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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Leadout Ministries is a resource created especially for those who lead out in youth ministry at the local church. It is staffed by youth pastors and young people. Leadout Ministries can also be a clearinghouse for the great illustrations, activities, study guides, or other resources that you and your young people have used successfully and are willing to share. Just contact them (troy@leadoutministries.com) with your ideas.
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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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Price and availability subject to change. Prices higher in Canada.
April

3—Love Is Patient [p. 11]
We all desire to love and to be loved. But how do we remain sexually pure in a world that doesn’t see love the way God sees it?

10—More Than a Job [p. 15]
When we choose a career, there’s more to consider than merely money. How can we also contribute to God’s cause through it?

17—God’s Eye for the Gay Guy [p. 19]
How can we as Christians love homosexuals and yet not compromise with the sin of a homosexual lifestyle?

24—That’s My Story and I’m Sticking to It [p. 23]
When the authorities came to arrest Paul, he asked permission to tell the crowd the story of his conversion experience. Our stories also have powerful potential to change lives.

May

1—Faithful in the Kangaroo Court [p. 27]
We will all be called by Christ to endure trials for Him with character and integrity. What better way to prepare for that future than by today living a life devoted to Him.

8—Wearing Someone Else’s Clothes [p. 31]
To be compassionate is to have a keen sympathy for the suffering of others. What does being “clothed with compassion” look like?

15—A Good Report [p. 35]
Though none of us want to face difficulties and trials, we can view these times as opportunities for lifting up the name of Jesus in our words and deeds.

22—A Part, Not Apart [p. 39]
God provided comfort and companionship to Paul through the loving-kindness of other believers while he was imprisoned. The church today is also meant for that type of unselfish love.

29—Alone but Not Defenseless [p. 43]
Paul stood trial before Nero without an advocate. No one was willing to speak on his behalf. We may also need to stand alone for Christ, but we will never be without an advocate.

June

5—Love Power [p. 47]
Time spent with Jesus is never wasted time. Lingering in Christ’s presence gives the power to transform our lives.

12—Stuck on an Island [p. 51]
The apostle John was keenly aware that his belief in Christ put him at odds with religious and civil leaders. As is often the case, however, that which humanity intends for evil God uses for His glory.

19—Forever Faithful [p. 55]
God has always had a remnant people—those who refuse to compromise with the majority. Are you part of this group?

26—Go Out Like a Light [p. 59]
Many people encourage us to give our lives for “a cause.” But have we chosen a cause that will endure throughout eternity?
love is patient

Scripture Story: 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians.
Key Text: 1 Corinthians 13:12.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Sexual purity is a tough topic to tackle in this day and age. In order for anyone to summon up the strength to wait for marriage, they have to believe in the importance of sexual purity in their own lives. Why would God ask us to deny ourselves physical pleasure until marriage? Why did Paul take such a strong stance against sexual impurity? What is the big deal, anyway?

The desire to be sexually active before marriage isn’t only about a physical experience; it’s about a desire for intimacy. The Key Text (2 Corinthians 13:12) talks about knowing and being fully known—the best description of intimacy this writer has ever seen. The desire for intimacy is very human and it is not sinful in the least. God created us to enjoy a sexual relationship within marriage.

Yet we all share a desire to love and be loved. The world’s definition of love is that of a feeling. The world says that we feel loving, and when that feeling passes, we should abandon the relationship in search of another feeling. However, the Bible defines love differently in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is an action. When we follow God’s leading and act in a loving way, those loving feelings come as a result. Part of real love is waiting for the physical demonstration of love until marriage. Love is patient.

So what do the students ultimately want in their lives? And how does the Bible tell us to go about getting it? How is it different from the world’s view? We will discuss these topics in our lesson this week.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand why God asks us to wait until marriage before having sex. (Know)
• Sense the good things that God has waiting for us as a result of our patience. (Feel)
• Choose to make a personal decision about sexual purity in their own lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Sex
• AIDS (STDs)
• Media

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 rate on a scale between 1 and 10 their position on premarital sex for the following situations. (1-OK, 10-wrong.)
1. A couple have been dating for a year and are about to be separated at different colleges.
2. A couple have just met but are very attracted to each other and want to pursue a romantic relationship together.
3. A couple are thinking about getting married and want to make sure that they are compatible sexually before making the commitment.

