the greatest joy in her life.

Lana realized that although getting pregnant as an unmarried teenager hadn’t been God’s will for her, He had still managed to work in her life. As she had tried to follow His will, step by step, things had worked out far better than she’d ever dreamed.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Though Mary’s pregnancy was the result of the Holy Spirit, she still would have experienced a lot of the shame and disapproval directed at a young woman who got pregnant out of wedlock. She probably would have understood Lana’s situation and encouraged her to have hope and be faithful. Mary was called by God to a very difficult and challenging calling. We can only imagine how she might have felt when the angel visited her with the news. But we know how she responded—with faithful obedience.

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.

Say: “At the beginning of today’s lesson we looked at some examples of famous artwork that various artists have created to try to capture the moment described in this Bible passage in which Mary is told she is going to be the mother of God’s Son. How would you depict that moment? What would you choose to show and emphasize if you were trying to make it real to an audience of today’s young people?”

Provide art supplies and plenty of space, and allow students to work in pairs, groups, or individually on their own representation of the Annunciation. Suggest that they might like to do a drawing, poster, or even a cartoon. But if you have space and time you might provide options for those who are less interested in visual arts. Perhaps a pair or small group might like to create a skit based on Gabriel’s visit to Mary, or on some other aspect of the story. Someone else might like to write a poem or dramatic monologue of what Mary might have been thinking during and after the angel’s visit.

After allowing 20 to 30 minutes for students to work on their projects, share them with the whole group.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 1:18–2:23.

Sharing Context and Background

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

As we look at the story of Mary and Joseph as related in Luke 1 and 2 and Matthew 1 and 2, it’s important to remember the role of “betrothal” in Biblical times. Unlike a modern-day engagement, which is simply an agreement between two individuals that they will get married at some later date, a Jewish betrothal at this time was a binding legal agreement. The bride-price, or dowry, was agreed upon by the prospective bridegroom (or his father) and the bride’s father. When the dowry was paid, the betrothal was celebrated with a public ceremony that was considered more important than the actual marriage itself.

After the betrothal ceremony, the bride-to-be still lived in her father’s house, but she was considered the legal property of her husband-to-be. If she was unfaithful to him, it was considered just as serious as adultery, and a divorce was required to break off the relationship. The marriage was formally celebrated with a procession in which the bride was brought to her husband’s house, where the marriage would be consummated.

So when the angel came to Mary, she was still a virgin, but in our terms she was legally married to Joseph, though still living in her parents’ home.
According to the customs of the time, Joseph was justified in seeing Mary’s pregnancy as a terrible betrayal. Though another angelic visit convinced Joseph of the truth of Mary’s claims, there were no doubt many among her family, friends, and neighbors who were never convinced. Mary had to be prepared to suffer shame, public humiliation, and gossip in order to be obedient to God’s call.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

After looking at the variety of artwork (and perhaps drama and writing) produced by students in response to this story, say: “There are many different ways to view any Bible story. But the most important thing we can do is to place ourselves in the story. If we were in Mary’s place—being called by God to do something challenging, difficult, maybe even impossible—how would we respond?” Mary’s words: “I am the Lord’s servant. . . . May it be to me as you have said” (NIV), illustrate the attitude we should all strive to imitate.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God requires human cooperation to get His work done. Or perhaps it’s better to say that He chooses to use humans who choose to cooperate with Him. Jesus could simply have appeared on earth, fully formed as a man, but He chose to be born in the ordinary way, to a mother and father who both had to agree to what was being asked of them. Both Mary and Joseph had a very challenging role to play in God’s work in this world, and they both chose to be obedient. Every day

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 The Desire of Ages. 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.
since then, God has been calling people—including teenagers, as Mary probably was—to respond to His challenges with courage and obedience. It’s not easy, but the rewards are great. Will you say to Him, “I am the Lord’s servant”? 

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 *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 4.

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what you seek is what you get

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 5.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Perhaps one of the most profound moments in the stories of Christ’s childhood is that of when Joseph and Mary had Jesus dedicated in the Temple. While this act was a normal part of the religion of the Jews, something very extraordinary occurred as Simeon recognized the Savior, and Anna responded with prophetic praise because she, too, had been waiting for the Christ to come.

In this week’s lesson there are several angles from which students may benefit from the study of Christ’s dedication. First, there is the picture of a small group of believers actively seeking the coming of Christ’s kingdom. Clearly, there is an image of a remnant similar to that which may be true of those waiting for Christ to come a second time. Second, there are images in the dedication itself that convey truths about Christ as our Redeemer. Bringing the firstborn son to be dedicated is an act connected to the deliverance of Israel during the Exodus. Ironically, the child who is the Redeemer is presented to the priest in a rite signifying redemption. Furthermore, as Ellen White observes: “The Shekinah had departed from the sanctuary, but in the Child of Bethlehem was veiled the glory before which angels bow” (The Desire of Ages, p. 52). And third, the people who witnessed Christ in the Temple that day were ordinary believers, much like God’s people today. Anna and Simeon are model believers for us today—ordinary people who have one prominent hope that is the theme of each day: the promised Savior will come. Young people today can live with the same hope and the same single-minded focus as Simeon and Anna.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• See the importance of having a seeking spirit. (Know)
• Witness a remnant of believers who remain focused on Christ. (Feel)
• Choose to live each ordinary moment with extraordinary expectations. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Remnant
• Priorities
• Second coming of Christ*

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 voting activity in the What Do You Think? section. How is the remnant waiting at Christ’s first coming like the remnant that will watch for Christ’s soon return?
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:
The story is told of a ranger in a national park leading a group of hikers to a fire lookout. The ranger became quite engaged with being a tour guide to the hikers, pointing out every flower and critter in the forest. As he guided the hikers through the forest, the constant communications on his radio distracted him and the wildlife he was so keenly in touch with; thus he turned off his radio so he could share the wonders of the forest uninterrupted. The people were excited to listen to the exuberant ranger, and some were even taking notes as they followed the evidences of wildlife in detail. What the ranger failed to notice was what was following them. As they made their way to the fire lookout, a frantic ranger caught up with him and the group. Trying to catch his breath he exclaimed, “Why isn’t your radio on? We have been trying to warn you for over a mile now that a grizzly bear has been stalking your entire group for the last half hour!” They were completely unaware that they were about to learn that the operative word in wilderness is “wild.” It is possible to be in touch with one thing and be completely out of touch with another.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:
How might this be true for people who live at the time when Christ will arrive? Whether it be His first appearance or His second coming, is it possible to live with our radios off?

Simeon and Anna were among a small group of people tuned in to the hope that the day of Christ would come. And the only way to witness the Savior, or the Consolation of Israel, was to be waiting and watching for that day.

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 try to imagine the scene in your mind’s eye. Envision the sights of the Temple, the sounds, smells, and the story as it might have played out.
• Underline what you think are three key phrases in this passage.

• As you pay attention to every word as you read, what new insights do you see in the story?
• With so little information about the childhood events of Jesus, why do you think this story is recorded in the Bible?
• Examine the words spoken by Simeon to God and his words to Mary. When you consider these prophetic statements, what can you discern about the kind of person Simeon was?
• Consider also Anna’s response (although her exact words are not recorded) and think about whether Simeon and Anna were typical people with common expectations about the Messiah, or were they somewhat unique for their time? What do you think and why?
• How do you think Anna’s lifestyle, always living at the Temple, fasting and praying, affected her influence on others? The last phrase of her story observes: “she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (NIV). How do you think people responded to her words?
• Since it was revealed to Simeon that he would not die before seeing the Messiah, imagine how hard he must have been looking at the end of his years knowing any day he would witness God’s Son. How does this anticipation relate to those of us living in the present season of earth’s history?

More Questions for Teachers

How does the work of the Holy Spirit resemble the movement of the wind? After discussing this question, look up Acts 2:1-12 and Acts 2:36-47 and examine the specific ways in which the Spirit works on people.

In John 3:14 Jesus refers Nicodemus to an old story every teacher in Israel would know. Read Numbers 21:4-9 and explain how that story is connected to the mission of Christ on earth. How does the snake being lifted up represent Christ being lifted up on Calvary? Compare the two events and discover why you think Jesus made this comparison.

It is likely that John 3:16 is the most popular verse from Scripture, perhaps because it is so simple a child can receive it and so profound a scholar cannot fully comprehend it. Have you ever heard something again and again and it lost its meaning? Rewrite this verse in
your own words and do not use any of the words in the passage (except words such as: in, the, to, but, and, etc.) and share it with each other in the class.

If you could go to Jesus privately and in person as did Nicodemus, what would you say/ask? Why? In the same way that Jesus “changed the subject” on Nicodemus, what subject do you think Jesus would take up with you? Why?

**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 highlights the dedication of the Christ child by Mary and Joseph, but the central event in the story has to do with the response of Simeon and Anna—two people waiting for the Messiah to appear.

