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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Welcome to *Cornerstone Connections*.

—The Editors

PS. Don’t forget to check out the reading plan.

*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.
## Scope & Sequence

### 2007
**1st Quarter**
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. Rebekeah
11. Jacob and Esau
12. Jacob
13. Israel

**2nd Quarter**
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

**3rd Quarter**
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
13. Early Judges

**4th Quarter**
1. Samson
2. Samuel
3. Eli
4. Philistines
5. First King
6. Saul's Death
7. Anointed
8. Fugitive
9. Lunatic
10. Crowned King
11. Incumbent
12. Sinner
13. Absalom

### 2008
**1st Quarter**
1. God's People
2. Solomon
3. Temple Builder
4. Proud Potentate
5. Repentant Author
6. Rehoboam
7. Jeroboam
8. Asa, Ahab, Jezebel
9. Elijah
10. Evangelist
11. Coward
12. The Sabbath
13. Jehoshaphat

**2nd Quarter**
1. Ahab
2. Elisha
3. Prophet
4. Naaman
5. Jonah
6. Hosea
7. Isaiah
8. Jehovah
9. Ahaz
10. Hezekiah
11. Assyria
12. Manasseh
13. Josiah

**3rd Quarter**
1. Jeremiah
2. Approaching Doom
3. Last King
4. Captives
5. Daniel
6. The Dream
7. Three Hebrews
8. Nebuchadnezzar
9. Belshazzar
10. Daniel
11. Daniel 7
12. Daniel 8, 9
13. Daniel 10-12

**4th Quarter**
1. Haggai/Zerubbabel
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
**1st Quarter**
1. Jesus
2. It's Time
3. Mary
4. Simeon/Anna
5. The Wise Men
6. The Child Jesus
7. The Voice
8. Victory
9. Messiah Found
10. Marriage Feast
11. The Temple
12. Nicodemus
13. John the Baptist

**2nd Quarter**
1. Samaritan Woman
2. The Nobleman
3. The Lame Man
4. Peter
5. Capernaum
6. The Leper
7. Levi-Matthew
8. The Disciples
9. The Centurion
10. The Demoniac

**3rd Quarter**
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. Zaccchaeus
12. Mary
13. James and John

**4th Quarter**
1. The King Comes
2. The Pharisees
3. The End of Time
4. Servanthood
5. The Last Supper
6. Gethsemane
7. The Trial
8. Calvary
9. Resurrection
10. Mary Magdalene
11. The Emmaus Road
12. By the Sea
13. Jesus' Ascension

### 2010
**1st Quarter**
1. The Mission
2. The Holy Spirit
3. The Lame Man
4. Ananias/Sapphira
5. God's People
6. Stephen
7. Paul
8. Peter
9. Paul/Barnabas
10. Gentiles Included
11. Spreading Good News
12. The Thessalonians
13. The Ephesians

**2nd Quarter**
1. The Corinthians
2. Workers for Christ
3. Romans/Galatians
4. Last Journey
5. Adventures and Trials
6. Philémon
7. Colossians/Philippians
8. Final Arrest
9. Before Nero
10. John the Beloved
11. Patmos
12. The Revelation
13. Church Triumphant

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### 1st Quarter

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### 2nd Quarter

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Is it enough for young people just to show up at church and sit in the pew? No way! Keep your youth and young adults growing strong in their faith—and actively sharing it. It’s never too soon to channel their energy and passion into pursuing God’s kingdom.

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January

2—Last Words and Witnesses [p. 11]
The last words a person speaks are usually of utmost importance—especially if they know they’re the last words they will speak. Christ’s last words were no different.

9—The Holy Spirit—Any Takers? [p. 15]
The Holy Spirit is one of the greatest gifts that God offers us. But do we see Him as a gift worth receiving?

16—Jesus Only [p. 19]
It was evident when talking with Peter and John that they had spent time with Jesus. Can people say that about us?

23—Dying for a Buck [p. 23]
God calls us to radical authenticity and uncompromising character. Unfortunately, Ananias and Sapphira didn’t heed the call.

30—Power. Perseverance. Purpose. [p. 27]
Whether as a religious leader or a teenager, we are empowered by God not only to overcome tribulation, but to develop our giftedness to be used for His glory.

February

6—The First Christian Martyr [p. 31]
Stephen was brought to court on trumped-up charges, permitted a brief defense, and then executed. Serving God exacted a price then—and it does now.

13—Go the Distance [p. 35]
Saul’s work of destruction was so thorough that Jesus had to arrest him, change his name, and set him on a different road. A road with a purpose.

20—Peter Principles [p. 39]
As demonstrated in Peter’s life, Jesus isn’t looking for perfect people to follow Him. He’s looking for real people who can be changed by His love.

27—The Epicenter for Missions [p. 43]
Antioch was the crossroads of the Roman Empire from which God launched His people full throttle into missionary work. But it doesn’t stop there.

March

6—Us and Them [p. 47]
Tensions arose between the Gentile and Jewish believers. But through sharing stories of how God was working among them, they rekindled the heart of their mission to the world.

13—Belief + Values = Action [p. 51]
Merely believing in the “right” things isn’t enough in this world. We must be firmly grounded in God’s Word in order to make right choices.

20—Hope Against Hope [p. 55]
When we have heard the good news repeatedly, the effect seems to wear off. But where would we be without hope?

27—The Uncool Minority [p. 59]
Paul made some enemies by his preaching. He cut into the sale of idols. But God never said that standing for the right would make us popular.
last words and witnesses

Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles, chapters 1, 2, 3.
Key Text: Acts 1:7, 8.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The last words we speak are usually about the things that are most important, especially if we know that they are in fact the last words we will say. Christ’s final words were strategic: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

In Jerusalem the storied event of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ was fresh on the minds of people who lived in the city. It is likely that many of the people who would hear this witness had heard of Jesus. Today there are many within our immediate sphere of influence (“Jerusalem”) that would be brought close to Christ if someone would bear witness.

The problem with taking the gospel to Judea and Samaria was not a matter of distance in miles but the prejudices between Jews and Gentiles. Yet, at the right time, the Holy Spirit accompanied the disciples as they testified to the risen Christ in that region. It is likely that the church has obstacles that only the Holy Spirit can guide us through to reach others beyond the walls of our churches.

And finally, we know more about the ends of the earth than even the disciples were aware of when they ventured out. The key for young people today is to recognize that Christ’s final words on earth were a commission to testify to what we know about Him to everyone.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• See the possibilities of their ability to share Christ with others. (Know)
• Feel the urgency to be ready to testify. (Feel)
• Seize every opportunity to convey who Christ is to the world. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Gospel
• Church
• Discipleship

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. The ranking activity challenges young people to choose between a variety of viable good answers. From this exercise you can get a sense of how they feel about their church and its mission. You might go down the list ranking options and ask, “Who chose ______ as their number answer,” and so on. Or, you might simply go around the room and ask each student what their first choice was and why.
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

One of the most memorable qualities Francis of Assisi had was his ability to teach others to think and live differently by being an example. In fact, he is well known for encouraging others to embrace selfless service and giving simply by modeling it. The story is told of how Francis invited a young monk to accompany him on a journey to the nearby towns to spend the day preaching. The young monk was honored by the opportunity and seized it immediately, fully expecting to get personal training in preaching. As they made their way through towns they walked through the worst parts of those towns, stopping to talk and pray and help those who were in need. All throughout the day he and Francis walked through the streets and the alleys, down the back roads, and even into what we would call the suburbs. They must have stopped and encountered hundreds of people throughout the course of the day. As the sun began to set, Francis and his apprentice headed back home. The young monk reflected as they quietly walked back that they had not once addressed a crowd of people with one sermon. They didn’t even talk to individuals specifically about the gospel. The young man felt somewhat disappointed and asked Francis, “I thought we were going to town to preach! We didn’t even give one sermon or tell anyone about Christ.”

Francis replied, “My son, did you not notice that today we have preached? We were teaching others while we were walking. There were many who watched our every move, whom we stopped to talk to, and how we had time to help others. It is of no use to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere as we walk!”

If we are to bear witness to the living Christ, how will we know when to speak and what to say?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Perhaps it has to do with what it means to be a witness. How do you define what a witness is? At the very basic level, a witness is someone who has experienced something and is willing to tell about it. As you read the following story, note that Christ is giving His last words—His final commission to His disciples. And the most important thing He chooses to speak about is how His disciples will become witnesses to the world.

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 underline what you think are the three most important sections of this story? Why?
- Who is this person named Theophilus that the book of Acts is addressed to? How does Luke describe his approach to writing the story of the New Testament church?
- This story contains the final words Christ spoke directly to the disciples before ascending to heaven. Compare these words with His final words in Matthew 28:19, 20.
- Why do you think the disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem for “the promised gift”? What is this gift and what did the disciples know about how they were to function without Christ physically there with them?
- How would you describe/define someone who is a “witness” and what they were to bear witness to?
- Why do you think they were to start first in Jerusalem?
- How is Jerusalem different from Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth?

More Questions for Teachers:

If Jesus were to give you the same commission today, describe what your Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth look like?

- How do you see this commission being fulfilled today?
- How does this story describe what it means to be a disciple?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Acts 9; Acts 3; Luke 19; 2 Kings 7:1-14; 1 Timothy 4:12.

Sharing Context and Background

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

The book of Acts was written by Luke (compare the beginning of Acts with Luke 1) to Theophilus. Nobody really knows who this man was, but the pur-
pose of the account is well documented: it is a continuation of Luke’s first Gospel on the life of Christ, but now Luke features the story of the church of Christ, led by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The setting of this lesson is the 40-day period from the time of Christ’s resurrection to His ascension into heaven. During those 40 days Jesus sought to clarify His connection to the Old Testament (Hebrew) Scriptures (Luke 24:44-48). It seems as though during this period between the resurrection and the ascension that Jesus would come and go and no one really knew when He would show up. But as the time came for Jesus to ascend into heaven there were several things He wanted the disciples to know:

1. **The disciples must experience the reality of the Resurrection** (Acts 1:3). The reality of our salvation rests on whether Jesus truly was raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-40). The theme of the New Testament church is the resurrection of Christ. Calvary was key, but Christ overcoming death is the theme of the book of Acts.

2. **The disciples must understand the Holy Spirit and His relationship to the church** (Acts 1:4, 5). Even Jesus said earlier in His ministry that “he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father” (John 14:12, NASB). That promise had to do with the fact that Christ must go to heaven in the flesh so that the Spirit of Christ could come to every believer—everywhere and all the time (Joel 2:28; Isaiah 44:3; 32:15; John 20:22).

3. **The disciples must embrace the responsibility to become witnesses of Christ** (Acts 1:7, 8). The disciples did not have all the answers, but they knew enough to stake their lives on their testimony that Christ was the Son of God who was crucified and raised to life. Christ ascended to heaven in the flesh, right before their eyes, so that the disciples could also testify of His return.

The sequence of going to Jerusalem first, then to Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth...

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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 Acts of the Apostles. 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.

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Molding by Modeling**

Learning by modeling (as in the example of Francis of Assisi) is by far one of the most underestimated teaching methods of all. Perhaps it is because the technique is subtle, but the principle is foundational. It is easier to get students to think and do something that has been modeled than it is to get them to respond to something you are trying to market. Instead of saying “This week we should try to reach out and share our faith in Christ with a stranger,” we ought to just do it and talk about the experience as it is a reality, not just a good idea. If you want to teach students about forgiveness, get a few to quietly practice it, then share their experiences.
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It is masterful to watch how the plan that Christ had to win the world flowed through normal people like you and me. Peter, Mary, James, John, and Lydia were all people not much different than we are today. What caused them to stand out was the story they told about Christ. Today we can begin telling our story right here in our own Jerusalem. Your church, home, and school is that first ring of influence we have in our world. In the second ring we may have to overcome some barriers, break down some prejudices through selfless service, and take some leaps of faith. You can’t go from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth without going to Judea and Samaria! I think the point is to be ready today to share who Christ is to you, no matter what scenario you are in or what it costs. Don’t fear. Christ promised that His Spirit will be with us, and the same Presence of Christ that accompanied the disciples accompanies us today. What do you think might happen if we were to begin praying: “Lord, introduce me to someone today with whom I can share my belief in Christ”? As you pray this prayer regularly, watch how the opportunities emerge. But don’t just watch, respond with your testimony!