4. Why do the students feel the way they do? What are their reasons?

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Queen Elizabeth I was 25 years old when she became queen of England and Ireland. Her mother, Anne Boleyn, was executed when Elizabeth was only 3, and Elizabeth was declared illegitimate. Her brother, Edward VI, cut her out of succession in his will, but when her sister, the Catholic Mary, died, after Elizabeth had been imprisoned for almost a year under suspicion of aiding the Protestant cause, his will was set aside and Elizabeth became queen.

England was a political boiling cauldron. The Catholics and Protestants were at each other’s throats. Not only did Elizabeth have a very unstable England to deal with, but she also had to find a husband. Society said that women were inferior to men. They were weaker. They were less intelligent. They were unable to grapple with the immense responsibilities of state. Therefore, a husband was necessary for Elizabeth . . . a husband who would become king and rule for her while she put herself to the chore of providing herself an heir.

The lineup of suitors was lengthy, and everyone waited with bated breath to see whom the queen would choose to marry. Elizabeth was a sitting duck, and Europe was waiting to pounce on her.

Until Elizabeth did the unthinkable—she declared herself the Virgin Queen! She would never marry. She would remain single and devote herself to the chore of providing herself as an heir.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Elizabeth stood in the face of a society that said she had no value without a husband and declared that she did! This strength of character was what made Elizabeth the stuff of stories and legends ever since. While God does not expect us to remain unmarried, He does expect us to stand up for what is right. While sexual purity does not have value to much of the world, it has immense value to God because His way gives us a happier life.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

- How seriously did Paul think sexual purity was?
- List the definitions of love found in 1 Corinthians 13. The first descriptor of love is that it is patient. What does this mean to you?
- By looking at these two passages, how are typical Hollywood relationships different than God’s ideal for us?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 4:1-42; 8:1-11; Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.*

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

The Greek city of Corinth is about 49 miles west of Athens. It was a city known for both its wealth and immorality. Corinth had a temple dedicated to Venus that employed more than 1,000 priestess prostitutes. The people of Corinth had seen it all, and were not easily shocked.

It is important to remember that the Corinthian church was a relatively new congregation, and Paul was doing his best to watch over them and keep them going in the right direction. He was more than a little upset when he started hearing stories of sexual impurity within the congregation. One young man was even sleeping with his stepmother! This was not acceptable, and Paul knew that the rest of the people were turning a blind eye, sweeping it under the rug, and generally treating this horrible thing as “not their business.” Paul, however, had something to say on the matter. It was their business! God had a much higher expectation from people who believed and knew better than He did from pagans who did not know Him yet. And He expected them to keep each other accountable.

Paul told them to stop associating with anyone claiming to be a believer who would flagrantly live a lifestyle outside of God’s direction. Basically, they
were told to stop talking with the offenders, to stop being chummy with them. Paul knew that “birds of a feather flock together,” and that if that young man was left to do as he pleased without any censure, he would end up losing his salvation. It was better to give him a little tough love than to lose him for all eternity.

Paul (in 1 Corinthians 13) describes what true love is. Venus, the Greek goddess of love, focused on sexual satisfaction, while Paul showed that real love is something much different. Paul showed how love is not a sexual act or even a fleeting feeling, but an approach to individuals and to life. Love was not a sordid affair or a guilty act; it was a pattern of behavior. Love is patient, kind, selfless, and pure. And, as we see in the first passage, love does not turn a blind eye to something that is wrong. Love points it out so that the person can benefit. Only God’s love through us can show us how to do that effectively!