Of the dedication service Alfred Edersheim notes: “It consisted of the formal presentation of the child to the priest, accompanied by two short ‘benedictions’—the one for the law of redemption, the other for the gift of a firstborn son, after which the redemption money was paid. Most solemn, as in such a place, and remembering its symbolic significance as the expression of God’s claim over each family in Israel, must this rite have been” (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database. Copyright © 1999, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved).

About 40 days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph would present the Savior of the world to be dedicated, as a sign of God’s merciful provision and their devotion to God.

Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the Temple in obedience to the law. Mary has to go through the rite of purification, and Jesus is to be dedicated. There are three different parts to their coming to this service. First is the rite of purification, which has to do with the mother. When a child was born, the mother was considered unclean for about 40 days—seven days for their male child and thirty-three days for the mother—to be able to come to the Temple, according to Leviticus 12:1-4. At this time the rite of purification could be done. This rite included an offering (a lamb as a burnt offering and a turtledove as a sin offering). During this time, only wealthy people could afford a lamb, which meant that poorer families could offer two pigeons or turtledoves instead (Leviticus 12:6-8). Clearly, Mary and Joseph were not wealthy.

Second, there is the dedication of the child. There were two parts to this dedication: if the child was a boy and born to the tribe of Levi, he would automatically become part of the priestly class. For the firstborn baby boys from other tribes, parents would bring a small offering for the service of the priests—this offering was usually about five shekels (Numbers 18:1-16).

The third part of the dedication was a consecration of the firstborn child to the Lord (Exodus 13:2, 12), a requirement of all Jewish families. Simeon, a faithful servant of God, and Anna witness this event and are

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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 The Desire of Ages. 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.
CLOSING
Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Divide the class into two groups. Invite one group to scan the room and look for items that have the color blue in them. Ask the other group to examine the room looking for items that have red in them.

As the students report, ask: “When you walked into the room today did you think, ‘Wow, there are at least five items in this room that have red in them’? Probably not. As you scanned the room you were looking for something particular. How is that like the vision Simeon and Anna had for the coming Messiah? How do you think our lives would be different if we were to watch for Christ in a similar way? What would change?”

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
Mary and Joseph were probably still reeling and exhausted by the events of the birth of Jesus when they brought the baby to the Temple at the appointed time. Simeon, knowing his days were numbered but promised by God to see the Messiah, looked each baby in the eye, wondering, “Is this the One?” Anna spent day and night in the Temple serving the Lord, hyper-focused on the day when the Messiah would show up. Perhaps neither really knew if the Messiah would first appear as a baby, but the glory of heaven showed up—and only a few were watching.

It is possible to go through your day, your weeks, and even a lifetime busy and focused on many things, except the one thing that truly matters. Maybe you could find ways to put around you reminders of the one person, the one most important event that is in your future. It’s not graduation. It’s not marriage. It’s not a job. It’s the coming of the Messiah—the Savior, Jesus Christ. As sure as He came to earth 2,000 years ago, He promises to return again. What will be your focus prior to that day?

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
The Wise Men are icons of Christmas whose navigation feat was aided by a divinely sent Global Positioning System that outshone the best technology available today. We don’t know if they were kings. We don’t know if there were three of them. We don’t know their names, place of origin, or ages. We do know it wasn’t really a star they were following. So how is it the Wise Men seem so familiar to us? Because they’ve become part of the lore that surrounds Christmas and have gained these attributions based on surmisal, an understanding of the culture of the time, and the sparse record of them found in Matthew.

They’ve been given names (Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar) and have the Feast of the Three Kings (also referred to as Epiphany or Twelfth Night marking the end of the Christmas season) celebrated in many cultures. But the real Magi (pronounced may-ji) were not extras in a Christmas play. They studied the Hebrew Scriptures and found the words of Balaam: “There shall come a Star out of Jacob” (Numbers 24:17, KJV). They probably also knew and understood the time prophecy of Daniel (Daniel 9:25, 26), and came to realize the Messiah’s coming was near.

They arrived in Jerusalem expecting to find excitement concerning the birth. Instead, they found general ignorance of the event and their words stirred passions within the Roman and Jewish leaders that would lead to the murder of untold numbers of innocent children and the eventual murder of Jesus.

In this lesson the Wise Men also serve as models for those who seek Jesus in the time of His second advent.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Understand how the Wise Men were led to Jesus according to divine plan. (Know)
• Sense the determination and excitement felt by the Wise Men as they travel to greet the Messiah. (Feel)
• See themselves as latter-day wise men and wise women who seek Jesus as did those Wise Men of old. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Politics
• Natural world
• Prejudice

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 thoughts about how Jesus was evident to them this past Christmas. Did they easily find Him in their Christmas obser-
advances? Were thoughts of Him part of their family time on Christmas eve or Christmas morning? As they experienced the Christmas season in your area, was He notable by His absence in things such as signs avoiding the word “Christmas,” advertisements, being usurped by Santa and reindeer?

Discuss with your students how today’s media would cover the arrival of the Magi if they were to arrive in your town.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

“The Gift of the Magi,” by O. Henry, is a classic short story about a girl who sells her hair at Christmastime so she can raise money to give a fob (a short chain for a pocket watch) to her beloved. Meanwhile, her beloved sells his pocket watch so he can raise money to buy her a set of combs for her beautiful long hair. In the end they realize their gifts of love surmounted the irony of their situation.

Here is the closing paragraph of the story: “The Magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the Magi.”

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The above story is an affirmation of unselfish love. Normally, and justifiably so, Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus are the stars of the Christmas story—the ultimate story of unselfish love. Today, however, we’ll focus on those who followed a star that led them to those central members of the Christmas story. The Wise Men were devout seekers of truth willing to leave their homeland on a journey that would be remembered through the ages. Are we wise men and women today?

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

- What does the Bible record (Matthew 2:11) indicate regarding where Jesus was when the Wise Men arrived? This would indicate He was out of the manger setting.
- Why were the Magi warned in a dream not to go back to Herod?
- What was the changed circumstance that made it safe for Joseph to take Jesus and Mary to Israel?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 2:1-20.*

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

According to *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Herod was in power from 37 to 4 B.C. and Archelaus (the...
worst of Herod’s ruling sons) from 4 B.C. to A.D. 6. The commentary also notes that according to the practice of the place and period, a child was “one year old” in its first calendar year (i.e., between birth and the next New Year’s Day) and “two years old” commencing with the beginning of its second calendar year (vol. 5, pp. 291, 292).

III. CLOSING

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

We are the wise men and wise women of the end times. We’ll welcome King Jesus as He again comes to earth. It is an exciting thought.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

 “[A] friend of mine was called by his three young children to watch a Christmas play they had created. My friend entered the living room and surveyed the scene. Jesus was being played by a doll wrapped in a blanket. His oldest son was obviously Joseph wearing a bathrobe and holding a broom handle as his staff. His middle child was playing Mary. Her head was draped with a sheet and she looked intently toward the doll. His youngest child wore an aluminum foil crown and carried a box of gifts. The child felt it was necessary to explain herself and her mission. “I’m all three wise men,” she said proudly, “I bring precious gifts: gold, circumstance, and mud!”

(From a sermon by Nancy S. Taylor, Old South church, Boston, Mass. Used by permission.)

What makes the Magi memorable? Is it that they’re mysterious, mentioned only in Matthew 2? They bore gifts? We all like to give and receive gifts. Is it that they are part of the Christmas story, bringing back childhood memories? Maybe it has to do with children. It actually has to do with the Child. We’d all like to believe we’d have been there to welcome the Christ child with gifts fit for a King.

The Magi represent us, and we represent them in these last days. Will you be there for Him?

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

• Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. 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 *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 6.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* 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.*
growing up

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Jesus grew up in Nazareth—a period of about 30 years that the Bible summarizes in a handful of verses. Except for the single incident of His visit to the Temple at age 12, the Gospel writers either didn’t know a great deal about Jesus’ childhood and youth, or didn’t consider it important enough to record.

The little we do learn creates a picture of a boy who was obedient and teachable, but also had a strong will and an independent spirit. Jesus grew physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Luke 2:52 may be intended to suggest that Jesus was not a prodigy who developed in one area of life at the expense of all others. Rather, He was a well-rounded person, liked and respected by those around Him, respectful of His parents but not afraid to tell them when the work of His heavenly Father had to take first priority.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Know that Jesus faced many of the challenges and trials of youth but remained sinless. (Know)
- Imagine Jesus as someone they might like to know and associate with as a young person. (Feel)
- Ask God for the grace to be like Jesus as they mature. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Maturity and independence
- Relationships with parents
- Extra-biblical writings about Jesus

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.

Tally the responses to see how many people chose each of them. What was the predominant feeling in the group about Jesus as a teenager? Discuss why this might be.