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

In the middle of the room set a display that has a bit of detail (a bowl of fruit or an arrangement of tools, flowers, or toys). Ask four students to volunteer and have them sit the same distance from the display on all four sides and write a detailed description of what they see in the display. Give them only a couple of minutes to write their descriptions. The rest of the class can do this from where they are sitting as well. Have the four read their descriptions to the class and invite the students to comment on the nuances and differences of each testimony. They all saw the same thing, but saw it from their own perspective. We want students to be encouraged that their testimony of Christ is the objective!
the Holy Spirit—any takers?

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The Holy Spirit is one of the greatest gifts that God offers us, but do we see Him as a gift worth receiving? Do we see the Holy Spirit as a force that works in evangelistic efforts, or perhaps as the voice of our conscience, but nothing more?

In Luke 11:13 Jesus makes the analogy of God as a father giving good gifts to his children. But when the punch line comes, Jesus doesn’t say “This is how God will give you what you want”; He says, “This is how God will give you His Holy Spirit.” It almost seems like a cop-out, doesn’t it? How many other things do we want or need? Perhaps we want good grades, the ability to get into a good school, the gift of good friends, the ability to fit in. . . . So many things seem much more important in a teenager’s life—even in an adult’s life! It almost seems like the beautifully wrapped gift, opened to expose a bag of tube socks.

But that is only if we misunderstand who the Holy Spirit is and what He wants to do in our lives! The Holy Spirit is God Himself, and He wants to lead us into all good things. God created us with the needs and desires we have, and the Holy Spirit will show us how to fulfill those in a lasting, godly way. And when others see that we have something different, they will want to know what the difference is.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand the immense gift of the Holy Spirit in their own personal lives. (Know)
• Sense the love God has for them to offer them such a gift. (Feel)
• Choose to ask for the Holy Spirit’s leading in their lives, and tell others why they have something so special. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Holy Spirit
• Witnessing/sharing
• Faith
• Spiritual gifts and ministries

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Ask the students to think of the one person they love most in the world. With that one person in mind, ask them the following question: If money weren’t an issue, what would the perfect gift for that person be, and why?

Look at each gift. How big is that gift? Is it lavish, such as a house or an airplane? Is it simple, such as a handwritten letter, or a family heirloom? Is it the gift of time? Why is the gift perfect for that person? How much thought must go into choosing that perfect gift?

God loves us infinitely more than we could ever
love another person. How much more thought must have gone into the gift He offers us?

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

There was a woman who was incredibly hard to please. She was a tough woman, and raised her three sons with a strong hand. When she got old, her three sons decided it was time to do something nice for their mother.

The young men could not stop arguing over who had bought their mother the best gift. They argued and argued.

“I bought mother a house,” the first son said.
“I bought mother a new car,” the second son said.
“I have you both beat,” said the third son. “Since mother is going blind in her old age, I bought her a parrot that has the entire Bible memorized. She just has to say a text, and the bird will recite it!”

Each young man thought his gift was the finest. Finally, they decided to ask their mother what she thought of the gifts they had bought her.

“Mother,” they said. “Tell us what you thought of our gifts.”

“Joe,” their mother said. “You are a wasteful boy! What did you think I needed with a new house? It’s too big. It costs too much to heat, and it takes forever for me to clean. This was no help at all. I’m an old woman, and I certainly didn’t need a bigger house!”

“What about my gift?” asked the second son.

“Frank,” said the mother. “You certainly don’t think! I’m old. I’m blind. I never leave the house. What do I need with a car? I can’t even drive myself!”

“And what about mine?” asked the third brother.

“Harry, you are my favorite!” the old woman exclaimed. “You certainly do know your mother!”

She threw her arms around his neck and said, “The chicken was delicious!”

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Sometimes we don’t know the value of the gift we have been given! It might seem ordinary or uninteresting. In fact, the gift of the Holy Spirit seems to be just that. It seems to be something theological, not practical. It doesn’t seem like something that would affect our everyday lives. We couldn’t be more wrong!

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

- What was the physical sign of the Holy Spirit in this story? How would it have felt to see this happen?
- What miracle did the Holy Spirit perform? Why?
- What do you think the Holy Spirit did for them personally and individually?
- What was the reaction of the people watching? What would your reaction have been?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 3:21, 22; 12:9-12; John 20:19-22.*

**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 Matthew Henry commentary sheds some light on this story:

He points out that this miracle happened during a feast day that brought Jews from countries far and near to celebrate. This would contribute to maximizing the gospel to all nations, since the miracle of the languages would be more public and its fame would spread sooner and farther.

The Feast of Pentecost, which was being celebrated in Jerusalem at the time of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, was a celebration of the law being given on Mount Sinai. Pentecost would now be a benchmark for the gospel as well. Passover took on a second importance with Jesus’ death, and now Pentecost was experiencing the same “doubling up” of significance.

The tongues of fire that rested upon each of the followers of Christ were also highly symbolic. First of all, John the Baptist had declared that Jesus would baptize them with the Spirit and fire. This is an example of that: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit paired with the tongues of fire that appeared over their heads. We are reminded of God’s appearance to Moses in the burning bush. It was there that He declared His name: I AM Who I AM. The law, celebrated at Pentecost, was given in fire on Mount Sinai. Even Ezekiel (in 1:13) had his mission confirmed with a vision of burning coals. Isaiah’s mission was confirmed with a coal of fire touching his lips (Isaiah 6:7). Sin finally will be destroyed in a lake of fire, and the earth will be purified with fire. Our characters are said to be purified like...
metal in fire. Fire is a very important symbol both before and after Christ’s ministry, showing the continuity of what Christ was teaching.

Matthew Henry makes a connection between the dividing of tongues at the Tower of Babel and the dividing of tongues of fire at Pentecost. He suggests that at the Tower of Babel the dividing of tongues separated people and made it difficult for the true worship of God to continue with those who had already set it aside. However, with the dividing of the tongues of fire at Pentecost (and with the subsequent miracle of languages) people from nations far and near were brought back together through the Holy Spirit.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Ask the students to think of one gift that God has given them. What do they do with that gift? With the blessing of the Holy Spirit, what limits are possible with that gift?
For example, perhaps one student enjoys writing. What do they do with that gift? Perhaps they write poetry, or contribute to the school paper. What could the Holy Spirit do with that gift if they would ask Him? Perhaps that student could become a great writer for God, given even more talent than they could imagine because of God’s special blessing. Encourage the class to think big!

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
The Holy Spirit was promised to us long, long ago. God has not forgotten His promise, and we can still claim that gift. The problem is that many people don’t see the value in the gift of the Holy Spirit. It seems boring or theological. People don’t see how it could fit into their lives. They don’t see what the Holy Spirit is offering to them personally. He is not offering overblown church services with people falling down in a faint. He
is offering courage, wisdom, discretion, contentment, and a sense of one’s purpose on this earth.

The Holy Spirit is given to us to help us gain all those things we crave. The Holy Spirit will lead us into joy and contentment. He will also give us the courage to stand up and say where our happiness comes from. We don’t need to preach. We just need to tell our own stories. There is no better sermon than a happy, successful young person saying “My life is different because of God.”

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Acts of the Apostles*, chapters 4, 5.

*A special adaptation of The Acts of the Apostles* 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 Peter and John healing the crippled beggar provides a great launching pad for spiritual conversations on a variety of topics. This healing story is followed with an explanation that Peter preached to the onlookers. Soon the Sanhedrin got involved and before they knew it, Peter and John landed in jail.

The prison gave Peter the opportunity to testify about Jesus. He explained, “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:8-12, NIV).

Regardless of what direction you go with this lesson, it is ultimately about Jesus. A natural emphasis for this Bible passage might be on outreach and service. Keep in mind that the whole narrative is triggered by a service project that John and Peter did for the lame man. Of course, the miracle of healing was performed in the name and power of Christ. Another highlight that merits emphasis is the importance of witnessing. The text provides an ideal case study in how we ought to share our faith. After all, the witnessing in the story is based solely on Jesus—His death, resurrection, and continuing presence through the Holy Spirit.

In presenting this lesson, take your cues from Peter and John—just keep on talking about Jesus. May it be said of you, as it was said of them, “and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, NIV).

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Hear the story of men who changed the world through Christ living in them. (Know)
• Sense the compassion that Jesus feels for all of His children. (Feel)
• Be challenged to share the story of Jesus with people who do not know Him. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Calvary
• Outreach and service
• 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.

As an alternate activity, use this scenario:
Divide your class into small groups. Give each
group the assignment of designing a seminar entitled “How to Share Christ Without Being a Weirdo.” Each group should brainstorm a list of as many ideas as possible. Then have the students share their lists with the whole class while you keep a master list. Put an asterisk next to the ideas that at least some people in the class would be willing to implement in the week ahead.

Illustration

In January 2008 a news story hogged the headlines about a 15-year-old girl in Australia named Demi-Lee Brennan. Brennan became the world’s first-known transplant patient to change blood types from O negative to O positive, taking on the immune system of her organ donor. Initially, the doctors assumed someone had made a mistake, because the assumption has always been that a change like that can’t happen. Now Demi-Lee is dubbed a “one-in-six-billion miracle.”

The blood stem cells in Brennan’s new liver invaded her body’s bone marrow, taking over her entire immune system. She now has an entirely different kind of blood—blood that welcomes life, rather than carrying death. “It’s like my second chance at life,” Demi-Lee says.1

The story is one of good news—for Demi-Lee and many others! The rare phenomenon now means that she no longer has to take a cocktail of antirejection drugs for the rest of her life. She is now a healthy teenager who displays no signs of her ordeal—other than the scar on her body.

Moreover, the success in her procedure gives hope to the 1,800 desperate Australians awaiting a similar transplant. The story is now the subject of medical research being conducted around the globe. Former head of Westmead’s liver transplant unit, Dr. Stuart Dorney, comments: “We now need to go back over everything that happened to Demi and see why, and if, it can be replicated.”2

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Demi-Lee’s story is not unlike your story and mine. We too have been offered a blood transplant—at Calvary. Now our Savior, Jesus Christ, bears the scar of our healing. Consequently, when we put our faith in Jesus, He gives us life eternal. And that is the good news!

Our lesson today tells about a miracle of healing. But it is really about much more than just the healing of the lame man that Peter and John performed in God’s Spirit. This story is our story of where we too can find life—in Jesus! It is a story we’ve got to share with others. Our lives depend on it.

The lesson this week focuses on Peter. This is the same apostle who wrote a letter to Christians and described the world as full of “debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry” (1 Peter 4:3, NIV). Then he adds, “Of course, your old friends don’t understand why you don’t join in with the old gang anymore. But you don’t have to give an account to them. They’re the ones who will be called on the carpet—and before God himself. Listen to the Message. It was preached to those believers who are now dead, and yet even though they died (just as all people must), they will still get in on the life that God has given in Jesus” (1 Peter 4:4-6, Message).

Who doesn’t want in on “the life that God has given in Jesus”? Sure, we may not fit into this world, but who cares? Life with Jesus is the best way to live.

Peter practiced what he preached. He was not intimidated in the least by the authorities that interrogated him for healing a crippled man. Then they threw Peter in jail for witnessing about Jesus. But He was happy to “stick out” from the crowd for Christ!

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• The lame man begged for money, but Peter gave him something much more valuable—the use of his legs. Have you ever asked God for help in a small matter, only to be surprised by a much grander answer to prayer than you could have imagined? If so, share your story with the rest of the class. Next, discuss the pros and cons of this suggestion when it comes to prayer: “Ask God for what you want, but don’t be surprised when He gives you what you really need.”

• Note that the lame man went “into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.” Think about what it is that people get really excited about in our culture today. Concerts? Yes. Football games? Absolutely. Political rallies? Sure. Church? Not so much. Why do you suppose that is? Is it possible or even desirable to try to replicate this lame man’s excitement in church?
• Acts 3:10 tells us that people “were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened” to the lame man. Would you characterize what is happening today in the church as something that sparks “wonder and amazement” in onlookers? Why or why not? Are these same kinds of miracles possible today? If so, why do they occur so rarely?
• How do you respond when people grill you with questions about your faith? What can you learn from the way Peter responded to the leaders of the Sanhedrin?
• Acts 4:13 speaks of the “courage of Peter and John.” When it comes to witnessing for Jesus, what might “courage” look like for you?

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 ancient world it was often the custom for beggars to sit at the entrance to the Temple. This was a strategic location because when people are on their way to worship God they are disposed to showing compassion to those in need. So this scene of Peter and John going to the Temple at the customary time of prayer (3:00 p.m.) and encountering a crippled beggar was a familiar one. What followed, of course, was anything but ordinary.

Peter commanded the lame man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6, NIV). In other words, Peter was saying “by the authority of Jesus . . .” This healing occurred through the power of the Holy Spirit, not their own.