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Ask students to think of the negative repercussions that can result from premarital sex. Ideas might be sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, emotional crisis, inability to pursue further education because of a baby, marrying someone who might not make a good partner, or lowered self-esteem following the dissolution of a relationship after having had sex already. Ask the students to look at their responses to the situational questions from the beginning of class and ask them if they think that they would stand by their original answers, or adjust them. Why or why not?

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
God asks us to keep ourselves pure, but this is not simply an exercise in self-control or denial. God wants us to have the intimacy that we all crave, but He also wants it to last.

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.
Love in our modern society is often defined as sexual or emotional. Emotions are unpredictable, and sex without commitment is often an empty and guilty experience. Love as defined in the Bible is an action. Love is shown by how we react in difficult situations, or how we patiently wait.

Within marriage sex is a beautiful communication of love. But outside of marriage we are set up for disappointment, embarrassment, and heartbreak. If we follow God’s plan and wait for the right time to enjoy this special intimacy, we can experience all the good things God has waiting for us. True, lasting love chooses to wait until the time is right.

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 29, 30, 31, 32.

*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

Everyone is faced with a career choice eventually. Even choosing not to go to school or not to plan for a career is a choice—a choice to take whatever comes. God created each one of us to be exactly who we are. He gave us talents, personality, and dreams. He wove us together with all of our nerves and sinews for a particular purpose. We each have something unique and important to contribute. Our careers are a part of that contribution, and choosing them is no small thing!

In 2 Thessalonians 3:8-12 Paul tells us how important it is for us to work for a living and to stay productive. Even Paul, who was the greatest apostle working to further God’s kingdom, worked as a tentmaker to support himself. A good work ethic is an important thing. Not only does it develop our characters, but it also serves as a witness.

However, there is another human tendency to work hard in order to make a lot of money. When money is our highest priority, we step onto some very dangerous ground. While money is a necessity in this world, we must not rely on money as if it could save us. Money is a tool, but when we make it our focus, we risk “all kinds of evil.”

When we choose a career, there is more to consider than money and hard work. We are told to be not only consumers but contributors to God’s cause. We must pray and ask God to lead us in the direction in which He wants us to go.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that God has a work for them to do. (Know)
- Sense the importance of their contribution to God’s cause. (Feel)
- Choose to seek God and ask for His guidance in their life choices. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Workers for Christ
- Career choices
- Dependability
- Stewardship*

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

- What career can you see yourself excelling at in the future?
- What reasons do you think you would be good at this job? What reservations do you have?
- Do you think that God has a career that He wants you to do, or do you think that career choices are up to us?
• What factors do you take into account when considering your career options?
• How important is salary to you? How important is others’ opinion of your choice?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

Albert Einstein is known as a scientific genius. He discovered the theory of relativity, suggesting that space and time were connected and that the universe was shaped like a saddle. He was brilliant, and even today very few of us are even sure what he was talking about! His ideas go whizzing past our heads, and all we can do is shrug and say, “Genius!”

Albert Einstein was not always seen as a genius, however. He was born in Germany in 1879. His parents made sure that young Albert was properly educated. By 1901, when he received his diploma in Zurich, he was ready to start his career as a mathematics teacher. The only problem? He couldn’t get anyone to hire him! That year he acquired his Swiss citizenship and since he couldn’t find another job, he took a position as a technical assistant in the Swiss patent office.

At this point, Einstein was unknown, but during his free time at the patent office he produced much of his most remarkable work. In fact, he scrawled out three essays and submitted them to the journal Annalen der Physik to be published if there were space. All three essays were published in the same issue of the journal, and Albert Einstein was recognized for the genius that he was!

Einstein went on to teach at the most prestigious universities of the world, and to receive numerous scientific awards for groundbreaking work in relativity.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

Einstein was created with an extraordinary brain. God gave him the ability to understand things that most of the world can’t wrap their minds around. The first step in his career, however, was what seemed like a boring plan B. A job in the patent office would have been a drudgery for a genius like Einstein, but it gave him the free time that he needed to think through the ideas that were spinning through his mind. God had something specific for Einstein to accomplish. What things in your life can you see that might be God’s hand, guiding you in a particular direction?