Ask people to share why they chose the answers they did. For those who feel they would be uncomfortable around Jesus as a teenager, explore a little. Is this because of how they perceive Jesus (judgmental, too “holy,” not able to relax and have fun?) or how they perceive themselves (too sinful, not good enough, not serious.smart enough?).

Say: “We often like to picture Christianity as a friendship with Jesus, and in fact He told His disciples that He would not call them servants, but friends. If we think we wouldn’t be comfortable with a teenage Jesus hanging around in our peer group, can we really be friends with Him? What would need to change—in you, or in your image of Jesus—before you could feel comfortable calling Him a Friend?”
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

As a 5-year-old, Jonathan got lost in a department store while shopping with his parents. He was terrified, and so were they. While his mother alerted store security, Jonathan wandered around looking for friendly faces and crying until he attracted the attention of a kindly adult who helped reunite him with his mother. For many years Jonathan vividly remembered the fear that accompanied that experience.

Ten years later, Jonathan, now 15, sneaked out of his house to attend a party his parents had forbidden him to go to. This time, instead of feeling frightened, he was excited and proud of getting away with it. Fear didn’t come till later—when he got into a car to ride home with a friend’s older brother who was obviously drunk. Jonathan was terrified the whole way, and began to wonder whether his parents might have had a point after all.

Meanwhile, Jonathan’s mom was just as frantic and worried as she had been when Jonathan was lost in the store at age 5—but now there was anger along with her fear. She knew Jonathan had deliberately chosen to disobey. She prayed he would get home safely, but she also intended to ground him for three weeks as soon as he walked through the door.

Was either of Jonathan’s experiences similar to Jesus’ experience of being left at the Temple? Why or why not?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Every young person goes through a period of distancing themselves from their parents and establishing their independence. This is one of the normal developmental tasks of adolescence. According to the Bible, Jesus wasn’t rebellious or difficult, yet He did cause His parents worry. To a certain extent, it’s normal for parents to worry about their children’s independence. But Jesus had the ability to become His own person without having to create conflict with His parents—a valuable lesson from which we could all learn.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- Discuss the Out of the Story questions from the student lesson.
- Go around the class (or divide into small groups if you have a large class) and ask each student to share about a time when they got lost or separated from their family when they were younger. Ask how they think their experience compares with Jesus’ experience of being left behind at the Temple at age 12. How did they feel? How might Jesus have felt? Was He even aware that His parents had left Jerusalem? Did their parents react as Mary and Joseph did? Discuss: Was Jesus deliberately worrying His parents here? Was He concerned about how they would be affected by His disappearance, or did He just forget about them altogether?
- Ask: “What can we learn from this week’s Bible passage that can relate to the challenges young people face today as they’re growing up and becoming a little more independent from their parents? How can we use Jesus as our example for how to live as a teenager?” On a chalkboard or flip chart at the front of the room, write suggestions from the class.

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 Other Eyes section of the student lesson contains an excerpt from the “Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” an apocryphal work probably from the second or third century. Monday’s lesson asks students to critically examine this text and compare it to the biblical picture of Jesus in Luke 2. You may also want to draw their attention to this passage in class and discuss it with them.

The passage may be a little shocking to readers coming to it for the first time. The infancy gospels, like many of the noncanonical Gospels, were written some time after the time of Jesus and the original apostles, to fill in gaps in the canonical Gospels and often to promote particular agendas. The passage quoted in the lesson presents a Jesus who, as a boy, is seen as a danger to the community. He appears to be hot-tempered and to use His divine powers to curse those who defy Him—something the Jesus of the Gospels explicitly refused to do. The author of this infancy gospel (not, of course, the actual apostle Thomas in
whose name it was written) appears to want to promote a vision of Jesus that emphasizes His power and divine judgment rather than His love and mercy. Remembering our focus throughout the Gospels—that Jesus came to reveal what God is like—this passage promotes a particular view of God that seems at odds with the way Jesus speaks and acts in the canonical Gospels.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Pass out cards on which you have preprinted this week’s key text, with the phrase: “I want to grow ________________________” below it. Say: “The Bible passage we’ve been studying this week tells us that Jesus grew into a well-rounded person, with His development appropriate to His age—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. In what area do you feel you most need to grow? In a few words, write on this card how you would like to grow at this point in your life. As we pray, ask God to help you become more like Jesus.”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus faced the normal growing-up challenges of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Even though His time and culture were very different from...
ours, there's still a lot we can learn from Him. We too can increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and humanity, if we take Jesus as our example. And like Jesus in the Temple, even though we have to move apart from our parents and establish our own independence, we can do that while still being obedient and respectful—becoming our own individuals while still maintaining that close relationship with the people who love and care for us. Jesus did it, and by His grace we can do it too.

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 *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 7, 8, and 9.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* 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
Ellen G. White summed up the importance of John the Baptist's ministry best when she stated that the responsibility given him was the greatest ever entrusted to a human (The Desire of Ages, p. 100). Is there any work on earth more important than preparing the way for the first advent of the world’s Savior?

The birth of John the Baptist was orchestrated by God. An angel was dispatched from heaven to deliver the news to Zacharias as he ministered in the Temple. The angel noted: “He will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15, NKJV).

This pivotal verse in the story of John the Baptist points the way to truths that are relevant for our youth today. For instance, John’s birth was no afterthought. God created him for a holy purpose, and He did the same with each of us. Also, John’s diet and manner of dress were prescribed by God. As you teach this lesson, note that, as Ellen White writes, John’s diet and manner of dress were meant to draw a distinct contrast with the intemperance and rampant materialism of his day. Teenagers today are struggling greatly in these two areas. Standing for God will cost them much, as it did John. But isn’t Jesus worth it?

Finally, you must emphasize the power and clarity of John’s call to repentance. This is the same message that will herald Jesus’ second coming, and we are called to give it. We have the unique privilege of doing a special work for God and we, like John, must seize the moment.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Discover that God calls each of us to a special ministry for Him. (Know)
• Sense the blessing of the Holy Spirit as they accept God’s call to service. (Feel)
• Dedicate themselves to living a life that points to the soon return of Jesus Christ. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Simplicity
• Gift of prophecy
• Baptism
• Confession, repentance

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 the students have had an opportunity to write in their answers to the What Do You Think? questions, give them an opportunity to share their responses with the class. The emphasis of this activity
was on its way in the form of Jesus, but before the Truth was made manifest, God called people to confess their sins, repent of them, and reform their ways. God spoke this message through John. This message was part of the preparation needed to receive Christ into their hearts and lives.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

- Consider this: Why didn’t God tell John the Baptist to go and preach to the people in the cities and towns where they lived? Why did John preach in the desert of Judea? Did the distractions of the city have anything to do with this?
- Your students will get a kick out of the fact that John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey. What is the diet of God’s end-time people? Does one’s diet affect their spirituality?
- John the Baptist seemingly understood his calling while he was still in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:41). What does this tell us about how God fashions the purpose and destiny of each child?
- Are we ever called to “sugarcoat” the truth? Is everyone called to preach the message of repentance in the same strident way in which John the Baptist did, or does God call different people to minister for Him in unique ways?
- Why was baptism such a central focus in the ministry of John? How did this fit the message that he came to give? What is the role of baptism in the Christian’s life?
- Why was Jesus baptized by John and not someone else? Was John the only person who could’ve baptized Christ?
- Why did God allow John the Baptist to die in such a grizzly manner (Matthew 14:1-12)? How does Jesus’ response to John’s death deepen our understanding of God’s love for us?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 14:1-13; 1 Kings 18:20-40; Isaiah 40:3; Acts 3:19; James 1:21-25.

**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. **Repentance Now.** The first call of God’s king-
dom is repentance. This is the starting point of any walk with God. The love of Christ draws us (Jeremiah 31:3), but the closer we get to God, the more our spots begin to show. When they do, we are confronted with a dilemma. Biblical repentance has three distinct parts: (1) a renunciation of all sin, a reversal in the direction of our lives; (2) submission to God’s divine leading in our lives; and (3) a continual willingness to be shaped and molded by God through the process of sanctification.

Acts 3:19 (NIV) states: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” Notice the prerequisite for the times of refreshing. In a very real way, John’s message of repentance was a prerequisite for the outpouring of God’s refreshing through Jesus Christ. We can be filled with the life of Jesus—through the Holy Spirit—only to the degree that we give up all for Him.

2. The Kingdom Is Here. Matthew 3:1, 2 (NIV) states: “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’” The phrase “kingdom of heaven” is recorded some 137 times in the New Testament—more than 100 of those happened during the ministry of Jesus. The kingdom of heaven was the central focus of the ministry of Jesus. In His sermon on the mount (Matthew 5–7) Jesus lays down the constitution of His kingdom to draw a distinct contrast between the kingdom of this world that is ruled by Satan and the kingdom of heaven that is ruled by God.

When John refers to the kingdom in Matthew 3:1, 2, he is talking specifically about the coming of Jesus, the Anointed One who would

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Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Use the Technology

Your students are the most technologically savvy teenagers in the history of the world, and they have an attention span to match. For this lesson you may want to consider bringing some video clips to class with you.