This miracle attracted a crowd, so Peter capitalized on the opportunity to share Jesus Christ. Notice that Peter clearly presented his message by who Jesus is, how the Jews rejected Him, why this rejection was deadly, and how they needed to respond to set things right with God. Peter shared a message of hope, emphasizing that it was not too late to accept Jesus as their Messiah and Lord.

Peter then called them to repentance: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus” (Acts 3:19, 20, NIV). Note that the result of repentance is that God will bless you with a time of “refreshing.” As Hosea put it, “Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth” (Hosea 6:3, NIV). Would you like to be refreshed? It is possible through repentance.

Peter and John then were called to testify before the Jewish council, which was comprised of the “rulers, elders, and teachers of the law” (Acts 4:5, NIV). This was the same council that had condemned Jesus to death (see Luke 22:66). It had 70 members plus the high priest. The majority of the group were Sadducees. They were influential and wealthy men of Jerusalem who did not believe in the Resurrection. Thus, they were highly offended by Peter and John, who “were . . .”
teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead” (Acts 4:2, NIV).

Nevertheless, members of the council were amazed because they knew Peter and John to be unschooled and yet they noticed what being with Jesus had done for these two disciples (Acts 4:13). Seeing the difference that Jesus makes in a person’s life is at the heart of the most powerful testimonies.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Challenge your students to practice servant evangelism during the week. Just like Peter and John began with an act of service before they witnessed for Christ, we too can spark spiritual interest by sharing the love of Christ through selfless acts of service.

Check out the Web site www.servantevangelism.com/ideas/search_ideas.php for hundreds of servant evangelism ideas.

Share the following story and discuss with your students the similarities between this story and the story of Peter healing the crippled beggar.

Matthew Parris is a newspaper columnist for The Times of London and a self-described atheist. Nevertheless, in a December 2008 column he wrote an article titled “As an Atheist, I Truly Believe Africa Needs God.” Parris admits that saying this runs counter to his beliefs, but he cannot ignore the difference that he sees in African Christians. Parris, who grew up in Africa, writes:

“Before Christmas I returned, after 45 years, to the country that as a boy I knew as Nyasaland. Today it’s Malawi. . . . It inspired me, renewing my flagging faith in development charities. But traveling in Malawi refreshed another belief, too—one I’ve been trying to banish all my life, but an observation I’ve been unable to avoid since my African childhood. It confounds my ideological beliefs, stubbornly refuses to fit my worldview, and has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God.

“Now a confirmed atheist, I’ve become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa. . . . It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good.”

1 As reported at http://preachingtoday.com/illustrations/weekly/08-06-02/2060208.html.

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 Acts of the Apostles, chapter 6.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

One of the most compelling snapshots of generosity in the Bible is found in Acts 4:32-36. Following that poignant picture of God’s people “sharing everything they had” and giving “to anyone as he had need” is the unsettling story of Ananias and Sapphira. The juxtaposition of the narratives is jolting to say the least.

Ellen White offers insightful commentary on both stories. Speaking of the generosity in the early Christian church she writes: “This liberality on the part of the believers was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit. The converts to the gospel were ‘of one heart and of one soul.’ One common interest controlled them—the success of the mission entrusted to them; and covetousness had no place in their lives. Their love for their brethren and the cause they had espoused was greater than their love of money and possessions” (The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 70, 71).

Referring then to the story of Ananias and Sapphira, Ellen White comments: “In sharp contrast to the example of benevolence shown by the believers was the conduct of Ananias and Sapphira, whose experience, traced by the pen of Inspiration, has left a dark stain upon the history of the early church” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 71).

This lesson offers extreme examples from Scripture of both hypocrisy and integrity. You cannot escape the radical calling of authenticity and God’s uncompromising character in this story. So present the story and let the students grapple with the gritty and messy dissonance in the text. You might just read the passage, and a lively discussion about integrity, hypocrisy, and giving is likely to follow.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Be exposed to the best and worst of the early Christian church. (Know)
• Grapple with the seriousness of God’s judgment. (Feel)
• Be challenged to live a life of integrity and generosity. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Integrity
• Hypocrisy
• Giving

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

As an alternate activity, use this scenario:

Play the old game “Two Truths and a Lie.” Have the students write three statements about themselves, two that are true and one that is not. If the kids choose...
two truths that sound like lies and a lie that sounds true, they’ll be able to fool the group. The group must try to guess which one of the three is a lie.

Another option is to host a lying contest. Have each student fabricate a lie and then vote on the best tall tale. Give a prize to the winner, or promise $10 to the winner—then later admit that you lied!

Illustration

John D. Rockefeller, Sr., at the age of 23 was a millionaire. By 50, he was a billionaire and dubbed the “richest man in the world.”

But Rockefeller was a miserable rich man. In his quest to amass a fortune, he sacrificed his health. At 53, his body was riddled with disease and ulcers.

Doctors gave him less than a year to live. At the root of his ill health was Rockefeller’s attitude. He was a grabber, not a giver. His all-consuming greed proved destructive. The man who could buy any restaurant in the world with pocket change was limited to a diet of milk and crackers.

During that crisis John D. Rockefeller reevaluated his life. He said, “I have all these possessions and yet I’ve never been a giver.” That’s when he decided to give much of it away. He gave to churches, hospitals, and medical research. Why not? He was going to die in a year anyway. What good would all his money do him then? Why not invest in something that would outlive him?

Today, many significant discoveries in medicine are the result of money given by the Rockefeller Foundation. Most significant, however, was the healing impact Rockefeller’s giving had on himself. When he focused on giving rather than getting, his ill health dramatically improved. His generosity proved therapeutic.

John D. Rockefeller lived to the age of 90.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Jesus taught this principle long ago: “Give, and you will receive. You will be given much. Pressed down, shaken together, and running over, it will spill into your lap. The way you give to others is the way God will give to you” (Luke 6:38, NCV).

Giving is therapeutic. The more we give, the more we benefit. What do you see as the primary benefits of giving?

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- Acts 4:32-35—Make a list of any similarities and differences that you see between the early Christian church described in this passage and your church today. How well would you have fit into the early church? How easy is it for you to share with others? What barriers to generosity do you see in our world today? How might God use you this week to reach out to someone in need?

- Acts 4:36, 37—What is your nickname? How did you get the name? Is there something about your nickname that expresses a truth about who you are? Joseph is best known by his nickname—“The encourager.” What is it about Joseph in verses 36 and 37 that merits a name like “the encourager”? Who is the most encouraging person you know? Explain. Who could use some encouragement today? What does God want you to do about it?

- Acts 5:1-11—Does God’s punishment of Ananias and Sapphira seem too severe to you? Why or why not? How would “great fear” be used by God in the early church? What do you think the members of the early church learned from God’s judgment of Ananias and Sapphira? If you had been one of the pall bearers at that funeral how do you think you’d have felt toward God? Why? What can we learn about the fear of the Lord in this story? How can you apply this in your life today?

Sharing Context and Background

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

William Barclay offers this commentary on the story of Ananias and Sapphira:

“This is one of the stories which demonstrate the almost stubborn honesty of the Bible. It might well have been left out because it shows that even in the early church there were very imperfect Christians; but the Bible refuses to present an idealized picture of anything. Once a court painter painted the portrait of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell was disfigured by warts upon his face. The painter, thinking to please the great
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Conclude by asking what the benefits are of being a giver. How are others impacted by their generosity? How does giving change the giver? What happens when giving people give too much? Or when the takers take too much? Talk about balancing giving with taking. Discuss ways your Sabbath School can model the generosity of the early church.

Summary

Share the following story and discuss with your students how it illustrates the principles of this lesson.

Wayne Cordeiro, pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship O‘ahu in Honolulu, Hawaii, writes:

Some time ago some wonderful people in our church gave Anna, my wife, and me a dinner certificate to a nice restaurant for $100. We thought, ‘Wow, a hundred bucks. Let's go for it.’ We found a free evening. We dressed up....I even washed and waxed my car, because we wanted to take it through the valet, and I didn't want my Ford Pinto to look bad. The night came, and we were excited.

We went to this ritzy restaurant and walked in. They gave us a nice, candlelit table overlooking a lagoon adjacent to a moonlit bay there in Hawaii. Oh, it was nice....

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 Acts of the Apostles. 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 Acts of the Apostles, chapter 7.

*A special adaptation of The Acts of the Apostles 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.

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Experiential Learning**

Jesus’ teaching that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35) is true—especially for young people. But how can you teach this truth in a way that it sticks and shapes generous kids?

Students are usually on the receiving end—they get food, clothing, education, and so on just given to them. Give them a chance to step outside the receiving role, however, and they learn the satisfaction of being the generous one, and they vibrate with joy. They feel grown up. It empowers them.

If you are serious about teaching your students generosity, you must make the experience their own. Take, for example, the typical food drive at the local school. Too often Mom or Dad throws some extra cans in the cart and the kids deliver the goods at school. It’s a good start, but the kids aren’t really participating in the process. All they’re doing is delivering your purchase to the school.

The difference between Dad’s $10 and the kids’ $10 is the difference between watching generosity and learning generosity experientially. Let the students decide how they want to respond to what this lesson teaches. Encourage them to dream about aiding the homeless or funding a well in Africa or giving money to a needy family in the church—and then let them pay for it!

When the bill came, I said, “Honey, why don’t you give me the certificate.”

She said, “I don’t have the certificate. I thought you brought it.”

I said, “You have to have it. You’re supposed to have it. You’re the wife!”

She said, “I don’t have it.” And I thought, We are in deep yogurt. Here we are. We look rich, we act rich, we even smell rich. But if we don’t have that certificate, it invalidates everything.

There are times in our lives when we can look holy, we can act holy, we can smell holy. But without a relationship with the Lord, we’ve forgotten something. It’s relationship that validates everything else.²

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I. SYNOPSIS

God has a purpose for everything. Even our problems serve to benefit us if we confront them with the right attitude and adequate preparation. God could have saved Peter and John from flogging, kept Paul and Silas out of jail, and prevented Daniel from being thrown into the lions’ den. Yet, He didn’t. And as a result, every one of them deepened their relationship with God.

This lesson aims to help young people recognize that God not only empowers them to overcome tribulation, but has planted seeds of potential in them that if attended to appropriately can develop into purposeful skills and talents to be used for His glory.

Ellen White reiterates this in her writings:

“What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ’s sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 85).

“The appointment of the seven to take the oversight of special lines of work proved a great blessing to the church” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 89).

Our students can make a difference today—in our churches and in their worlds. They are gifted, they are empowered, and God wants to use them. In this lesson they’ll be encouraged to be open to how God wants to use them today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that not only their strengths serve a purpose, but even their problems and weaknesses can. (Know)
- Desire to be constantly tapped into God’s power. (Feel)
- Be challenged to discover their spiritual gifts; finding avenues to apply and develop them. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Perseverance/suffering
- Purpose
- Character building/transformation in Christ
- Gifts and talents

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.

Beforehand, prepare cards or decorative notepapers. Instruct students to write notes of encouragement to someone they know who is going through a difficult time. Alternatively, if any of your students are currently feeling discouraged or overwhelmed, encourage them to write notes of encouragement to themselves.

If they absolutely cannot think of anyone to write a
note to, have them write to an imaginary friend.

If it’s possible, have your students share what they have written with the class. Plan to make time at the end of the session to pray for the people mentioned here.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

For this illustration, prepare the following items: flashlight, batteries for flashlight, table lamp.

Bring out a flashlight that has no batteries in it. How useful is it? What does it need?

(Give the students time to share their answers with the class.)

Put the batteries in. Now it works. But what will happen if you leave it on for a few days or months?

(Give the students time to share their answers with the class.)

They run out of power. This is a metaphor for our relationship with God. We cannot do what we were made to do until He gives us power to do it. We can last for a little while, until our “batteries” run out.

(Now take out a lamp and plug it in.) Compared to a flashlight, how long can the lamp keep shining? We need God’s constant power in our lives if we are truly going to make an impact for Him in the lives of the people around us. We need to tap into that power source—constantly and consistently.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

When we chase after God with all of our hearts, when we make every effort to get to know Him better, He reveals to us our purpose for existing. He tells us the plans He has for us. He gives us courage to face whatever problems may come our way. In order to make this happen, we need to tap into His ultimate power source. Then we can begin not only to see the purpose in everything, but to become purposeful ourselves!