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 characteristics make up a good work ethic according to these passages?
• What lessons do we see about handling money?
• How do these passages relate to choosing one’s career?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Genesis 39–47; Matthew 25:14-30; 18:12-14.

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

In the first passage (2 Thessalonians 3:8-12), according to the Matthew Henry Bible Commentary, some of the people of the church in Thessalonica misunderstood Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians in which he told them that the coming of Jesus was very soon. They thought that since Jesus’ return was so imminent they should not work at their trades, but instead simply wait. This was not what Paul had intended at all. Not only did it put undue stress upon the other members to support them, but they were not piously waiting. They were gossiping and generally making trouble. Paul stressed that those who did not work should not eat. They were not to stop living their regular lives, but to keep on working, making money and eating, while at the same time furthering the church’s work. A righteous life is not the life of a recluse, but the life of a productive person who lives as God asks us to.

Timothy, who was first converted by Paul, was an evangelist. He was “lower” than an apostle, and he worked in church planting. Paul was writing to Timothy to encourage him in his ministry. The second passage (1 Timothy 6:10-19) is a charge to Timothy. Paul, as Timothy’s mentor, is warning him about the danger of loving money. Timothy was young, and like the rest of us, would have been tempted to do something more lucrative. The work that Timothy did for the church did not pay, and he would have been, in essence, volunteering his time.

Timothy was also being given the responsibility of
addressing the very wealthy. In Greek or even Judean society, a young man did not have the ability to approach his elders or those of a higher social status. However, in the Christian community, these social niceties were being stood on their heads. Timothy, both young and not wealthy, was being given the authority to teach those much higher than he was on their responsibilities. The wealthy were to care for the poor and not trust too much in their money. Rich or poor, everyone is equal in God’s eyes.

Paul was establishing the church in these sections, giving them direction in how to sustain themselves for the long haul. While he was encouraging them in their relationship with God, he was not getting them ready for an immediate Second Coming. He was, instead, preparing the church to work, and the members to continue to live their lives in readiness.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students to write down five ways that they can prepare for their future careers. Examples might be achieving a certain grade level to let them get into university, volunteering in school council, or finding a part-time job or volunteer position in the field that interests them. Look at each idea and ask how God can be included in these plans for their futures. How can God stay at the center of their career goals?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Choosing a career is an important decision. Like all decisions in our lives, God must be a part of it. He created us with a job to do, and our career aspirations are a part of that. God gave us talents and desires for a reason, and if we follow the talents that God gave us, we will find a rewarding career waiting for us. We are not put on this earth to consume and show off; we are...
here to be productive, help others, and show the world what living for God is all about. While a strong work ethic is very important, it is equally important that we don’t get sucked into the trap of striving for money, money, money. We can’t forget that God knows our needs before we do, and He’ll provide for us. The most important thing we can do is to follow God’s will for our lives.

* Fundamental Belief No. 21.
I. SYNOPSIS
Today’s young people are growing up in a world more tolerant of alternative lifestyles. The media portrays homosexuality as an acceptable—even desirable—option, portraying it regularly in TV shows and movies. This lesson offers an opportunity to tackle a sensitive subject that is on the minds of many young people. Since the culture is not shy about perpetuating a certain view on the topic, it is especially important that our young people hear an alternative view based on God’s Word. Fortunately, the Bible is not silent on the subject. So dive into the discussion with Bibles open and hearts receptive to what God would want you to know and do. If this is the direction you choose to take the lesson, then it is important to emphasize how Christians and the church can love the individual homosexual and yet not compromise with the sin of a homosexual lifestyle.