For instance, at the heart of this week’s lesson is John the Baptist’s message of repentance. A YouTube on the issue of saying sorry would yield hundreds of videos that can be used to draw the contrast between the repentance John preached about and the repentance we see in our society. Most of the time people repent only when they are caught and can find no way out.

Using video and other media can break up the monotony of the usual flow of the class. Be careful not to allow the media to obscure the message you are attempting to share.

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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 The Desire of Ages. 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.
break Satan’s hold on fallen humanity. The kingdom was near, because the King of the kingdom was near. Death, disease, and all such maladies were about to meet their end in Christ. John felt the pull and power of the kingdom.

3. **Far From the Madding Crowd.** Consider the following quote from Ellen G. White and its implications for us today.

“In the natural order of things, the son of Zacharias would have been educated for the priesthood. But the training of the rabbinical schools would have unfitted him for his work. God did not send him to the teachers of theology to learn how to interpret the Scriptures. He called him to the desert, that he might learn of nature and nature’s God.

“It was a lonely region where he found his home, in the midst of barren hills, wild ravines, and rocky caves. But it was his choice to forgo the enjoyments and luxuries of life for the stern discipline of the wilderness” (The Desire of Ages, p. 101).

John’s simple upbringing sharpened his perception of sin. He was not desensitized by sin.

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

Distribute pencils and 3” x 5” cards to your students. Ask each student to make a list of people in the Bible who suffered because they obeyed God. Some examples are Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, the disciples, Paul, etc.

Ask one or two of the students to share the people they chose and how they suffered for God. After the students have finished sharing, lead the class in a prayer of dedication to God—even when that dedication may cause us to be unpopular.

Allow one minute for silent individual prayer; then, close the activity with prayer.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Jesus uniquely understood the ministry of John the Baptist. We know this because He told His disciples that of those born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John (Matthew 11:11).

From his miraculous birth through his public ministry, John the Baptist modeled what it means to be a servant of God in the way that he lived his life and in the power and clarity of his message. He was called by God to swim against a tide of sin and self-destruction, and he accepted this calling willingly. It was not without a cost, however.

John’s message was a constant rebuke to the Pharisees who plotted his death, and to the political elite of his day, led by Herod. The power of the Holy Spirit that filled him harkened back to the anointing resident in the life of another man of God who was called to give a difficult message—Elijah. As was the case with Elijah, some listened and changed when they heard the message while others continued in sin.

Whether greeted by well-wishers or detractors, John remained faithful. Jesus began His ministry among a people who were prepared to receive Him. We must herald the coming of Jesus so faithfully that men and women will be prepared when He comes again.

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1 Fundamental Belief No. 18.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 15.

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 The Desire of Ages, chapters 10, 11.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Temptation. It is the bane of every Christian’s existence. Yet, through the example of Jesus we learn how to meet every temptation and emerge victorious from the scum.

Jesus faced powerful temptations throughout His sojourn on Planet Earth. For instance, Satan attempted to misdirect Jesus through the harsh treatment He received at the hand of His siblings. Jesus refused to yield then. When Jesus met Satan in the wilderness, He was familiar with His wily foe. They had been skirmishing since His birth.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was “led” into temptation by the Holy Spirit. Many are uncomfortable with the idea of God leading us into a trying situation, but faith that is not tried is not faith at all. Your students must know that all who follow Christ will be led into situations that will test their fidelity to God. It is in these moments that our spiritual muscles grow. We should be encouraged by the promise that all such meetings with the enemy are weighed carefully, and a way of escape is made for us to be victorious (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Jesus met each of Satan’s temptations with a clear “It is written.” Emphasize the importance of God’s Word in our day-to-day struggles with Satan. Jesus overcame Satan because He had studied the writings of the prophets that were available to Him. Jesus was a disciplined follower of God. He prayed, He studied, and He fasted—the latter was His preparation for this moment of trial.

Make the point that through the Holy Spirit we can overcome any temptation, even as Jesus did.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Learn that temptation is a natural part of every Christian’s journey. (Know)
• Experience the power to overcome all temptations through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. (Feel)
• Adopt the spiritual disciplines that help bring victory in the Christian life. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Spiritual disciplines
• Temptation (dealing with)
• Fasting

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.

Allow the students some time to come up with the top five temptations that they believe teens face. (Feel free to add other temptations that you feel may have been overlooked.) As the teens begin to share their
before. Then, ask if they know the events that preceded Jesus’ temptation (His baptism and fasting in the wilderness).

- Read 1 John 2:16. Ask the class if they see any similarities between the three areas of temptation mentioned in this verse and the temptations offered to Jesus.
- Jesus went into the wilderness filled with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be “filled” with the Holy Spirit? Is it possible to be filled with the Holy Spirit while remaining in sin?
- What were the stakes in the wilderness that day when Satan tempted Jesus? What did Satan stand to gain? What did Jesus stand to lose? What was our role in the battle? Are the same stakes that high when we face day-to-day temptations?
- What were Jesus’ keys to victory over Satan in the wilderness? What were His tools of battle? (i.e., God’s Word, prayer, infilling of the Holy Spirit).
- Fasting is an often overlooked spiritual discipline. What are its benefits physically and spiritually? Make the point that when Satan approached Jesus, though He was hungry, Jesus’ spiritual powers were in a heightened state. He was ready.
- Luke 4:13 says that after the temptation, Satan left Jesus until a more opportune time. Is there ever a time when we can let our guard down with Satan?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:12-17; Romans 7; John 15.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

No one would yield to a temptation that didn’t look good, feel good, or wasn’t in some other way “good.” Temptations always promise something good, but they always end up hurting much more than we bargained for.

The great Irish dramatist and poet William Butler Yeats once wrote: “Every conquering temptation represents a new fund of moral energy. Every trial endured and weathered in the right spirit makes a soul nobler and stronger than it was before.” In every temptation there is an opportunity to grow in Christ that will not come again. As you prepare to explore this week’s lesson story, keep in mind that it was Jesus’ habit of resisting Satan, of deciding to please God instead of Himself, that enabled Him to face His moment of trial.

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.

- Ask your students if they have ever read the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness before. Then, ask if they know the events that preceded Jesus’ temptation (His baptism and fasting in the wilderness).
- Read 1 John 2:16. Ask the class if they see any similarities between the three areas of temptation mentioned in this verse and the temptations offered to Jesus.
- Jesus went into the wilderness filled with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be “filled” with the Holy Spirit? Is it possible to be filled with the Holy Spirit while remaining in sin?
- What were the stakes in the wilderness that day when Satan tempted Jesus? What did Satan stand to gain? What did Jesus stand to lose? What was our role in the battle? Are the same stakes that high when we face day-to-day temptations?
- What were Jesus’ keys to victory over Satan in the wilderness? What were His tools of battle? (i.e., God’s Word, prayer, infilling of the Holy Spirit).
- Fasting is an often overlooked spiritual discipline. What are its benefits physically and spiritually? Make the point that when Satan approached Jesus, though He was hungry, Jesus’ spiritual powers were in a heightened state. He was ready.
- Luke 4:13 says that after the temptation, Satan left Jesus until a more opportune time. Is there ever a time when we can let our guard down with Satan?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:12-17; Romans 7; John 15.

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. Ready and Waiting. Ellen G. White states: “At the birth of Jesus, Satan knew that One had come with a divine commission to dispute his dominion. He trembled at the angel’s message attesting the authority of the newborn King. Satan well knew the position that Christ had held in heaven as the Beloved of the Father. That the Son of God should come to this earth as a man filled him with amazement and with apprehension. He could not fathom the mystery of this great sacrifice!” (The Desire of Ages, p. 115).
We may not prepare ourselves to meet Satan in battle, but he certainly prepares himself for us. Like the soldier who goes to battle without the armor they so desperately need, we are left helpless when we fail to ready ourselves through fasting, prayer, study, and service to God.

2. This Bread. “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, NIV) is a scripture that many of us know, but may scarcely understand. The Greek word for word mentioned by Jesus in this verse is rhema. It means that which is said or spoken, an utterance. This “word” is different from the term logos, which refers to all the words of God. Jesus is a revelation of the logos, as John notes in John 1. If the logos is the Bible, rhema would be one verse.

When Jesus used rhema He was sending the message that we must hear and obey the specific, proceeding word of God each day and in every situation we face. To hear God in this way will require that we listen carefully to His voice, which is revealed primarily in His Word. Yesterday’s word (rhema) will not do. We need today’s word to meet today’s challenges.

3. An Inside Job. In his much-read and respected book, Celebration of Discipline, Richard J. Foster writes: “The grace of God is unearned and unearnable, but if we ever expect to grow in grace, we must pay the price of a consciously chosen course of action which involves both individual and group life. Spiritual growth is the purpose of the [spiritual] Disciplines” (p. 8).