**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.*

*Circle the main characters in this story.*

*What event is occurring here?*

*Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.*

*Peter and the apostles did not back down even though the circumstances were so intimidating. What can we learn from their actions?*

*God sent an angel to open the jail doors for the apostles. What does that reveal about God?*

*What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?*

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Read Acts 6:1-7. The apostles could withstand beatings. They dared to rebuke people in positions of authority. Yet they needed to outsource the job of administrative duties in the church to seven others. What does this say about abilities and talents?*

*Read Ephesians 2:10. God planned for us to do good things. He has a purpose for us. Peter said: “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another” (1 Peter 4:10, NLT). What talents and abilities do you have? (Sometimes students will refer to performance-based abilities, such as singing, drawing, or playing a musical instrument as talents. This is a good opportunity to broaden their understanding that our talents and abilities can also include listening, problem solving, or compassion.)*

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

1. **The Power to Change.** Despite his initial character flaws and shameful denial of his association with Christ (Mark 14:66-72), after Christ’s resurrection Peter was a changed man. He preached fearlessly and performed many miracles. His actions clearly pointed to the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit—through which there is no task insurmountable. The Holy Spirit is still available to empower believers today. God promised (John 16:1-16) the believers a source of power and help—the Holy Spirit. We should turn to the Holy Spirit to give us strength, courage, and insight to accomplish God’s work for us.

Ellen White offers this insight on the power of the Holy Spirit: “What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ’s sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union
with Christ. Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 85). What can you do today to better experience this life-changing and life-empowering infusion of the Holy Spirit?

2. The Power of Purpose. The apostles declared that they “must obey God,” echoing their earlier rhetorical question in Acts 4:19. Their statement emphasizes their conviction to fulfill God’s plans and purposes no matter the cost. Previously, Jesus had commanded them (Acts 1:8) and now, the angel of the Lord was directing them (Acts 5:20). Naturally, the apostles knew their purpose.

Although Romans 12:18 encourages us to live at peace with everyone and Jesus laid down the principle of obeying both Caesar and God (Matthew 22:21), yet when a choice is to be made, we can pledge allegiance to only one master. How many times have we chosen the approval of men over God’s approval? Is it because we are unclear as to what God wants from us and has planned for us? How can we attain clarity on this? If we are sure but are avoiding His directives because they do not align with our desires, what can be done to recalibrate our moral compass?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

- Design a simple blank business card that says I AM MADE FOR GOD’S PURPOSE and a place for students to sign their name.
- Hand them out and challenge your students to sign their cards. Next, have them pick a Bible verse from the Punch Lines section of their lesson and write it down on the back of the card.
- Encourage your students to put this card in their wallets or purses and whenever they are waiting in line, or for a bus, to take out this card and memorize the text.
- During the week pray for your students, that as they read and memorize the text, God will show them...
opportunities to fulfill His purposes. Discuss the results the following week in Sabbath School.

**Summary**

*Share the following story in your own words:*

“A certain college pastor had an abstract painting on the wall behind his desk. Students would come up to his office and unknowingly say, ‘What’s that? It looks like someone threw up on your wall!’

“And then he would have to explain, ‘My dad painted that. He painted this painting of a magician, but my mom didn’t like it—too dark. One day my dad got a rare brain virus and lost the ability to paint forever. And sometime later, he compromised with my mom on that painting of the magician. He and I took it outside and cut the bottom of it off and reframed the top. Somehow this made it a little softer. So, after my dad died, I took the bottom—the part he signed—and framed it.’

“Of course this description always made the college students feel awful about calling it puke. The problem was they didn’t see the whole picture. Not just the whole painting—but the whole story.

“Sometimes the process of being shaped by God can be painful and difficult, but if we can look up from the problems of the moment, in the distance we should glimpse the joy of knowing that wonderful things happen when we live our lives according to God’s purpose” (*Great Talk Outlines for Youth Ministry*, p. 281).

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 Acts of the Apostles*, chapters 8, 9.

I. SYNOPSIS

By any measure, the martyrdom of Stephen is one of the most grizzly episodes in all of Scripture. An innocent man, he is brought to court on trumped-up charges, permitted a brief defense, and then summarily executed, by stoning no less.

The tale is made more disturbing when we consider that Stephen is described as a man “full of God’s grace and power, [who] did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people” (Acts 6:8, NIV). He was the kind of person who was a credit to society. But he had the misfortune—or fortune to some—of living during a time of great upheaval. The reverberations from the death of Jesus were just beginning to be felt. The Jews were determined to stamp out all members of the “sect” who believed in Christ. Stephen was a card-carrying member of this group, and he did not hide his allegiance. There’s an important point for our youth to grasp.

Stephen’s trial and death remind us that serving God often exacts a price. In a world in which prosperity preachers insulate their members from the reality that “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12, NIV), Stephen’s willing sacrifice reminds us of the life to which we have been called.

The preceding points should be noted as you teach this week. But special emphasis must be placed on the role that Jesus played in the final scenes of Stephen’s life. God gave Stephen a view of Jesus standing on the right hand of the Father, very much alive and very much King. This vision comforts the humble servant of God in his hour of great distress. The Resurrection was no longer some abstract truth he had heard. For Stephen it was now a fact. Stephen transcended the most painful moment in his life, because he caught a glimpse of Jesus.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that obstacles and trials are part of the Christian’s journey. (Know)
- Realize that through Jesus they can face any challenge in life. (Feel)
- Embrace the peace offered by God and share that peace with others. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Death and resurrection*
- Persecution
- Adversity/trials

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

This activity is designed to get the kids talking about some of the downsides of fame and success.
Celebrities court the media and then complain when they are hounded, often for their negative behaviors. Christians who seek to serve God faithfully can expect to attract attention. They will not have to worry about paparazzi photographers, but at some point they will have to stand up for what they believe, and do so against a tide of opposition. This is what Stephen faced. His faithfulness caught the attention of the adversary of our souls.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Across the world today, men and women, young and old, are paying a high price for their faith in Jesus Christ. Consider, for instance, the case of a convert to Christianity named Azir. Mr. Azir lives in Pakistan, where he makes a humble living transporting people in his rickshaw. The rickshaw was provided to him by Voice of the Martyrs ministries.

In addition to transporting people, Azir also transports Bibles and other Christian literature for distribution. On January 26, 2009, Muslim extremists found out what he was doing. They began screaming at him and then proceeded to beat him, loosening several of his teeth in the process. They took Azir’s rickshaw and left him by the side of the road.

Thankfully, through the intervention of a local village elder, the rickshaw was returned and Azir has returned to his work and his ministry.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Religious persecution is a fact of life in many parts of the world. Yet, as Christians, we are called by God to deliver His message to a world desperately in need of the truth. The motivation to carry God's truth is the same as it was when Stephen gave his life for it. One who has been freed from the power of sin through Jesus’ sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection are enjoined to share that good news with others. Doing so will inevitably catapult one into direct confrontations with the devil and his agents in human form. But we must not be dissuaded. We must be ready to give our all for a God who gave us all.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• The story of Stephen’s martyrdom may be new to many of your students. As you read the story with them, ask them to give you a one-word description of the emotion that this story evokes in them. Death is never pretty, but a death by stoning was, and is, extremely gruesome. This practice continues today in some countries.

• The tension in the narrative is palpable. The leaders were determined to preserve the Jewish faith and traditions at all cost. They were so blinded by this obsession that they could not see the Spirit of God radiating through the countenance of Stephen. Sometimes we too can become slaves to meaningless traditions when God offers us true meaning.

• Note that Jesus seems to enter the narrative at the very end, but this is not true. Stephen saw the vision of Jesus just before he was killed, but Christ was present with His servant in the person of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the entire Godhead paused its work to be with Stephen that day. Jesus stood by the Father, and the Spirit was in Stephen. God wants to be in our lives in the same way. This is one of the lessons that the students need to know.

• The students were asked to consider the similarities between the death of Jesus and the martyrdom of Stephen. Consider that both Jesus and Stephen were arrested on false charges. Both of them had sham trials. Both asked God to forgive their oppressors before being killed. Both saw heavenly realities in their moment of distress. Stephen was a type of Christ.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Deuteronomy 31:6; Daniel 6:10; John 19:10, 11; Psalm 118:6.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Opening Skirmishes. The death of Stephen was but the opening skirmish in a long battle to destroy the church of Christ. Following Christ’s death and resurrection, a small group of followers heeded the call of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20. Powered by the Holy Spirit poured out at
Pentecost (Acts 2), they started to talk about Jesus to fellow Jews. Jewish leaders took particular umbrage at this, so they tried to stamp out the sect at all cost. From those early days until this very moment, Satan has tried everything within his power to stop the followers of Jesus. He continues to try to kill them. He tries to seduce them with allurements. He tries to push them into fanaticism. He tries to make them apathetic. He introduces heresy into the mix to cause people to lose their way. Yet all his efforts have done nothing but build up God’s church. Persecution has always backfired on Satan. It’s a wonder that he still uses that tired weapon.

2. Self-defense? It bears noting that Stephen’s defense (Acts 7) of his new faith was rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ was the long-awaited Messiah written about by the prophets of old. He made the point that though Jewish leaders revered the law, the law was not able prevent God’s people, Israel, from descending into rampant idolatry and apostasy (Acts 7:37-43).

Stephen also noted that God’s true tabernacle was not the one made by hands. The Most High didn’t dwell in physical temples erected by humans, Stephen added, for what temple could hold the one who made all things (Acts 7:48-50)? Stephen saved his sharpest rebukes for the end. He aimed all the power of his words at the leaders and declared: “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (Acts 7:51, NIV).

For a man about to die, Stephen’s defense was remarkably self-effacing. Stephen saw in this moment an opportunity to tell the truth and, hopefully, save some souls. Ellen White tells us in The Acts of the Apostles that one of the souls he helped save that day was a man named Saul.

3. Good Persecution. Is there such a thing? Consider this quote from the servant of the Lord: “The per-

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Keep It Real**

For this lesson, consider doing an Internet search for stories of Christians who are standing up for their faith in the face of great persecution. If you have access to someone in your church who has experienced persecution for their faith, consider having them come to class to share a brief testimony with the class.

A great place to begin your online search is www.persecution.org. Share these stories with your teens as an alternative way of introducing the Stephen story, or use the stories to encourage your teens to keep standing up for Christ. Also check out www.parl.gc.adventist.org to find out what the Adventist Church is doing to fight religious persecution throughout the world.

**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 Acts of the Apostles. 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.
secution that came upon the church in Jerusalem resulted in giving a great impetus to the work of the gospel. Success had attended the ministry of the word in that place, and there was danger that the disciples would linger there too long, unmindful of the Savior’s commission to go to all the world” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 105).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give each student a pencil and a 3x5 card. Have someone read John 14:27 in the hearing of the class. Repeat it if necessary.

Ask the students to take one minute to jot down all the things stressing them out and complicating their lives. When the students are finished, collect the cards and pray for the students. Ask God to do something in the coming week to bring His peace into the life of each student. Pull out the cards next week and debrief with them how the week went.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The call to stand for Christ will come to every follower of Christ. What we do with our moment will define us and likely impact the faith of others whom we influence. Stephen offers us a clear example of how to live for God in times of severe crisis.

Stephen was prepared for his moment because he had a strong relationship with God that shone through his life. He knew the Word of God, as evidenced by his defense, and he was not afraid to speak truth to the powerful.

The Spirit of God rested on him and gave him strength to endure his hour of trial. Near the end of his life, he was ushered into the very throne room of heaven and permitted to see a sight viewed by few human beings.

We are modern-day Stephens, and this is our moment to shine for God. All will not be called to die physically, but some will. Let us be ready.

* Fundamental Belief No. 26.

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 Acts of the Apostles, chapters 10 and 11.

*A special adaptation of The Acts of the Apostles 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

Saul. Paul. The names alone almost write the story for us. They describe one man who lived two distinctly different lives. The apostle Paul is revered today, and rightly so, for helping to engineer the foundation of the Christian church. It is his letters, his life experiences, his holy boldness that gave shape to the faith.

Yet long before this titan of the faith set about his mission, he was on another. In his former life he is described as “breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples” (Acts 9:1, NIV). It would have been wonderful for the ancient church if Saul had been only a heavy breather, but there was much more to him. He presided over the murder of Stephen and many other believers. He was sincere in his efforts to rid the world of these troublesome followers of Jesus, but he was sincerely wrong.

This point is one to be emphasized as the lesson is taught. Sometimes we can be quite wrong in our assessment of another’s faith, so we should not be swift to condemn anyone. We must be led by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit in all our interactions with people of differing faiths.