Perhaps you feel it wise in your context to steer the lesson in another direction. Since the scope of this study embodies both the books of Romans and Galatians, you have wide boundaries to explore and yet remain within the text of this teaching. Both Romans and Galatians contain very insightful teaching on the topic of salvation. Many young people today are starving for solid, biblical teaching about the assurance and experience of salvation. These books of the Bible give you that opportunity to share the good news of salvation.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Hear about the freedom that results from a life of obedience to God. (Know)
• Sense God’s passion to save every person. (Feel)
• Be challenged to experience the assurance that comes by following God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Homosexuality
• Salvation (assurance of)
• Salvation (experience of)

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 exercise:
• Quiz your young people about gay characters they have seen in movies and on TV. Keep a master list of these shows and then discuss the following questions:
• How are these characters portrayed in the movies or on TV?
• How do the media stereotypes measure up to
any gays that you know personally?

• How does the treatment of homosexuals in movies and TV compare to the way they are treated in real life?

• Do you think it is politically incorrect to call homosexuality a sin? Why or why not?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Illustration

Marion struggled with her sexual orientation. Listen to some pieces of her story:

My first year of college was very lonely. I never bonded with any guys, even though I felt some attraction to men. I had no one with whom to share. I felt very alone and isolated. . . . Eventually I became involved with another woman who was a lesbian. . . . My lesbian friend and I lived together for eight years. . . .

One Sunday around Easter while I was out jogging, I passed a church and felt an urge to go in and pray. I hadn’t been in a church for years, but I enjoyed the worship and felt a peace there. . . .

I was drawing away from my partner and closer to God. I wanted Him to take charge of my life. He did not condemn me but showed me His unconditional love. He cared for me regardless of what I had done or what choices I made. I also had a strong sense from God that I shouldn’t continue to live this way. Without a shadow of a doubt, I knew I had to leave homosexuality. . . .

After being actively lesbian for nine years, I left that life behind almost 10 years ago. Through a long process of change and growth, I am no longer sexually attracted to women. Attending a support group was particularly helpful for dealing with that sexual attraction and for working through the feelings of hurt from my past.²

Bridge to the Story

Romans 1:26, 27 describes the sinful culture of the day in this way: “Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved” (NLT).

• How does this passage inform the argument so prevalent today that homosexuality is simply an alternative lifestyle—not necessarily a sinful lifestyle?

• Note that they suffered “as a result of this sin.” Even in a world that is, generally speaking, very tolerant and accepting of gay people, how might they suffer today?


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.

Read Romans 1:28-32. After describing the perversion of homosexuality, Paul goes on to portray the depraved mind that is “filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity” (NIV). Note the specific sins that Paul includes in his list. Are there any sins in the list that surprise you? Why? Are all the sins in his list equally evil? In the eyes of God are murderers as offensive to a holy God as gossips? Why or why not? How would you explain Paul’s observation in verse 32 that even though they know that the consequence of their sin is death, they continue in their unrighteous behavior?

Sharing Context and Background

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

This lesson covers two letters that the apostle Paul wrote around A.D. 50. Getting a broader view of the letters can be helpful in understanding the overall message that Paul was trying to convey. Whatever teaching from the book(s) you wish to emphasize, it should always be presented within the framework of the bigger picture. Use the following thumbnail overviews to ensure that your teaching is consistent with the historical and cultural context.

Romans

Overview: Like a skilled attorney, Paul presents a carefully organized statement of his faith in this letter to the believers in Rome. While Paul knew about the church in Rome, he had never been there. The church had been formed by Jews who had come to faith during Pentecost (Acts 2). They shared their faith in Rome
and the church grew. Although it does not have the form of a typical letter, Paul does spend considerable time greeting people in Rome at the end of it. The purpose of the letter was to introduce himself to the Romans and to share his message of righteousness by faith and the gospel before his journey to Rome.

**Major Themes**
- Sin
- Salvation
- Growth
- Sovereignty
- Service

**The Blueprint**

*Chapters 1-11:* Paul shares what to believe. He presents an airtight argument for the lostness of humankind and the necessity for God's intervention. He goes on to share the good news that we can experience salvation through the forgiveness of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary and we can live above the clutches of sin’s grasp.