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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 The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

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

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
All disciples of Christ must be disciplined. The inward disciplines, as Foster discusses in his book, of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study place us in a position to receive the infilling of God’s presence through the Holy Spirit. It is this abiding presence that gives us victory. As Jesus noted: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV).

Jesus used the spiritual disciplines to bring heaven near to Him. We too have the privilege of making God our constant companion. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is liberty—and victory.

III. CLOSING

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

Ask the students to think introspectively for this activity. Ask them to think of a temptation that they would like to overcome. It needn’t be some deep, dark sin. They may be struggling with a penchant to talk when their teachers are talking, for instance.

Once the kids have the temptation on their minds, ask them to do the following:
1. Imagine that the temptation they struggle with is in their hands. Have them close each hand tightly in a fist.
2. Ask them to close their eyes, sit up in their chairs, place their fists facing upward as the back of their forearms rest on their thighs.
3. Ask them to pray silently to God, asking Him for strength to overcome this temptation. Ask them to open their palms and release the temptation into the waiting hands of Jesus.

Close with a prayer, thanking God for victory through Jesus Christ.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:
Satan’s temptation of Jesus and Jesus’ victory over that temptation show us how we must meet the devil’s sophistries. When Jesus met Satan on his turf, He was led there by the Holy Spirit. Many times we “fall” into temptation because we are not being led by the Holy Spirit. This episode at the beginning of Jesus’ public earthly ministry reminds us that there is no substitute for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The wilderness temptation also teaches us the importance of personal spiritual preparation for the challenges we face. During His battle with Satan, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 6:16, and Deuteronomy 6:13. He read and studied the Bible that He had—the writings of Moses, Isaiah, and the other Old Testament prophets. Jesus prayed earnestly and fasted regularly. These disciplines gave shape and power to His life because He was always in the presence of God.

Finally, the fact that Jesus won the victory over lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life means that we do not have to be bound by these sins. If we follow the path laid down by Jesus, we too will experience victory over the power of sin, until God removes us from the presence of sin.

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 The Desire of Ages, chapters 12 and 13.

*A special adaptation of The Desire of Ages 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.
come see

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
This week’s lesson surveys the chain of events that led individuals to choose to follow Christ as disciples. The ministry of John the Baptist prompted many to pay attention to Jesus. The first disciples, Andrew, John, Philip, and Nathanael responded to the call to “come and see” for themselves. There is a certainty in this saying that suggests, “I can testify for hours, but the way to know whether Jesus is the real thing is to come and see for yourself.” Sometimes we think we have to package Jesus in a way that is appealing, nonoffensive, and relevant. The disciples in this story will testify that all you need to know you will discover when you meet Jesus.

The dramatic incident with Philip introducing Nathanael to Jesus is significant because it captures the coordination between the human and the divine as Christ makes disciples for His kingdom. Some seek out Jesus while others are sought out and found by the Lord. The word find or found appears five times in this story. Clearly people were searching for something or someone, and in need of the promise Jesus makes to Nathanael, saying, “You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51, NIV).

It is fascinating to watch the “getting to know Him” stage, where disciples come to Jesus with their ideas and even some misconceptions about Christ and discover firsthand who Jesus is. Learning about Christ is the first work of discipleship, and this story is filled with vivid examples for young people.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Understand that discipleship is a personal choice to learn from Jesus. (Know)
• Connect with the Christ as the object of all that humanity is searching for. (Feel)
• Choose to step into the life of a disciple of Christ. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Discipleship
• Jesus, the Son of God
• How to witness
You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.leadoutministries.com.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

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

Invite the students to share their responses to the ranking activity in the What Do You Think? section. What methods do you think effectively draw people to Christ? What are some memorable stories you have heard about people finding or being found by Christ?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

Scripture Story: John 1.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 14.
Key Text: John 1:45, 46.
If a picture is worth a thousand words, then an encounter is worth a million. Backpacking through Yosemite National Park one can view lakes and glaciers and sights that are breathtaking. Of course books, paintings—even video footage—capture the scenery and anyone viewing it would say, “Wow, that’s amazing!” On a backpacking trip several young people were setting up the tents and the fire pit, while others were gathering wood and doing various duties to set up camp. A couple of other wood-gatherers made their way higher and higher up the side of the rocky slope until they reached the crest where they witnessed a sight that arrested them. The crystal-blue lake looked like a giant sapphire set against the forest-green trees with silvery-black granite rocks randomly cropping out. A glorious white snowpack cascaded down the opposite side from the top of the range to the water’s edge. The explorers remained for a moment, but the metallic tapping sound of hammers and tent stakes and the muffled noise of chopping wood and the busy work of their companions awakened them from the vision—they had to see this. They yelled down the side of the mountain, “Stop what you are doing and climb the mountain! The view is amazing!” Annoyed that they were working at the setting up of the campsite and that the firewood-gatherers found time to sightsee, they replied, “Just tell us what you see and bring the wood for the fire!” Frustrated, those on the ridgetop cried out, “Just come up here and see for yourselves.” Clearly words would not work. So, leaving their hatchets and hammers and campsite rope lying on the ground they climbed the ridge and witnessed the sight. And to any other backpackers who came through they could only say, “You have to climb the ridge and see for yourself.”

How is this story like finding Christ? How is this story like introducing others to the Savior?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Perhaps the only way to capture something so great is to witness it firsthand. When the disciples asked about where Jesus was going, He replied, “Come and see.” When Philip urged others to meet Christ he simply said, “Come and see.” As followers of Christ, we need that firsthand experience with Jesus, which will likely prompt us to say the same thing to prospective seekers.
(John 20:30, 31, NASB). And the last verse of John’s Gospel reads: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25, NASB).

Second, John values the whole concept of being a personal witness—someone who has seen, heard, and experienced firsthand knowledge of Christ. Note the visual/experiential language in the first chapter alone of John’s writings:

- John 1:6, 7
- John 1:14, 15
- John 1:29
- John 1:34

Even 1 John 1:1-4 and Revelation 1:1-3 capture John’s visual/experiential approach to Jesus.

And finally, John takes particular interest in verifying “who Jesus is,” even if it is a surprising twist of ideas. Consider how he records Nathanael’s response, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Whether this statement is one of cynicism or innocent surprise, the common preconception of Galileans was unfavorable. John 7:39-52 records the board meeting of the Sanhedrin to discuss what to do with Jesus, and throughout their conversation they describe Galileans as a “mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them” (7:49, NIV). So as people come to “see for themselves” they “witness” the One they have been waiting for—but Jesus is surprisingly and controversially not what they expected. In fact, Jesus alludes to seeing and doing “greater things than that” in this story (John 1:50, NIV) and later when He challenges His disciples in the future (John 14:12).

One final note of context on the Gospel of John has to do with how this story captures the magnetic impact Jesus had on the people that witnessed Him. Have the students scan through the book of John and meet the people who met Christ and “see” how they were trans-

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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 The Desire of Ages. 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.
formed. It is possible to jigsaw the book by chapters, giving each student a section and seeing what they see. If they report what they see—they are witnesses!

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

Find a picturesque image and have two or three students volunteer to view it. However, they can describe the picture in only 20 words or less. Give them a few minutes to prepare their 20-word description and report. After the students report, ask the class: “Do you think you have an accurate description of the picture (the rest of the class has not yet seen)?” Invite the students who conveyed their 20-word description to share how they felt as they tried to capture the picture in so few words. Show the picture to the class and discuss how seeing firsthand for themselves is the only way to have a relationship with Christ.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Paul said in Philippians 3 that nothing compares to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. But first you have to meet Him. The disciples’ first encounter with Jesus reveals some of the dynamics of human relationships. Initial apprehension. Curiosity. Suspicion. Mystery. But as the disciples spend the day with Jesus they claim: “This is the Messiah, the One we have been waiting for.” But do you ever feel shortchanged because you were not there with Andrew and Philip and Nathanael? Jesus would say: “Blessed are those who have not seen but still believe.” In fact, Peter says these words about us: “You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy” (1 Peter 1:8, NLT).

The only way to become a disciple of Christ is through a firsthand-come-and-see-for-yourself encounter with Jesus Himself. Those who do are never the same. If you choose to do so today, your witness may bring someone else to Christ.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 14.

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partying with Jesus

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

As Jesus’ public ministry began, He performed His first recorded miracle almost, it seems, against His will. He attended the wedding at Cana as a friend of the family, accompanied by His disciples. He seemed to have no intention of making a public display of His power at this point. But when His mother approached Him with the news that the wedding party had run out of wine for the feast, she seemed to expect He could do something about it.