Saul’s work of destruction was so thorough and efficient that Jesus had to arrest him, change his name, and set him on a different course. The journey begun at the Damascus road meeting with Jesus was a miracle of epic proportions. God took the man most dedicated to destroying His church and turned him into its chief exponent. This is what Christ wants to do in the life of all who accept conviction and submit their life to Him. When Paul sees Jesus face to face, his journey will be complete.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Discover that God has a unique purpose and destiny for their lives. (Know)
• Be challenged to begin their journey with God and grow in grace with Him. (Feel)
• Share their new walk with God with others who are searching for God’s leading in their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Conviction
• Growth/transformation
• Bible/Holy Scriptures

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

The objective of this activity is to get the students to think about what it takes to reach the prize for which one is striving. Every Olympic athlete we see on the world stage is one who has been training for many
years to maximize the moment. Through the application of certain principles and hard work, they are transformed, able to pursue their dream of sport success.

In the Christian life there’s a goal to be won, a prize worth striving for, and that prize is God, poured out in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul used many sports metaphors to make points about the Christian’s journey to God. While life is not a game, we can learn much from those who dedicate their lives to achieving a dream.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

“Sociology professor Anthony Campolo recalls a deeply moving incident that happened in a Christian junior high camp where he served. One of the campers, a boy with spastic paralysis, was the object of heartless ridicule. When he would ask a question, the boys would deliberately answer in a halting, mimicking way. One night his cabin group chose him to lead the devotions before the entire camp. It was one more effort to have some ‘fun’ at his expense.

“Unashamedly the spastic boy stood up, and in his strained, slurred manner—each word coming with enormous effort—he said simply, ‘Jesus loves me—and I love Jesus!’ That was all. Conviction fell upon those junior-highers. Many began to cry. Revival gripped the camp. Years afterward, Campolo still meets men in the ministry who came to Christ because of that testimony.” (Source: Alice Gray [compiler], “Just a Kid With Cerebral Palsy,” *Stories for the Heart* [Sisters, Oreg.: Multnomah Books, 1996], pp. 60, 61.)

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The love of Jesus really does have the power to change everything. The young boy at the junior high camp had found the secret that makes life bearable and makes human beings changeable.

When we consider that Saul was persecuting God’s church while claiming to be a part of God’s family, it gives us pause. It was the Damascus road meeting with Jesus that started Paul’s transformation. For the first time he saw how much his behavior was hurting Jesus. He wanted to be transformed. He no longer wanted to accept his life as it had been. That’s the effect that Jesus has on those who look into His face.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

The apostle Paul is one of the most famous Bible characters. Next to Jesus, he is perhaps the most widely quoted of all biblical writers. Most kids will know something of Paul’s life story—his brushes with death, breaking out of jail by earthquake, being bitten by snakes, whippings, etc. However, most of your students may not know about Paul’s former life. Spend some time detailing his former exploits to give the backdrop to his awesome conversion.

Barnabas plays a very critical role in ushering Paul into his ministry. Barnabas’ name means “son of consolation,” and he truly lives up to his name. He is willing to put his reputation and “street cred” on the line to protect Paul. Ananias also comes in for high praise for his willingness to listen to God when He tells him to go to Saul. This gives us some idea of just how scary a person Saul was before his conversion experience.

Notice that Jesus is central to Paul’s conversion, acceptance by the church brethren, and entry into ministry. Jesus is with Paul every step of the way, growing him into the man he was designed to be.

You may want to highlight the fact that Paul’s physical blindness followed his spiritual blindness. Blindness forces one to concentrate the mind. It heightens the other human senses. Perhaps Jesus wanted Paul to focus exclusively on Him without any distractions. This take-charge man who seemed to be indestructible was totally and completely helpless. He had to trust God.

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:* Psalm 51; Mark 5:1-15; John 4:17-29; Isaiah 30:15.

**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. **Long Time Coming.** As is often the case, what seems like a momentary occurrence is a long time in the making. Ellen White notes that God had been trying for some time to get through to Saul. He was convicted by Stephen’s sermon before the Jewish council. Sometimes he would toss and turn all night, fighting against the conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 116, 117).

When Jesus finally spoke to Saul for the first time
with His own voice, it was the culmination of a long effort to meet with Saul. Now Jesus had his undivided attention.

2. Baptized With the Spirit. Jesus directed Ananias to lay his hand on Saul that he might be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This baptism occurred about three days after Saul's Damascus road encounter with Jesus. Saul had accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, but he still needed the filling of the Holy Spirit to make the work of Christ effectual in his life.

Before leaving His disciples, Jesus made this promise: “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you” (John 16:13-15, NIV).

The work of growing up into Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul needed the Spirit to fit him for his life's work, and so do we.

3. Start Now. One of the beautiful parts of Paul's transformation narrative is his immediate willingness to begin working for Christ. He is not careful to move slowly into ministry; he jumps in with both feet. Acts 9:19, 20 tells us that after he had broken his three-day fast, he immediately preached about Jesus in synagogues that He was the Son of God. One can only imagine the effect that the sight of Paul must have had on the congregants.

There's an important point here. People who accept Jesus as their Savior must be allowed to engage in the work of leading others to Christ. They must not be given certain responsibilities until they are knowledgeable and grounded enough to meet those tasks, but they should not be held back from opportunities to tell their story.

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Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book The Acts of the Apostles. 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.
**Jesus to die for the sins of the world. Salvation is free and available to all who accept it.**

The apostle Paul accepted Jesus’ call to a new life. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he set about to fulfill the destiny that God had outlined for him. From a life driven by destruction God created a life driven by love. Paul walked with Jesus until they two became one and he could exclaim: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21, NIV).

One day if we’re faithful, we will see Paul in heaven. We will be able to ask him whether the journey was worth all that he suffered. Perhaps his answer will be the same as it was when he wrote to the fledgling Roman church: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18, NIV).

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**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

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

Invite the students to sit quietly with their eyes closed. Ask them to think of one change they’d like God to make in their lives. Tell them to focus on something that would help them to have a deeper relationship with God. Ask the students to pray silently for God’s help to make the change they seek.

After a minute or so, close with a prayer of thanks to God for answers to your prayers.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

God is on a mission to save all humanity from the ravages of sin. In truth, He has already done so. God went the distance, the extra mile, when sent His Son Jesus to die for the sins of the world. Salvation is free and available to all who accept it.

The apostle Paul accepted Jesus’ call to a new life. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he set about to fulfill the destiny that God had outlined for him. From a life driven by destruction God created a life driven by love. Paul walked with Jesus until they two became one and he could exclaim: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21, NIV).

One day if we’re faithful, we will see Paul in heaven. We will be able to ask him whether the journey was worth all that he suffered. Perhaps his answer will be the same as it was when he wrote to the fledgling Roman church: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18, NIV).

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1. Fundamental Belief No. 11.
2. Fundamental Belief No. 1.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Acts of the Apostles*, chapters 12, 13, 14.

*A special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* 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

Jesus’ first words to Simon Peter were “Come, follow me” (Mark 1:17). His final words to him were “You must follow me” (John 21:22). In between those commands Peter’s colorful life flourishes with essential life lessons for all who would strive to follow Jesus.

Peter was a fisherman when he first met Jesus. That encounter with Jesus radically redefined the trajectory of Peter’s life. Jesus gave Peter a new name—the “rock.” But more than that Jesus gave him a new life. Peter was certainly never perfect, but he was transformed into the character of Christ. Peter gave his life to proclaim the good news of a risen Christ. He was the recognized leader among Jesus’ disciples. He was the first great voice to share the gospel during and after Pentecost. He most likely knew Mark and gave him information for the Gospel of Mark. And finally, he wrote the books of 1 and 2 Peter.

This lesson focuses on Peter. Given the colorful stories, engaging personality, and personal writings of Peter, there are many directions you could take this study. The primary story of this lesson recounts the deliverance of Peter from prison. Thus the emphasis of this lesson will be on miracles and the miraculous. Intertwined in the narrative are lessons about grace and love. For when Jesus chooses His followers, He isn’t looking for perfect people; He is looking for real folk who can be changed by His love.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Hear the story of Peter’s miraculous deliverance from prison. (Know)
• See Peter as a real person—marked by both success and failure. (Feel)
• Have an opportunity to respond to God’s desire to perform miracles in them, just as He did in Peter. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Miracles and the miraculous
• Grace
• Love is . . .

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

As an alternate activity, use this scenario:

Assign students the following roles from the story of Peter’s deliverance from prison: Peter, two soldiers, an angel, two guards, believers who were gathered at Mary’s house to pray, and Rhoda. Have the students act out the story as you read Acts 12:1-18.

Illustration

Our story begins in Rome, July 19, A.D. 64, when
Nero, a lunatic emperor, torched his own city.

It was common knowledge in that day that Nero hated Rome’s architectural layout. The inner-city streets were too narrow; the buildings were dilapidated. When foreign dignitaries came to visit Rome, Nero was embarrassed to give them a tour of his town.

So Nero constructed a model of an improved, symmetrical Rome. But Nero knew that his ambition would never be realized—unless, of course, by some stroke of fate the old city would be destroyed. Although it could not be proved, public opinion held that on the night of July 19 this demented dictator coaxed fate along and set his city ablaze.

According to the historical account, when the flames subsided in places, Nero commanded his men to reignite the fire. Out of Rome’s smoldering debris, the phrase “Nero fiddled while Rome burned” was coined.

Imagine the protests that were sparked by this act of arson. Incensed Roman citizens rallied against Nero demanding retribution. Feeling the heat, Nero claimed, “The Christians did it. They have destroyed our beloved city in hopes of building another city for themselves.” He then commanded, “Soldiers, arrest all Christians and throw them in the dungeon.”

In their commentary on 1 Peter, Pastor Doug Murren and Barb Shurin explain: “Having his soldiers arrest the Christians en masse at their meeting places, Nero not only lent credence to his monstrous lie, but also cleverly and diabolically got the Roman senators and citizens off his back. This marked the beginning of the Christians’ hiding and meeting in the catacombs under the city—the approximate time when 1 Peter was written.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Keep this historical context in mind when you read 1 and 2 Peter as well as the stories of Peter in the book of Acts. It was a time of severe persecution when Christians were fed to half-starved lions for sport. Most Christians were running for their lives, just praying to survive. Because of Peter’s unique relationship to Jesus, as well as his own story of imprisonment and persecution, his voice rings a credible call to remain faithful to God—no matter the circumstances.

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.

• Acts 12:1-23—What is the most unbelievable story of a miracle that you have ever heard? How does it compare to the story of Peter’s escape from prison? Why do you think God freed Peter? In verse 17 who is the “James” that Peter is talking about (see Galatians 1:18, 19)? Why would Peter mention him specifically? Why do you think that God allowed James to die (Acts 12:2-11) and yet miraculously saved Peter?

Reflect: What “jail” in your life are you praying that God would help you to escape? In your mind, would God’s deliverance for you be any less miraculous than it was for Peter? Why or why not?

• 1 Peter—Suffering through the “painful trial” (1 Peter 4:12), Christians were hurting. Picture the dispersed Christians who are being hunted. Imagine Sister Martha or Brother Nicodemus holed up in some hovel with other believers. Their lives are endangered, and when you’re dealing with someone who is on the brink of death, you don’t talk about trivial matters. You talk about life and death stuff. You concentrate on what really matters. Scan through the book of 1 Peter and find passages that illustrate the life-and-death nature of Peter’s message.

• 2 Peter—The theme of 2 Peter varies from that of 1 Peter. The second letter addresses the issue of laxity in the church—which comes as a result of defective doctrine. For example, one of the stalwart teachings in question centered on the Second Coming. “Where is this ‘coming’?” the scoffers asked. “Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:4). Peter answers (verse 9): “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Scan through the book of 2 Peter and identify other doctrines that were being challenged.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to help sort out some of the characters in the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

• Herod Agrippa I—“It was about this time that
praying” (Acts 12:12, NIV). Scholars suggest that Mary’s home was the headquarters of the Christian church. It has also been suggested that it was in Mary’s home where Jesus and His disciples partook of the Last Supper. Notice that in this story, her home served as a meeting place for the believers to pray. When they faced impossible odds, they turned to God for help.

- John Mark—John Mark, more commonly referred to as Mark, wrote the Gospel of Mark. He was a helpful companion to three influential leaders in the early church—Barnabas, Paul, and Peter. His Gospel is one of the shortest in the New Testament.