*Chapters 12-16:* Paul shares how to behave. The Christian journey is not an abstract theology disconnected from real life. It has practical implications that impact choices and behavior each day. It is not acceptable to merely know the gospel; we must live it.

**Galatians**

**Overview:** The book of Galatians was written to the churches in southern Galatia. It is the charter of Christian freedom. In his letter Paul declares the reality of our liberty in Jesus—freedom from the law and the power of sin. Paul refutes the teachers who were making the claim that in order for Gentiles to be saved they must obey the Jewish laws. Moreover, it is an appeal to Christians to live out their faith and find total freedom in Christ.

**Major Themes**
- Law
- Faith
- Freedom
- Holy Spirit

**The Blueprint**

*Chapters 1-2:* Paul speaks to the authenticity of the gospel.

*Chapters 3-4:* Paul outlines the superiority of the gospel.

*Chapters 5-6:* Paul proclaims the freedom of the gospel.

**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

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

You may want to invite a panel of parents to attend the session and talk about their views on homosexuality. Of course, choosing the right parents will be the key to success. It’s important that they are respectful of all people—regardless of their orientation. They must also respect the differing opinions of the youth. Encourage your group members to ask questions and engage in honest conversation on the topic.

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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."
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 35, 36.

*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.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Teaching Sensitive Topics**

Should you decide to focus this study on the topic of homosexuality, it may be helpful to peruse the following suggestions adapted from U. C. Berkeley’s Office of Educational Development:

1. Create a classroom environment that sets ground rules for discussion and makes it clear that all students are included in the work of the class.
2. Recognize the diversity of opinions and backgrounds of your students.
3. Be prepared. Even if you do not think there will be a reaction to an issue you raise, plan ahead what you will do if you encounter one. Know yourself and your own emotional triggers. Don’t personalize remarks.
4. Focus the discussion on the topic, not the individual student.
5. Protect all students equally during moments of potential conflict. Seek to draw out understanding and communication as well as opinions.
6. Foster an environment of debate and dialogue in which it is OK to disagree.
7. If a student suffers from an emotional reaction or angry outburst because of a sensitive topic discussion, acknowledge it, and ask them if they would like to remain or leave for a while.

**Summary**

Share the following study and discuss it with your students.

Robert L. Spitzer, the Columbia University psychiatry professor who convinced the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973, sparked another controversy again by saying that homosexuals can change their orientation—if they want to. “The subjects’ self-reports of change appear to be, by and large, valid, rather than gross exaggerations, brain-washing or wishful thinking,” he summarizes. Spitzer interviewed 153 men and 47 women who said counseling had helped to change their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual. ABC News sums up the data: “66 percent of the men and 44 percent of women reached what he called good heterosexual function—a sustained, loving heterosexual relationship. . . .”

Questions for discussion:

Do the findings of Dr. Spitzer surprise you? Why or why not?

What suggestions would you share with a friend who is interested in leaving a gay lifestyle?

Check out the Web site www.narth.com. How might this resource assist in helping to change a gay lifestyle?

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1 Fundamental Belief No. 10.
2 As quoted at www.freetobeme.com/rs_marion.htm.
3 Adapted from ctfd.sfsu.edu/feature/top-ten-tips-for-addressing-sensitive-topics-and-maintaining-civility-in-the-classroom.htm.
that’s my story and I’m sticking to it


PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Paul’s final days were ahead of him and even though the religious leaders at Jerusalem were looking to arrest him, he longed to share with the believers what God was doing on behalf of the gospel. He also wanted to present to them the generous offering from the Gentile believers all over the world. This week’s lesson is about Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem, where he voluntarily turned himself in. This act had been prophesied by the prophet Agabus when “he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, ‘This is what the Holy Spirit says: “In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles”’” (Acts 21:11, NASB). Upon his arrival the news spread, and the authorities came to arrest him. It is at that time that Paul asked for permission to speak to the crowd and when he did, he simply told the story of his conversion experience.