Jesus at first said the time wasn’t right. Did He change His mind after thinking about it? For whatever reason, He worked His first miracle at a wedding feast, blessing the joyful celebration with His power. It might seem like a frivolous reason for a miracle. But the water-to-wine miracle at Cana not only provided a dramatic, faith-building moment for Jesus’ disciples and friends—it also conveyed two very important messages. First, it demonstrated—as Jesus would do again and again throughout His ministry—that He enjoyed being with people in times of feasting and celebration. Second, it illustrated Jesus’ power to transform ordinary things into extraordinary—not just water to wine, but ordinary human lives into lives changed by His Spirit.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize that they serve a God who rejoices in our times of celebration. (Know)
- Feel that they can enjoy the presence of Jesus and celebrate with Him. (Feel)
- Invite Jesus into their lives as a Friend who can share the good times and the bad times with them. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Miracles
- Transformation
- The Holy Spirit*

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.

Discuss how students responded to this question and to the lesson title “Partying With Jesus.” What would a party with Jesus be like? What kinds of things do they imagine Him doing at a party?

Are there things we can’t imagine Jesus doing at a party? Why or why not? How do these images fit with the pictures we normally have of Jesus? What are these pictures based on?

Ask students to brainstorm about a party they could invite Jesus to if He were on earth now. Where would it be? What types of activities would take place? Who would be invited? Write responses on a chalk-
Ask how many people would want to attend the party with Jesus—and discuss why they answered yes or no.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Read the lyrics of the song “Wine Into Water” by T. Graham Brown, quoted in the *Other Eyes* section of the student lesson. Before class, find the complete lyrics online and share them with your class. The song tells the story of a man struggling with alcoholism who asks God to change his “wine into water”—to take away his desire for alcohol so that he can live a whole and healthy life. The songwriter takes the image of transformation in this story and turns it around to demonstrate another way in which God’s power can transform a human life. In what other ways can Jesus’ power transform lives?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Jesus’ miracles were all about transformation—Jesus’ *life* was all about transformation. He made sick people well, dead people live, hopeless people hopeful. His power can still transform lives—and that includes breaking addictions such as the one the song “Wine Into Water” talks about. We may claim that we don’t live in the age of miracles anymore and that we don’t see things like Jesus turning water into wine, but we can see the miracle of His transforming power in lives all around us every day.

**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.*

Ask: “Why did Jesus perform miracles? What did miracles accomplish?”

Brainstorm responses and list the students’ suggestions on the board. Then guide the discussion using some of the following questions:

- Did all Jesus’ miracles accomplish all these purposes? For example, one purpose might be to relieve suffering. Jesus’ healing miracles certainly fulfilled this purpose, but what about the miracle at Cana? If anything, that relieved only inconvenience, not real suffering.

- Did Jesus use miracles to build people’s faith in Him? Read John 4:48 and John 20:29. What does Jesus seem to suggest here about faith that’s based on miracles? If a faith inspired by miracles is weaker than one that hasn’t seen miracles, why did Jesus perform so many?

- Today we live in an era in which we don’t see the kind of miracles described in the Bible very much. Why do you think this is? Do you think it’s harder or easier to have faith in these days? Based on the passages we just read, what do you think Jesus would say about that?

- By performing His first major miracle at a wedding party, what message was Jesus sending? (Remind students of the message in John 1:

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Large-group Versus Small-group Discussion**

This week’s teaching activities are mainly discussion-based, as are many of our teaching strategies. While group discussion should not be the only teaching tool we use, it does form an important basis of any Bible study.

How you handle discussion will depend largely on your class size. In a class with fewer than 12 people, most discussions will probably be held with the group as a whole, though you may occasionally want students to talk in pairs or smaller groups. For classes with more than 12 people, breaking off into smaller groups of four to six people for discussion works well, perhaps with a spokesperson from each group reporting back to the larger group after they’ve talked for awhile.

Larger groups can sometimes have whole-group discussions, but it’s important to watch out for those one or two talkative people who dominate the discussion and don’t give others a chance to speak. While you’ll want to avoid interrupting someone, it’s OK to jump in when a “talker” pauses and say, “Thanks for sharing that, Sherry. Now, who else has some thoughts about this. Justin, what do you think?” Without being rude to Sherry or putting Justin too much on the spot, try to broaden the discussion to include more people.
that’s not their own personal experience, they may submit that their friends would feel this way. Young people who have used drugs and alcohol, especially if the use is frequent, often find it hard to adjust to a normal, “nonhigh” level of fun. The levels of dopamine in the brain that are released through everyday, enjoyable activities are artificially enhanced by substance abuse, so that an evening of playing games with friends seems “boring” by comparison if no mind-altering substances are involved. As you discuss “partying with Jesus,” be sensitive to this question and address it as seems appropriate with your group. Youth should get the message that they can enjoy lots of “good, clean fun” with God’s approval, and that if Jesus were here on earth He would be right there having a good time with them—not passing out under the pool table or driving home under the influence.

III. CLOSING

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

One of the student lesson activities asks students to think about a party they could plan that they’d be comfortable inviting Jesus to. Based on the ideas and discussion generated in the “Getting Started” section of this lesson, talk about some future social activities your group has planned. Discuss how they can focus

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 The Desire of Ages. 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.
on activities that demonstrate their joy at being friends with Jesus and sharing His joy with others.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Jesus chose to perform His first miracle at a wedding. He performed many miracles of healing and mighty acts of power, but His first public act was to make people happy at a simple celebration. Our image of God as someone distant and disapproving is shattered by the picture of the Son of God enjoying Himself at a village wedding, by a miracle saving the host and hostess from embarrassment.

Jesus wants to be involved in and transform every part of our lives—not just the few hours we spend in church each week, but the time we spend with our friends, hanging out, having fun. What would change in your life if you took Jesus everywhere—even to parties?

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*f Fundamental Belief No. 5.

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Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 15.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Isaiah 56:7 says: “Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (NASB).

The money changers in the Temple completely disregarded this verse. They went against everything it said. Instead of having reverence for the house of the Lord, they sought to corrupt people with their lust for material gain. Pride is also an issue here. The money changers knew that it was a sacred place to worship God, yet in their arrogance they became blinded to what God wanted. Their greed and thirst for gain, as well as their blatant disrespect for His Father, is what angered Jesus. Think about it: if one does corrupt business dealings in any form it’s considered wrong. Yet to do these sorts of things in a place of prayer seemed to be the last straw.

In this story we learn about how frivolous materialism can be. We also learn about the importance of reverence to our God. Some Jews were using the Temple for their own ends, turning it into a place of greed and materialism. Some even justified their greed in the name of God and religion. When Jesus came and drove them out, it was not because He hated them, but because He was angry that they disrespected the place of worship.

Help the students understand the importance of reverence and respect in all things related to the Lord. Just like some of these people turned a place of worship into a den of thieves, we can be guilty of the same thing but in different ways. We may not do exactly what the people did in the Temple, yet we may give in to our greed and try to justify it. Ask the students how they would feel if they had a certain place that they went to, or if they owned something that was special to them and that they treated with the utmost respect. Then ask them how they would feel if someone took it and defiled it or laughed and scorned it. This is probably how Jesus felt when entering the sacred Temple. God is the Creator of all things, yet many times we look past His amazing greatness and power and commit acts of irreverence.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Realize the importance of reverence to Jesus Christ. (Know)
- Understand that the things of this world are not of importance and that they will all pass away. (Feel)
- Have a desire and seek to eliminate materialism from their daily lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Anger
- Worship
- Christ (life of)

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

Activity

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

Divide the students into groups. Have each group come up with what they think are the top three aspects of materialism that could destroy a person’s life. After they have done this, let each group discuss their answers. Talk to them about how no matter what aspects of materialism they chose, each could eventually ruin someone’s life one way or another. Make this point clear. Many times it can start out small, but if fed it can grow to become someone’s downfall.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

There is a story about a young man in his 20s who became a new Christian. The pastor of a church led him to the Lord. The pastor had weekly Bible studies with him and baptized him. This young man looked up to the pastor and all but idolized him. He seemed to be the equivalent of a perfect Christian. The young man had never met anyone so morally strong and religious.

Soon after, however, a rumor circulated around the church that his pastor had been unfaithful to his wife. The new Christian disregarded it. There was no possible way the pastor would do such a thing. But, finally, the facts came out and the pastor’s guilt was unquestioned. He even admitted it to the whole church! The emotions going through this young man’s mind were of disappointment, hurt, and betrayal.

However, once he started reading his Bible, he came to realize that the pastor was not his Savior. Jesus was. His Savior died for him, not the pastor, and so the young man determined not to let this terrible incident ruin his faith in Jesus. His pastor was not God. It was almost as if he had regarded the pastor as a divine being because he seemed so holy and faithful. Yet when he studied the Bible, he realized that we should never exalt any man like that. No matter how perfect people may seem, they have flaws in them. But God is flawless!

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Just as in the story of the young man and the pastor, that illustrated how we can look at other people and give them more importance than we should, many times we look at the things of this world as of great importance. Objects can take over our lives with such ease we might not even be able to notice at first. Like the business dealers in the Temple we may put material things in front of holy things. Just as some in the Temple tried to justify their actions, we may do the same as well. Yet we should remember that no matter what happens throughout our lives, we must always put God before material gain.