King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church . . .” (Acts 12:1, NIV). Four generations of the Herod dynasty are mentioned in the Bible: Herod the Great murdered the children at the time of Jesus’ birth; Herod Antipas was involved in Jesus’ trial and John the Baptist’s death; Herod Agrippa I murdered the apostle James and is the ruler referred to in Acts 12; and finally, Herod Agrippa II was one of Paul’s judges. Herod Agrippa I (grandson of Herod the Great and brother of Herodias—the woman responsible for the death of John the Baptist) enjoyed modest favor among the Jews because his grandmother (Miriamne) was Jewish. Although as a young man he had been imprisoned by Tiberias, he was later trusted by Rome and assigned the governorship of most of Palestine. His fatal error came while on a visit to Caesarea when the people called him a god and he accepted their praise. “Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12:23, NIV). Like his grandpa, uncle, and son after him, Herod Agrippa I was exposed to truth, but he would not accept it. Religion was important only as it bolstered his political aspirations.

- Mary the Mother of John Mark—“When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying” (Acts 12:12, NIV). Scholars suggest that Mary’s home was the headquarters of the Christian church. It has also been suggested that it was in Mary’s home where Jesus and His disciples partook of the Last Supper. Notice that in this story, her home served as a meeting place for the believers to pray. When they faced impossible odds, they turned to God for help.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students**

Education theorists suggest that learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Superior learning is collaborative and social rather than competitive and isolated. This principle rings true in the traditional classroom; it is also true in the Sabbath School setting. Working with others tends to heighten involvement in learning. Sharing one’s own ideas and responding to others’ perspectives focuses concentration and deepens understanding. So, as much as possible in your context, encourage reciprocity and cooperation among your students.

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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 Acts of the Apostles. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

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

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
and Peter. The material in his Gospel is primarily attributed to Peter. Mark’s role as an assistant seems to have served him well as an astute observer. He listened to Peter's stories about Jesus over and over and was one of the first to put these accounts into writing.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Refer to a story in the news that some interpret as a miracle. Discuss whether or not our interpretation of events taints our understanding of miracles. For example, you could refer to the news story of the U.S. Airways plane crash on January 15, 2009. According to news sources on the Internet: “With both engines out, a cool-headed pilot maneuvered his crowded jetliner over New York City and ditched it in the frigid Hudson River on Thursday, and all 155 on board were pulled to safety as the plane slowly sank. It was, the governor said, ‘a miracle on the Hudson.’”² Compare and contrast these modern-day miracles with the miracles in the life of Peter.

Summary

Referring to the story of Peter’s escape from prison, Bible scholar William Barclay writes: “In this story we do not necessarily see a miracle. It may well be the story of a thrilling rescue; but, however it happened, the hand of God was most definitely in it.”³

Points for closing discussion:

- Would you agree or disagree with Barclay’s statement? Why or why not?
- Share a story from your life where you knew “the hand of God” was at work.
- Do you suppose that miracles are happening all around us—every day—that we miss?
- What is the most important lesson that we can learn from the life of Peter?

² As quoted at abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?id=6606452 &section=news/national_world.
the epicenter for missions

**PREPARING TO TEACH**

I. SYNOPSIS

Can you imagine what a daunting task the early church may have felt to spread the gospel to the world? Well, actually, Luke doesn’t tell us that they viewed it as daunting at all! What is clear is that in the midst of persecution and hardships, these early believers were full of joy—and they were unstoppable. They were so infected with the love of Christ that their enthusiasm was contagious. When we speak of mission work today, we seem to feel the weight of all that needs to be done “so that we can go home.” But that attitude does not seem to exist in these chapters of Acts as we read of the lead-up to and the first missionary journey of Paul.

The believers in Antioch were so infectious in their faith that two interesting events occurred: (1) News of their faith reached Jerusalem, and a group of elders came to check them out. (2) The people of Antioch coined the name “Christians” to describe these believers.

God picked just the right place to launch His people full throttle into missionary work. Antioch was at the crossroads of the Roman Empire. The believers there were a multicultural, international group. And they appointed two perfectly suited individuals to “go”: Barnabas, an elder filled with compassion and with the gift of encouragement; and Paul, a highly educated Pharisee and Jew who was also a Roman citizen and a Hellenist. What a team! What a community of believers!

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Explore the challenges of taking the gospel message to nonbelievers. (Know)
- Discover how God empowers His messengers through the Holy Spirit and through the faith community. (Feel)
- Ask God to reveal His purpose for their life and commit to following that call. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Witnessing/sharing our faith
- God’s call for the church and the individual member—“the Great Commission” *
- How to approach nonbelievers with the message of hope

**TEACHING**

I. GETTING STARTED

**Activity**

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. Ask the students whether they took time on their own to finish the sentences. If not, then do the exercise together and discuss the answers.

Ask: “Did it surprise any of you to learn that we still have more than half the world to evangelize 21 centuries later? Explain.”

**Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

A little more than 100 years ago, near Detroit, Michigan, a young man had a factory that built a new-fangled invention called the “automobile,” more deri-
sively referred to as a “horseless carriage.” The new invention allowed people to travel farther and with less concern than with a horse. The idea of driving yourself around caught on quickly—especially among the affluent.

But that wasn’t enough for Henry Ford: he wanted millions of people to be able to afford to buy his car. He refined the manufacturing process until automobiles could be assembled quickly on a production line. Using standardized parts and, initially, only one paint color, Ford’s “Model A” and subsequent “Model T” brought the price of driving within reach of those millions of people which, of course, led to the auto-dependent world in which we find ourselves today. But Ford started with a goal: that his product would have that wide reach.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

Nearly 2,000 years ago, the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth set for themselves a huge challenge: to bring a new means of salvation and being right with God to a world desperately in need of both. You can live in many parts of the world without an automobile, but you can’t see God without Jesus. The disciples used themselves and their lives to bring this message to the people of their day. Now, it’s our turn to live out the Great Commission and make the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob accessible to all. What means and methods does our church have available today to see the Great Commission fulfilled in our lifetime? How has God moved upon you to participate in this great ministry?

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.*

- Time and again throughout the Bible, we see how God has taken bleak circumstances and turned them around for His purpose and, yes, for His glory. Whether it’s Joseph languishing in a pit on his way to Egyptian slavery and a prison cell, or Moses’ exile from the palace of Pharaoh, or, as we see today, the scattering of the early believers from Jerusalem, there’s a way God can turn tragedy into opportunity. Write down an example of such a change from your life, or the life of someone close to you.

- The people in Antioch who believed weren’t just Jews, but also Gentiles—people for whom the God of Israel was supposedly a stranger and unapproachable without their first being circumcised and brought into the Jewish fold. But these self-appointed evangelists didn’t use yardsticks; they just told the good news, and people responded. Do you see a similar opportunity around you today? Are there groups of students or coworkers you can go to and reach?

- In Antioch Saul and Barnabas spent a year teaching others before they were called to the mission field. Is there preparation you might be doing now to make yourself ready for what the Lord might have you do in a year or two?

- Throughout their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas went first to the local synagogues and spoke to those most likely to respond. Yet others were hearing and responding as well. Is there a parallel you can think of in your experience? Does your church’s outreach have unintended, but pleasant, consequences?

- In Pisidian Antioch the disciples spoke so well that they were invited back for a second Sabbath’s worship to discuss their ideas. Can you think of ways to express your faith that keep people asking questions?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Acts 7; 8:1-3; 9; 18:1-10; Romans 15:14-22; Ephesians 3:7-13; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.*

Sharing Context and Background

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

It is interesting to see how God works as we see Saul of Tarsus come to be chosen to team up with Barnabas to launch the first missionary journey. First of all, the persecution of Stephen is mentioned as a reason why the believers had fled Judea and scattered throughout the region. Remember, Saul was a ring-leader in persecuting the early church, and history reveals that he stood holding the tunics of those who stoned Stephen to death. While Saul was headed off to chase down the believers as they fled Jerusalem and Judea, God found him, blinded him, and later told him that he would take the message of salvation to the Gentiles.
Paul was uniquely qualified for the task; first, because God had called him, and second, because he was a Pharisee and leader among the Jews, but also a Roman citizen. He was a Hellenist. He didn't live in the confines of a Jewish-only community, but was raised a Jew among the “heathen.” He was both religious and worldly in his outlook. He spoke Greek and Hebrew.

It is also noteworthy that God launched the missionary work from Antioch. This community of believers was international and multicultural in their makeup.

Both the body of believers and the individuals within that body were united in their joy to spread the word throughout the whole region, not being intimidated or put off by cultural or ethnic differences. Christ had come to them, and their joy was such that they wanted to take Him to others without any barriers in their mind about the “heathen.”

Another irony is how Paul handled a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus (also known as Elymas) while he, Barnabas, and John Mark were on the island of Paphos. When Bar-Jesus tried to stop them from sharing the message of salvation with the governor there, Paul rebuked him and told him that he would be struck with blindness. Just as God stopped Paul from interfering in the spread of the gospel, Paul called upon God to do the same thing to Elymas. Elymas wouldn’t be permanently blind, but how like God is that! The governor received salvation and perhaps later Elymas himself came around to the truth.

God certainly has a highly developed sense of irony, and He uses all our experiences to strengthen our faith when we are heavily tried and bombarded by Satan. When He calls us, He equips us to serve Him, and this strengthens our faith and our joy in our relationship with Him.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Distribute paper and pencils to the students. Ask them to think about the people they come in contact with outside of their church family. As individuals come to mind, ask them to write their names down. Then ask them to write down anything they have done to

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Sentence Openers

A great way to warm the students up to discussing the topics at hand without having them feel like you’re pressing them to participate is to prepare a few sentence openers before class. Then when you are ready to open up a discussion time, start with your sentence opener, but don't finish the sentence. Ask the students to complete the sentence. This should help get the group buzzing in no time.

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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 Acts of the Apostles. 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.
express their faith with this person(s). Ask: “Do you make it a habit to pray for them? Do you share Christ openly and verbally? Or do you witness by example?” Encourage the students to intentionally commit themselves to witnessing to the nonbelievers in their lives.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

The first-century believers were so infected with the love of Jesus that they couldn’t keep quiet. Their joy spilled out into their community and into the regions beyond. In each city where Barnabas and Paul established a group of believers, whatever obstacles this group encountered, they remained firm in their faith. They were marked by their joy and by the encouragement and support they offered to Paul and Barnabas. In each place, Acts records that their numbers increased, and Paul and Barnabas appointed elders and deacons to care for the believers there. Each of these new churches offered comfort to the apostles, and they collected offerings for the believers in Jerusalem who were struggling. These acts were evidence of their newfound faith in Christ. Persecution didn’t stop them, but only strengthened their ties to God and to each other. That’s what the church at any age should look like.

* Fundamental Belief No. 12.
us and them

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story that frames this week’s lesson illustrates the central purpose of our mission and describes how we can negotiate through our problems with politics, personal preferences, traditions, and practices. By this time in the life of the church the Gentiles were breaking down the doors to know who Christ was, but some Jews felt strongly that in order to be a follower of Christ you must also be a good Jew. The practices and traditions of the Jews became so convoluted over time that it was hard for them to separate truth from tradition. So the church had a meeting—a “General Conference session” or board meeting to deal with the growing problems.

Paul, Barnabas, and Peter were in attendance while James presided over the meeting. The discussion was vigorous and passionate, because church and faith and eternal life are things that matter and are worth getting excited about. But in this storied moment, gospel minds prevail and embrace the basics of their faith with resolute conviction: the grace of Christ poured out at Calvary and made certain by the resurrection is a gift to all mankind, given freely and with no preference to race, gender, age, or social class. Another key feature that made this meeting so successful was the way Paul and Barnabas told stories of the miraculous way God was reaching the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). These stories sealed the meeting with a sense of renewed purpose and commitment to the gospel commission. This lesson can be a key moment to face the hard truth of politics and problems among believers; but moreover, to rekindle the heart of our mission through storytelling, and reminding ourselves why we are here.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• See how prejudice and preferences shape all people. (Know)
• Sense a unity of purpose based on God’s grace to all. (Feel)
• Choose to be devoted to the gospel commission. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Prejudice
• Church
• Missions

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. The voting activity should incite various opinions based upon their experience and perspective. To avoid stu-
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

What lesson or truth do you think this story illustrates? What is the meaning of this story from the perspective of Kreisler? What about from the perspective of the man who bought the violin and who was just going to keep it on display? What does this story teach us about how we should function as individual believers? How should we live as a body or a church?

Kreisler came to the same conclusion that many of the New Testament believers came to, and that was: there is something that is worth everything. The early church had problems, but their biggest problem was the amazing growth and impact they were having on the region. As a result, problems emerged. Read the story of how this band of believers functioned as a church.