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.

- In what way did the money changers in the Temple show their greed and materialism?
- Jesus told the Jews: “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” What do you think He meant when He said this?
- What do you think caused the Jews to react to Jesus in the way that they did?
- As we read the passage that talks about how Jesus made a whip out of cords and then drove the people out of the Temple, were you shocked at Jesus’ anger?
- Describe some of the ways that materialism appeared in this story.
- What do you think went through Jesus’ mind when He came to the sacred Temple, which was devoted to worshipping His Father, and found people buying and selling and doing business?
- In what ways can we keep from getting caught up in all the materialism that is in the world today?
- What does reverence mean? Give some examples of how reverence can be expressed?
- Have you ever displayed irreverence toward God? Was it something you thought, or something you did?
- Many of the money changers in the Temple tried to justify their irreverent actions in the name of God and religion. Are there ways that we can be guilty of the same kinds of things today?
• Do you think that church leaders today should give more attention to the topics of irreverence and materialism? Do you think these things are overlooked?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 6:19-21; Psalm 5:7; Ephesians 5:21; Proverbs 28:25; Proverbs 15:27; Psalm 10:3.

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

In the Temple, the money changers were using forms of a religious service to exploit the poor. Many commentators say that when Jesus said they had turned His Father’s house into a den of thieves, He was referring to these exploits.

Isaiah 56:7 says: “Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (NASB).

This story most likely took place in an area known as the Court of the Gentiles, a location in the massive Temple complex used specifically for the purpose of purchasing sacrificial animals, and the place where Jewish pilgrims could exchange their foreign coinage for the appropriate local currency. They had to pay with special currency; they could not use foreign money to buy the animals needed for the sacrifices. Roman money was very common at that time, but the Temple authorities would not allow for any of it. They had to use only Hebrew money. This gave them the opportunity to use whatever exchange rate they wanted and, thus, could exploit the poor.

Another important point is that the salvation offered by Jesus, as symbolized by the animals, is free. Jesus paid for salvation with His blood. For the animals, which symbolize that freedom, to have been sold was one thing, but for them to have been sold at prices that were ripping off the poor was a whole other matter. No wonder Jesus acted as He did. The Bible warns against exploiting the poor (Isaiah 10:1-3).

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

“Brainstorming”

Brainstorming can be a great technique to help students generate more creativity because there are no right or wrong answers. Make sure you allow everyone to contribute their ideas. Also be sure you let them know that no answer can be wrong. Be aware not to criticize or demean anyone’s answer, but seek to look at it objectively. When finished, evaluate their responses and discuss them as a group.

The closing activity in this week’s teacher’s lesson in which they brainstorm examples of materialism and how they can lead them away from God is an example of this technique.

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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 The Desire of Ages. 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.
James 5), and for this to be happening right at the sacred Temple was too much. On top of that, for it to be happening at the center of the plan of salvation, which is free (Romans 5:15), and which we cannot buy for any price, was a great sacrilege in the eyes of God.

This story wasn’t just about Jesus going after people trying to make a fast dollar. It was about Jesus going after those who were taking the most wonderful part of the Gospel—that is it free—and making it something that has to be purchased.

Sadly, later Jewish historical sources show that the practice continued even after Jesus died. Some see the same principle at play in the work of buying indulgences, as practiced in certain churches even today.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have all the students name at random a few things in their lives that may be tearing them away from God. Tell them to work through the next week to try to slowly take these things of either irreverence or materialism and put them away from their lives. Just like the money changers’ greed drove them away from God, make sure the students know that they should not let their daily struggles drive them away from their Creator.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God will always remain faithful to us. Even if we turn from Him and stray far away He will never be absent when we call out to Him. Ephesians 2:4, 5 says: “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (NIV).

Even if we eliminate all materialism and irreverence from our lives, that is not what saves us. Nothing we can do on our own can save us in the end. It is what God did at the cross that rescues us. But because of what He did and because of His undying love for us, we should give Him honor and respect, and our lives if necessary.

Psalm 111:10: “Reverence for the Lord is the foundation of true wisdom. The rewards of wisdom come to all who obey him” (NLT).

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 The Desire of Ages, chapter 16.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Nicodemus, although enmeshed in the hierarchy of Israel’s elite religious leaders, had a soft spot for the voice of God. Ellen White comments about how he was sensitive to the harsh reactions toward Jesus because that is what previous generations of leaders did to the prophets. With a teachable spirit and a careful approach he came to Jesus at night and engaged the Savior in an unforgettable evening of instruction.

This week’s lesson can feature the “conversion experience” process and students may learn that conversion is a lifelong journey, as it was for Nicodemus. This lesson can also foster discussion about the nature of knowing—theoretical knowledge versus the kind of transformation that Ellen White describes as “regeneration.” Throughout this incident Jesus offers several metaphors or illustrations that are pivotal to the transformation of Nicodemus: (1) birth and being born again; (2) the work of the Spirit like blowing wind; (3) the duality of flesh and spirit; (4) the image of Calvary portrayed by the Old Testament story of the way Israel was saved by fixing their eyes on the snake on a stick. And, of course, if the metaphors and images don’t convey the essence of the mission of Christ on earth, then there is always John 3:16.

Many young people don’t feel converted because they don’t have the Damascus Road experience. This is a perfect opportunity to remind them that Saul was already a believer in God before his “conversion”—he was just wrong about a few important things. Nicodemus was a slow burn instead of an explosion. If students can have their journey validated perhaps they will not feel so self-conscious about their role as disciples of Christ.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand the ongoing nature of conversion. (Know)
• Feel confident that God is transforming them, as they allow Him to. (Feel)
• Choose to live boldly for the kingdom of God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Salvation
• Baptism
• Spiritual growth

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 ranking activity in the What Do You Think? section. Where did you register your conversion experience? Why do you think people resonate with dramatic con-
version stories? What kind of weather describes your walk with God?

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Have you ever heard the story of Ignaz Phillip Semmelweis? When he was born (1818), it was common for women to die during childbirth. It had been reported that one out of every six mothers would die as a result of what was called “childbed fever.”

The daily routine for doctors would often start by performing autopsies and dealing with emergency scenarios. As the day wore on the doctor would attend to the mothers who were in labor—without washing their hands! Dr. Semmelweis was the first to implement washing his hands regularly—between each examination—with a chlorine solution. After practicing this simple method for 11 years, instead of losing one in six mothers at childbirth he had lost one in 50.

He spent years on the lecture circuit railing other doctors, “For God’s sake, please wash your hands!” During the Industrial Revolution, technology was on the onset, so many medical professionals were curious about new techniques and significant medical breakthroughs—very few people listened to the simple message of Semmelweis. In fact, at age 47 Dr. Semmelweis died insane due to the raging frustration and guilt because of the needless deaths of women around the world.

King David cried out, “Wash me!” John the Baptist called the entire nation of Israel to “repent” and wash away the old by baptism and bring in the new birth of the Spirit. Even Jesus said to Peter, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” The new birth experience throughout Scripture has always been connected with water and washing. The message conveyed to Nicodemus was meant for all. Repent. Wash. By faith, start your new life this new day and be born from above.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

As you read and respond to the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, notice the openness of Nicodemus to the teaching of Christ. He doesn’t get it entirely, but unlike the medical world during the 1800s, Nicodemus did not resist the message of Christ in stubbornness. Semmelweis went crazy trying to convince people they were wrong. Over time and thousands of meaningless deaths later, the world finally figured it out. But the words and work of Christ burned slowly and steadily in Nicodemus. And it all started with the following encounter.

**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 each word in this narrative carefully and patiently and see if you notice something you had not seen before.
- Highlight or underline every question that Jesus asks. What are the questions you think are the most difficult to answer?
- What can you tell about the character qualities of Nicodemus by looking at this story (positive and negative)?
- What are the key verses in this storied encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus?
- As Jesus seeks to communicate the essence of kingdom life to Nicodemus, what metaphors or illustrations does He use to teach this lesson? (Read also John 7:40-53 and John 19:38, 39.)
- What do you think is the central message that God has for you in this passage?
- In what way do you resonate with the story of Nicodemus? In what way is his experience different from yours?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 1:10-12; Romans 6:1-6; Acts 9; Numbers 21:7-9; Philippians 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 setting of this exchange between Christ and Nicodemus is late in the evening, at a time and place where their conversation would be undisturbed. Some suggest that Nicodemus was being secretive because of fear or cowardice. But this is unlikely in that he speaks up on behalf of Jesus directly to the Sanhedrin later in chapter 7. Perhaps the teacher is being discrete because he is truly seeking to understand the mission of Jesus and he could ascertain better who Jesus is without the controversy or crowds. There is, already, plenty of controversy because, just prior to
this meeting, Jesus turned the Temple upside down. The religious leaders were already planning to take action against Jesus for His overt attack on what seemed to be their jurisdiction.