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 underline what you think are key phrases to understanding what this passage is about.
- Draw a circle around all the individuals and people groups mentioned in this story.
- Describe what you see as the social and religious dynamics that are going on in the New Testament church at this time.
- Who are these “certain men” who demanded that Gentile believers be circumcised? What do you see as their spiritual focus?
- Why did Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem, and why do you think they went through Gentile territory on their way to counsel with the apostles in Jerusalem?
- What is the yoke that Peter referred to in verse 10?
- After Peter spoke to the assembled leaders of the Christian church, Paul and Barnabas added their stories of Gentile believers they had met in their journeys. How do you think these stories impressed the congregation? How are such stories important to the decisions we make?
- What do you think God is trying to say to us today in this story?

More Questions for Teachers:

- When people work together for a cause that is worthwhile, there will be differences. How have you seen these differences tear churches apart or bring them together?
- The center of the controversy was about the whether the Gentiles should keep the traditions of the Jews (eating meat that was kosher, keeping the festivals, etc.) as part of their faith in Christ. How much of that is what Christ called them to teach (Matthew 28:19, 20) and how much was about getting them to conform?
- What traditions do you have in your culture that...
One of the basic arguments centered around food. It was common for food to be used in religious rituals but then sold in the market afterward. Then there was the manner in which food was prepared. God instructed the Jews to slaughter the animals that they would eat in such a way that the blood was drained from the animal. Disease (and in the minds of Jews—

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

It is likely that more than 10 years had passed since Christ ascended into heaven, and the church was growing by leaps and bounds. Peter and James were focused on teaching and reteaching the Jews and those closely connected with the faith of Israel. Paul and Barnabas set out to share the gospel with those who were not Jews, but Gentiles.

By this time there was somewhat of a structure and an agreed-upon process for the problems the young church faced. There had been seasons of famine and shortage of money. There were certain groups that felt neglected (Acts 6). On one hand there was the blossoming church filled with disciples of Jesus and the resident leadership of Pharisees and Sadducees. The adversarial elements that fought against Christ had not gone away and would need to be addressed (especially in light of Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 and Stephen’s rebuke in Acts 7). So arguments would arise.

One of the basic arguments centered around food. It was common for food to be used in religious rituals but then sold in the market afterward. Then there was the manner in which food was prepared. God instructed the Jews to slaughter the animals that they would eat in such a way that the blood was drained from the animal. Disease (and in the minds of Jews—

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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 Acts of the Apostles. 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.

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

*From PowerPoint to Story*

Storytelling. This theme will return again and again if you are hearing anything master teachers are saying about how people learn. The most pervasive, memorable teaching tool other than personal experience is through story. In fact, entire corporations are moving away from PowerPoint presentations and bullet-listed charts and graphics to telling stories in their boardrooms. Why? Because people don’t change because of facts. They are transformed through experience, and storytellers usher you into the realm of thinking and feeling that is beyond becoming convinced something is true; they are convicted to live by it.

Look at this week’s lesson and see how Paul and Barnabas turned this heated meeting around with stories from the front lines (Acts 15:12).
sin) was carried through the blood. But Gentiles who became believers in Jesus had no experience nor did they see the need to practice such things, and thus, controversy ensued.

The controversy in our story this week was held by “Judaizers,” who held that in order for Gentile believers to become “true members of Israel” they had to be circumcised. Maybe the prejudices and tensions between Jews and Gentiles were still so strong that these little arguments were simply tangible ways to vent their prejudice. Either way, controversies are always a part of any group:

“In every society or organized group of people two types are always represented: the conservative, looking to the past, and the progressive, looking toward the future. The ultra Jewish element in the church held that there could be no salvation outside of Israel; hence, that all the Gentile disciples must receive circumcision and observe the Jewish regulations” (The Story of the Christian Church, Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, p. 26).

But this story is a testimony to how the church can stay on track and focused on mission in the midst of problems. They overcame this problem by: (1) Peter’s reminder of how God’s grace comes to all people the same way, through faith; (2) Paul and Barnabas’ heart-warming stories of the miracles God was doing on behalf of the Gentile world; (3) James, the leader of the church at that time, taking a bold stand for the heart of the mission instead of letting little problems sidetrack the church. What might this look like today?

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

Give each student a 3x5 card or a small piece of paper and something to write with. Then give the following instructions:

“We are a church, and we forget sometimes about what matters most to Christ. But we need to move forward and be able to agree upon what our mission is. So I want you to write out in 30 words or less what you think our mission is as a local church. Begin.”

When they are done, set all the statements where everyone can see them. Then you can debrief with them:

“What were some common elements you saw in all the statements of mission? What were some of the most obvious differences? Now if we were to condense these together and agree upon one statement to work toward, what might be different in this church?”

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

This week’s story is not at first the brightest portrayal of Christians—arguing over whether the outsiders (Gentiles) should be circumcised or not. It seems petty, but it was a real issue then. How they negotiated through it as a body of believers is what is truly inspiring! They found the core of what they were all about. They reminded themselves how they became disciples of Christ. Peter must have remembered how many times he stumbled—now he was a leader. James, the brother of Jesus, had his share of problems. Paul listed his in his letter. All of these people returned to the basic beliefs they knew to be true and worked together. Peter gave his remarks. Paul and Barnabas told stories. James closed the issue and refocused everyone back on the task of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. What part will you play in this church today?

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 Acts of the Apostles*, chapters 19, 20, 21.

*A special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* 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 call to share the good news of God’s forgiveness and His gift of salvation is a personal call (Isaiah 6:1-9). Two thousand years ago we received the Great Commission to go into the entire world to preach the gospel to all peoples and to make disciples of the nations. This world is not some untouched corner of the Amazon jungle. This world is our neighborhoods, our schools, our workplace, our friends, our families. It is also a world in which half the population lives in urban areas as of 2009 and about 70 percent will be city dwellers by 2050.¹

Ellen White’s words resonate with as much relevance today as they did years ago: “The Greeks sought after wisdom, yet the message of the cross was to them foolishness because they valued their own wisdom more highly than the wisdom that comes from above” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 240). This begets the question of how we can share the gospel in this increasingly urban world imbued with hubris from an overabundance of information, technology, and medical advancements.

Our youth live in a culture that espouses living and believing whatever you want as long as it is right for you. Truth has become relative. That is why simply teaching our kids to believe in the right things isn’t going to be enough to enable them to stand strong and make right choices in today’s culture. It is critical that our youth are taught skills that will empower them to be firmly grounded in the Word of God. This will strengthen them spiritually, morally, and emotionally to stand firm against a world in which philosophies of pluralism and relativism impact them in a very real way. Ellen White emphasizes: “The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward with faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 230). Our youth need to be so thoroughly convinced of the truth that they will take a stand for it regardless of the consequences.

In these times of loneliness and despair, we have been given a great and precious gift. It is our God-given responsibility to stay undeterred and keep sharing the message of freedom and an abundant life to a world crying out for hope and belonging.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Recognize some of the barriers to accepting and believing God’s message of salvation. (Know)
• Experience the urgency to be firmly grounded in their beliefs so that they are prepared to face the inevitable challenges that come with following God’s command to spread His message of salvation. (Feel)
• Adopt Bible study skills and apply them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Evangelism/outreach and service
• Conviction/knowing God
• How to witness
• Communication
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 and guide them to understand the concept of how beliefs influence our behaviors through the following activity:

In the novel Sophie's Choice, by William Styron, a Polish woman, Sophie Zawistowska, is arrested by the Nazis and sent to the Auschwitz death camp. Upon arriving, she must make a choice: one of her children will be spared the gas chamber if she chooses which one. She must choose or lose both.

Divide the class into pairs and have them discuss what Sophie should do, and then share their thoughts with the rest of the class. What did they base their decision on?

Now introduce a belief about action related to the story: After much anguish, Sophie finally makes a choice. She chooses her daughter who is smaller and younger to be sent to her death because she believes that her son, being older and stronger, would have a better chance of surviving the rigors of internment and war.

If you shared this belief, how would it affect the decision you made?

**Illustration**

Share this illustration in your words with your class:

There is a ministry called Bible League that provides Bibles and plants churches in many war-torn or impoverished places, to people who “hunger and thirst” for God's Word. People such as Asel, a former Muslim who accepted Jesus as her Savior after a Bible League worker shared God’s Word with her. Kagiso, from South Africa, studied the Bible every day and later brought her parents into the knowledge of Christ, too. Marjan broke away from the hold that occultist practices had on him through studying God's Word diligently.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

Followers of God believe that the Bible is more than just a book. God’s people value the power that the Bible imparts. We believe that the Word of God is not only useful in challenging non-Christians on their worldview, but also for us to challenge ourselves concerning our own views.

If you wanted to read the Bible now, where would be the nearest place you could get one? Your home? Your desk? Or even in your schoolbag? In many countries, it’s easy to get hold of a Bible. However, in many other places, Bibles are hard to come by, and Christians living there either have to travel very far to read the Bible or face persecution if caught with one. In places such as these, people value the Bible and treasure every opportunity they can get to read it.

How important is the Bible for you? If you had to walk for an hour to get to a Bible, would you still go to read it?

**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.

- Circle the different cities mentioned in this story. What happened at each venue?
- In every place, Paul preached God's Word blatantly, with passion and courage. However, he achieved varying degrees of success. What can we learn from this?
- The people in Athens were not uneducated. They valued the pursuit of knowledge. They spent “all their time discussing the latest ideas.” Why, then, did they reject the truth that Paul was sharing with them? What did their actions reveal about their beliefs and values?
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?

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

- **Mark 16:15**—God divinely commissioned everyone who has ever heard or read this command to “preach the gospel” and draw people into following Him. What does it mean to “preach the gospel”?
- **Matthew 7:24-26**—In this story of the wise and foolish builders, Christ uses this analogy of house building to describe two categories of people. On the surface, both houses appear the
same but without the right foundation (James 3:13-17) their end can be disastrous. A good foundation is daily obedience (Psalm 111:10), service, Bible study, and prayer. What kind of foundation are you building your “house” on?

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

1. **Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens.** Thessalonica was one of the wealthiest and most influential cities in Macedonia. Athens was the center for Greek culture, philosophy, and education. According to *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Berea was a “small Macedonian city about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. The city was of far less commercial importance than Thessalonica” (vol. 6, p. 344). Are there any similarities in the way Paul’s preaching was received and the way God’s Word is received in today’s megacities?

2. **The Stoics and the Epicureans.** The Stoics valued logic over emotions and, as a result, they attempted to attain a harmonious life by suppressing their desire for pleasure. In contrast, the Epicureans valued the pursuit of happiness or pleasure as the primary goal in life. What values did Christ impart and how was that reflected in His actions while on earth?

3. **“May we know?”** *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* sheds light on the nuance of this question: “An idiomatic expression, which may here be rendered: ‘Is it possible for us to know?’—a question that may have been courteous, sarcastic, or ironical. The Epicureans and Stoics had no doubts about their own ability to understand all that Paul might say to them but they were obviously eager to hear about his strange teaching” (vol. 6, p. 349). What are your beliefs or notions about God and the Bible? Are they derived from hearsay or diligent and humble self-study?

4. **Dionysius, Damaris, and a number of others.**

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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 Acts of the Apostles*. 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.
Although the majority of people in Athens did not accept and believe Paul's words, there were a few who believed. As a result, a church was founded. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary proposes that the church in 2 Corinthians 1:1 ("the saints which are all in Achaia") is the result of the conversion that Dionysius and the others experienced. What can you infer about God's plans from this?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Gather the class for a role-playing session.

Hand out four or five scenarios to the groups (e.g., using another person's belongings without permission; being an unpopular, bullied child; someone the class dislikes wanting to join in your game; your close friends deciding to do something you do not agree with).

Ask each group to create a short role play to enact the scene without considering the words of Jesus. Then ask the groups to create another short role play on the same scenario but this time keeping in line with the values that Jesus espouses.

Discuss the main differences between the scenes.

Summary

Share the following summary in your own words:

When there are no standards, everybody thinks they are right, and there can be a lot of misunderstanding and arguments. It’s difficult to compare anything unless you have a standard of comparison. The Bible is the standard to evaluate the Christian's life. When we compare ourselves with God's law, with God, and with Christ, we realize that none of us measures up. None of us can meet His standards. We learn what the wise thing to do is, as well as the unwise. The Bible is a standard for living. But in order to live our lives accordingly, we need to know the standards from our personal experience. We need to look to Christ, read the Bible, and search the truth for ourselves and not simply rely on the hearsay of others.

However, no matter how far we fall short, Jesus has already bridged the gap between us and God so that He can accept us according to His standard of righteousness.

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* * *

2 www.bible-league.org/blcorp/changedlives/article.asp?id=211.
4 www.bible-league.org/blcorp/changedlives/article.asp?id=212.

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 Acts of the Apostles, chapters 22, 23, 24.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Paul had a complicated mission. He was sent to teach the Gentiles about Jesus and His sacrifice, people who did not know God at all. He had a responsibility to show them the character of Jesus in a way that they would understand. He had to give “milk” to the baby Christians and more solid sustenance to the more mature believers. He had to balance encouragement with reprimands for bad behavior. He had to meet the needs of people from every walk of life. It certainly was not an easy calling!

One of the basic doctrines that Paul felt was important to teach was that of Jesus’ second coming. He wanted to encourage the new believers with the knowledge that Jesus would come again, the dead would be raised, and all those who accepted Jesus’ sacrifice on their behalf would live forever with Him.

When we have heard the good news repeatedly, the effect seems to wear off. Many of us do not fully appreciate what this really means in our lives. Many of us have been raised since infants knowing that Jesus will come again, but we fail to see what life would be like without that hope. In fact, we seem to take it for granted.

When we can see what God is really giving us, it gives us a new realization of our responsibility toward others in their spiritual walks. Service becomes central to our lives, and we realize that how we represent God matters immensely in the lives of unbelievers or baby Christians.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand why the good news really is so good. (Know)
• Sense a responsibility toward others in their spiritual walk. (Feel)
• Choose to see the service opportunities as well as the difference that our hope in Jesus gives us. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Second coming of Christ*
• Service

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Ask the students to imagine that there is no hope after they die. Let them imagine that Jesus is not coming again and that once we die there is nothing else.

What would they do differently in their lives if this were the case? Would they feel a responsibility toward others? How would they feel about helping others? How would they feel about their relationships, knowing that nothing would last longer than life on this earth?
Now, let them imagine that they are being told “the good news” that Jesus is coming, and that there is hope for living eternally? How would they feel now?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
There was a young teacher in an inner-city school. She felt frustrated because the students just didn’t seem to care about learning. She felt as if she were beating her head against the wall. Every other week, when she left school to drive home, she would find her car vandalized.

She knew that her students were angry because they were poor. They were disrespected. They felt like the world was against them. While she was tempted to be angry at the students who ravaged her car, she realized that their anger wasn’t at her so much as it was at the world. She decided to use their anger to help them learn.

The next day she made a deal with her class. If every single student in her class scored 80 percent or higher, she would permit them to “egg” her car as much as they liked for one day. If they scored 90 percent or higher, she would allow them to slash her tires until they looked like rubber bands! The students agreed, amused at the teacher’s tactic.

True to their word, they didn’t vandalize the car again that semester. Instead, they studied as hard as they could. At the end of the semester, the teacher was delighted to find that every single student scored over 90 percent!

The week before, the teacher’s old car gave out and she had to replace it with a new car. But she wouldn’t take back her promise. The students joyfully demolished her car! The car was never the same again. It smelled like rotten eggs forever after that day. But the teacher saw it as a reminder of how her students had finally learned!

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
Paul had some difficult students to teach as well. He had people from all walks of life, from every religious background, all looking to him to learn about this Jewish Messiah who came for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. It wasn’t easy, but just like the young teacher he had to find a way to reach these people where they were. There were specific things that Paul felt were important for these baby Christians to understand.

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 is the reason for Paul’s letter?
• What things does Paul encourage the Thessalonians to do in their spiritual growth?
• Why do you think Paul’s explanation of what will happen at the Second Coming was so important to these people?
• How would it have affected their lives on a personal level to have this information? How would they see things differently?
• How might this knowledge change how they feel? How would it encourage them?
• If you had no hope of a resurrection in Jesus, how would it change your outlook on life?

Additional Questions for Teachers
• What practical advice did Paul have for the Thessalonians?
• What positive reinforcement did Paul give them?
• In what ways can we see Paul being gentle with them?
• What encouragement did he give?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 13.

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

Thessalonica was a principal city in Macedonia as well as a primary port. It was founded in 316 B.C., during the reign of Alexander the Great. It became a very important city under the Roman rule as well. The Christian church there was the second church founded in Europe, and Paul wrote this letter from Athens in A.D. 51 or 52. Acts 18 tells us a little bit surrounding the time that 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written.

Paul had great success in winning converts to Christianity, but he also faced great opposition. He had to leave the new Thessalonian church before it had become firmly established because of the opposition. He was worried for the new converts, though,
afraid that they would be persecuted. Paul sent Timothy to them to encourage them and to report back to Him on how they were doing. When Timothy reported back that the new converts were standing firm in their faith, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, his letter to them.

Paul was writing to this new church to encourage them to live holy lives. He wrote 2 Thessalonians not long after 1 Thessalonians as a “PS” of sorts, explaining what they had misunderstood. Mainly, they thought that Jesus would return in their lifetimes, and they were afraid that those who died before the event would not inherit eternal life. So in 1 Thessalonians, Paul addressed this issue.

In the Thessalonians’ zeal for the gospel, and to demonstrate their belief that Jesus’ coming was in the very near future, some of the members of the church stopped working their professions. They would have been a burden to those who were still working and an object of ridicule for unbelievers. This situation needed to be dealt with. So Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, insisting that they needed to continue working their regular jobs and not wait idly for Jesus to return. Paul outlined some of the things that had to take place before Jesus would return, namely the coming of the antichrist.

These letters to the Thessalonians give us a good view into what the early Christians were taught regarding some important doctrines, such as the resurrection. Many people worry that we have moved away from the original teachings of Christianity, but by reading Paul’s letters to the early churches, we are able to see exactly what Paul taught.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students to each think of a time or situation that makes them long for Jesus to come. Perhaps it is when they see horrible things happening on the
news on TV. Or maybe they long for Jesus to come when someone close to them dies or is in pain. Discuss these situations as well as what kinds of feelings they have surrounding them. Read the Key Text and say the following: “This verse tells us to encourage each other with these words. How do these words encourage you?”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Paul was teaching some new Christians some very important lessons about living a Christian life, and about our hope of Jesus coming again. Everyone is at a different level in their relationship with Jesus. Being a beginner doesn’t make a person less important or less loved, but it does give us a special responsibility to encourage and support that person. Sometimes we have the urge to judge someone by their actions or attitudes, but if we remember that they might be at a different level of understanding or at a different place in their relationship with God, we can be more patient and deal with them differently.

In all of our lives, it is comforting to remember that Jesus IS coming, and that the pain and sadness of this world will NOT last. Stick with it! Things are going to get better!

* Fundamental Belief No. 25.

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 Acts of the Apostles, chapters 25, 26.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Paul had to face great opposition when preaching the gospel. God not only used Paul to work miracles to guide the pagan population back to the true God, but He also gave him the courage he needed to face immense confrontation. Paul had to stand for what he knew was right, even if he had mobs chasing him down!

This lesson examines the courage of those who were willing to stand up for what was right in the face of an offended, angry majority. The majority was prejudiced against the Christian movement. Some hated Paul because he was affecting their profit in the sale of idols. Some hated Paul because he was adding to the Jewish belief system, a threat to the established power structure. Others had no personal reason to dislike Paul at all, but simply joined in on the public fervor, unwilling to be outside the safety of the majority’s approval.

God never said that standing for the right would make us popular or part of the majority’s clique. God did tell us, though, that He would be with us, that He would provide us with courage, and that we would be rewarded for our faith.

Facing opposition is never easy. It’s never comfortable. God never asks us to face opposition for no reason, either. There are people without the strength to stand up who need a champion. There are people loaded down with questions who need to see an answer in your relationship with God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand how a relationship with God gives us courage to face opposition. (Know)
- Sense a responsibility to stand for what the Holy Spirit tells us we must stand for. (Feel)
- Choose to live life courageously, living life to the fullest with God as our support. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Courage
- 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.

Give the students a list of causes and ask them to prioritize them. The first should be the one they would be willing to die for, and the last should be the one they simply don’t care about. Examples of causes could be: world peace, a cure for cancer, environmental issues, freedom of religion, rehabilitating criminals, educating people on the dangers of smoking, etc.

After the students have put the causes into the order that best represents their personal feelings, ask them why they ordered them the way they did. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. This
is meant to get them thinking about their own priorities and values.

Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks paid her fare and boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus home from work one night. She worked at a department store as a seamstress, and she was thankful to sink into a seat.

According to municipal law, Blacks and Whites were segregated in virtually every aspect of everyday life. On buses there were “colored sections” where non-White people were permitted to sit. When the “White section” filled up, the people sitting in the “colored section” were expected to give up their seats.

On this particular night, some Caucasian people boarded the bus and the bus driver, James Blake, ordered the four people seated in the “colored section” to vacate their seats. Three of them stood up, but Rosa Parks did not. Instead she scooted in to the window seat. When the bus driver asked her why she would not stand, she said, “I don’t think I should have to.”

“Are you going to stand up?” he asked.

“No,” she said.

“If you don’t, I’ll call the police and have you arrested,” he said.

“You may do that,” she replied. The police were called, and she was arrested.

Many years later, Mrs. Parks commented on that night: “People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was 42. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

Rosa Parks has gone down in history as a woman who was willing to “sit down” for what was right. Because of Mrs. Parks, and other courageous people like her, great advances were made in human rights. Generations after her have grown up in a much different America because of her decision not to give in.

God needs courageous people who are willing to stand up for what is right in the seemingly unimportant situations like a bus ride. He needs people who are not willing to compromise their beliefs or the peace of their conscience.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- What was the reason for Demetrius’ behavior toward Paul?
- Do you think that Paul was aware of why the city had been thrown into an uproar?
- Do you think that the city clerk was courageous in facing the mob? Why or why not?
- What do you think had a calming effect on the crowd?
- In the mob, it says that “most of the people did not even know why they were there.” What made them follow the group in this show of rage?

Additional Questions for Teachers

- Who began the riot, and why?
- Why do you think the majority of the people went along with the mob?
- Who acted in a courageous way? Defend your choice.

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Isaiah 44:6-23; Exodus 20:1-4.*

Sharing Context and Background

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

Ephesus was the home of the temple of Artemis—one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was built in 559 B.C., and there is evidence of earlier temples being built on the same site as early as the Bronze Age. Ephesus was an economically vibrant area, and merchants from all over Asia Minor were drawn to the temple of Artemis. The temple was constructed over a period of 220 years and was made of pure marble. Inside the temple was an idol of Artemis that, the story was told, had fallen from heaven. Some have suggested that the idol was carved out of an asteroid that “fell from heaven” and hit the earth.

The worship of Artemis was a very lucrative business. A large number of priests and priestesses lived in the temple. Coins were minted there and banking transactions were carried out. Festivities were cele-
brated each May in honor of the goddess’s birthday, and Ephesus was the destination of many pilgrimages.

Artemis was a Greek goddess, a virginal huntress, and goddess of the moon. She was mythically the daughter of Zeus and Leto. She was the twin sister of Apollo. Artemis was often depicted in a forest with a bow and arrow and accompanied by deer. She was often worshipped in contrasting ways—as virgin, wife, and mother. She developed as the combination of several different goddesses, but was known most commonly as Artemis or Diana. She was referred to as the Queen of Heaven.

Demetrius was a silversmith who made shrines of Artemis. He would have made a good amount of money from the many tourists, devotees, and pilgrims who came through Ephesus to see the magnificent temple and worship there.

Paul was preaching a dangerous message. He was preaching that idols could not aid their worshippers and that there was one God who would hear the prayers of His people, and of this God, it was a blasphemy to create an image. Many pagans were being converted, so many, in fact, that it was having an effect on the profits of the silversmiths who made shrines of the goddess!

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

As mentioned above, put up two signs that read “Agree” and “Disagree.” Ask the students to stand in a position between the two signs in response to some statements:

For example:

• “I would be willing to die for something I believed in.”
• “I think people are more important than ideas.”
• “I believe that God wants us to stand up for the truth.”

Ask the students why they chose the position they did. Is there anything that they are willing to stand for, no matter what the cost?

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 Acts of the Apostles. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

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

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

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Having the courage to stand for your beliefs in the face of opposition is not easy. Paul faced an entire city filled with devoted pagans with a financial interest in their goddess's temple. And we all know how seriously people take their money! God was with Paul, though, and protected him through it. In fact, God used a pagan official to calm down the crowd that wanted to kill him.

We can trust God to be with us and protect us when we stand up for what is right, even if we have to be the unpopular minority when we do so. God rewards us when we are loyal to Him, and He gives us the courage and wisdom to stand for what He thinks is important!


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 Acts of the Apostles, chapters 27, 28.

*A special adaptation of The Acts of the Apostles 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.