One of the key talking points had to do with birth and rebirth, flesh and the Spirit, and the inward change versus the external appearance. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again in order to even see the kingdom of God, it must have shocked the honest seeker. The Jews believed that baptism was solely for non-Jews seeking to convert to the faith of Israel. Baptism, or the rite of water purification, was the only way. But they believed in the ritual so much that when a heathen or Gentile converted and was baptized, they were reborn to be a child of Abraham in the fullest sense. Jesus was not teaching Nicodemus something foreign—what was foreign was that it was being applied to Nicodemus—one who was already considered a child of Abraham by blood. But Jesus would say, “Flesh gives birth to flesh and Spirit gives birth to Spirit,” meaning the only way to be truly a child of Abraham is to be reborn by faith.

Furthermore, Jesus is referring to the internal renewal that is not foreign to the Old Testament either. Jeremiah 31:33, 34 and Ezekiel 36:26 refer to the inward regeneration so prominent in the New Testament.

It is not a coincidence that Jesus also used the story in Numbers 21:4-9 as an analogy of His mission and authority. Even as people chose to fix their eyes upon the snake on the staff, as Moses lifted it up, they were saved. But the same disobedient, hostile attitude that endangered Israel existed in the ranks of Israel during the time of Christ. The meaning of this analogy is unpacked throughout verses 16-21. Clearly, the overwhelming message of this event is that there is only one way to salvation—never make the mistake of thinking otherwise.

Nicodemus ultimately made the choice that everyone must make about Jesus.

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Tips for Top-notch Teaching

**Honest Affirmation**

Honest affirmation will move young people to feel more inclined to respond. One of the reasons youth hold back from conversation or offering their ideas is because their insights at this stage are tightly tied to who they are. They are at the stage of development where they seek to personally own their faith. So as they share in class, give a note or a word of encouragement, citing specific things they said, thus affirming their response. One of the key attributes of an effective learning environment is a positive feeling about the place, the people, and things students say.

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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 The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

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

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

Activity

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

Have the students divide into groups of two or three. On a piece of paper have them write out the stages of growth that a simple plant goes through to maturity. Invite them to report and discuss the commonalities of their responses. Now, to extend this activity, ask them to discuss in their groups the stages of regeneration or the new birth experience. In the same way they mapped out stages of plant growth, have them describe the conversion process of people and share their ideas with the class.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Nicodemus got what he was looking for. His heart was open and his sensibilities were softened to the leading of God’s Spirit in Christ. But he loved Israel and longed for the new day when Christ would come. Perhaps he was the eternal optimist and thought the religious leaders could also receive Jesus as the Messiah. Over time, this would be impossible to see. But the good news is that Nicodemus became a part of the new church after Christ had risen from the dead, which tells us that sometimes it takes time to come around. Consider the many people in Scripture who matured over time. There are moments that can seem monumental—baptism is one. But this story teaches us that while baptism or rebirth is essential, it is better thought of as a mile marker rather than a monument. If you were to scan your life and choose the key moments that caused you to grow, what would they be? Maybe you need to take the step toward baptism because you recognize that you too need to be born again. Perhaps you have been baptized but you long for the inward transformation of the heart. Now is the time to respond.

1 Fundamental Belief No. 10.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 15.

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 *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 17.

* A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* 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.
it’s your turn

Scripture Story: John 3:22-36.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 18.
Key Text: John 3:29, 30.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Imagine what it must have been like for John the Baptist. He and Jesus were cousins, although they had no direct contact with each other during their childhoods (see The Desire of Ages, p. 109). As they grew into adulthood, Jesus spent more time in His father’s carpenter shop, while John the Baptist went out preaching. Jesus watched from a distance as John the Baptist “prepared the way” for the coming Messiah.

Then the time came for Jesus to take center stage. He started preaching and baptizing—just like John. As the people flocked from John to Jesus, John had a choice to make: to be jealous or to be excited for Jesus. John chose the latter. He chose to take a step back to the sidelines.

This is a decision that we all face at one point in our lives. The real question is, which will we choose? Human nature and society combined tell us to be jealous, but as Christians what should our choice be?

John the Baptist chose to take joy in Jesus’ success. He lived in the same world that we live in. He knew that his time had come to an end. He had prepared the way and that was God’s plan for him. Now it was time for someone else, Jesus, to take over. He stepped aside—and took joy in that.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand the importance of humility in a Christian’s life. (Know)
• Sense the closeness of God when they allow Him to control their thoughts. (Feel)
• Commit to being humble and doing unselfish acts. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Self-denial
• Humility
• 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.

Invite the students to share how they ranked the people in the What Do You Think? section. Ask students why they chose the one they did as their first choice.

Humility is usually not a top choice in the most desirable characteristics (as evidenced in the Did You Know? section). But how close does it follow with other desirable characteristics? Have students discuss the importance of humility in a relationship.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:
Grades were never Derek’s strongpoint. He’d rather be out playing baseball or buried in a good book. His mother tried everything to get Derek to study harder—even paying him for good grades. Derek changed schools in the middle of high school and found himself in a class of academics—nearly every student had good grades. This motivated Derek to do better, and for the first time he received straight A’s—no matter that it was the final quarter of his senior year. It motivated him to do better in college. But his first semester of college Derek found himself on familiar ground when he received a D in his U.S. History class. That first year, Derek even received an F in a Bible class. Throughout college, his grades never improved much, he never achieved straight A’s again.

It was seven years before Derek attempted graduate school. That first quarter, Derek studied hard. He did all the reading requirements—sometimes 300 pages a night—and turned his assignments in on time. In one class he felt defeated as he learned he had a D after the first exam. Here we go again, he thought to himself. In that class the professor offered the students a choice between writing reaction papers and doing a project. Derek chose the project. Imagine his surprise when he received his final grade report for that quarter: three A’s and one A-.

Derek was proud of himself. It made him feel good that he had accomplished something that he had done only once before. He was sharing this with a friend when she commented, “It’s all God.” Derek felt the air go out of his balloon. He wanted to receive congratulations for his achievement, yet at the same time he knew he should praise God.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Has there been a time in your life when you have accomplished something that you didn’t think you could do? Climbed a mountain? Rode a bike 50 miles? Confronted a friend? Achieved good grades? How did you feel when that happened? Pride or humbleness? Think about Derek’s story. Was there any part of him that had achieved success, or was it all God? Is it wrong to take pride in one’s accomplishments? Where is the line between pride and humility? And how does that connect with John the Baptist’s line: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”
1. John the Baptist was different in an odd sort of way. He wore strange clothes, and ate even stranger food. Today we judge people by how they look and what they wear; not so with John the Baptist. Despite his appearance, people still wanted to hear what he had to say. He preached one message and one message only—Repent.

John wasn’t concerned with what people thought of him, only that they listened to what he had to say. He knew that he had a special task—to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. He knew the Messiah would come soon, and his job would be done. He was content with that.

When his disciples came to him bitter with jealousy over the multitudes who were flocking to hear Jesus, John didn’t get upset. He was happy and filled with joy. His job was done. Over. Finished. He was no longer needed. In fact, soon after that he went to prison.

2. In biblical times the “friend of the bridegroom” was the one who made arrangements between the families of the bride and the groom. When the arrangements had been agreed upon by both families, the friend received joy from completing the task well. Just so, John was filled with joy at completing his task of preparing the way for Jesus. John rejoiced in the popularity of Jesus. He could not regret that the people were attracted to Jesus and leaving him to go listen to Jesus. He had fulfilled his task and he had no greater joy.

“He must increase, but I must decrease,” are probably the last recorded words of John before his imprisonment. His words show us John the Baptist’s true character as humble, submissive, and unselfish.

Discuss with your students the differences to Jesus. He had fulfilled his task and he had no greater joy.

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between being humble, submissive, and unselfish. Are there any differences? What are the drawbacks, if any, in our society of being humble, submissive, and unselfish? Then challenge your students to do at least one humble act, one submissive act, and one unselfish act this week.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give the students colored index cards and markers. Have them write on the index card: “I will do one unselfish act this week.” Have them leave space so they can write what they did that week. Share with them that the reason you have them write this down is that the act of writing is like making a commitment or a contract to actually put this week’s lesson into action in their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

John the Baptist may have preached 2,000 years ago, but his message is still relevant today. Just as Jesus came into this world, He wants to come into our life. Not only is His message relevant, so is His story. John stood against the crowd and was humble. He didn’t try to stay in the limelight, he didn’t bad-mouth people, he didn’t argue over semantics. He simply said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” The ultimate act of humility, John stepped out of the limelight and let another take over. His acts of humility and selflessness are the character traits of a true follower of Christ. Ellen White reminds us that as we let God take complete control of our thoughts, we are made full in Christ. We naturally become humble, like John.

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 The Desire of Ages, chapter 18.

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