The lesson for young people today is modeled by Paul as he tells his conversion story. One of the great failings of the religious leaders of that day, and perhaps the same is true today, was that they could not imagine their religion changing. Ellen White observed that “these men had lost sight of the fact that God is the teacher of His people; that every worker in His cause is to obtain an individual experience in following the divine Leader” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 401). This week we need to challenge young people to obtain this personal encounter with God so their story might indeed affect the world as did Paul’s.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Deepen their understanding of the importance of personal experience. (Know)
• Sense a responsibility to testify. (Feel)
• Determine to encounter God with genuine devotion and live to tell about it. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Adversity/trials
• Character
• Conflict
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 appropriate options. You may have students pencil in an example or illustration of each type of transformation story. You might invite the students to share what their first choice was or name each sample given and ask, “How many of you chose this as your first choice?” Always invite the students to
explain their response and affirm their answers in order to foster more discussion. The ultimate goal is to get students to talk about what kind of life change matters to them.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

The story is told of John Currier, who was sentenced to life in prison for committing the crime of murder back in 1949. After several years they transferred him out and put him on parole where he was assigned to work on a farm in Tennessee. Almost 20 years later, John Currier’s life sentence had been terminated and he was legally a free man. Except, John never received the letter and no one chose to tell him about his freedom. He continued to labor under the rugged work without even the hope of ever being a free man. Currier continued to work day in and day out on that farm even after the farmer he worked for had passed away.

Another 10 years passed before a state parole officer discovered what had happened and immediately set out to find John Currier and tell him he was free. He found John and shared with him that he had been a free man and apologized that the news had never reached him.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

How would you have felt? What if someone neglected or purposely avoided telling you the truth about your freedom and kept you in bondage all your life? Maybe Paul felt so compelled to share the message of Christ to others that there was no way he was going to hold back the kind of knowledge that just might set someone free.

John Currier represents people who might come to know the joy of salvation if someone would just declare it in a way that they can understand. Paul had one moment to open his mouth and speak words that might help some understand and accept Christ. What would he say to the hostile crowd? How could his words penetrate the stiff-necked Jews in Jerusalem that stood in the way of the Christian movement?

**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 verses leading up to this story in which Paul reveals what happened to him. What do you think is the most compelling part of Paul’s testimony? Why?
- **Underline** the words or phrases that you think are critical to understanding its message.
- **Circle** the names of people mentioned in this story and see if you can identify them.
- Why do you think the angry crowd fell silent when Paul spoke to them in Hebrew?
- Given one opportunity to speak, Paul chose to tell his conversion story rather than try to defend the prejudices people had about him. Why?
- Ananias is described as “a devout man according to the law.” Gamaliel and Ananias were two different but devoted Jews. Coupling those names with Paul’s own reputation, what do you think the listeners were feeling as they heard his story?
- Who are some other people in Scripture who told their own story of what God had done for them? How did people respond to them?
- To what degree do you think Paul’s testimony had an impact on people?
- What do you think is the ultimate message in this story?

**Extra Questions for Teachers:**

- What impact do you think Paul’s Saul-to-Paul story had on the crowd? Think about how crowds react together and how when you are alone you tend to think differently than you do in the masses. While Paul was arrested, to what degree do you think Paul planted seeds in the hearts of Jerusalem for the gospel?
- Who would you liken the hostile crowd of the Jews to in your world? Do any of your friends, neighbors, or people at your school hold prejudices toward the message of Christ?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Acts 9; Acts 1; John 4; Revelation 12:14; 1 John 1:1-4.*

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

This week’s lesson picks up at a climax of events...
from the prophet Agabus in dramatic prophetic fashion (Acts 21:7-14). Barclay notes that “when words were inadequate, they dramatized their message” (The Daily Study Bible, p. 154). (Examples of this can be found in Isaiah 20:3, 4; Jeremiah 13:1-11; Ezekiel 4; 1 Kings 11:29-31.) In spite of all the danger and woe from the surrounding churches, Paul makes his way to certain death at Jerusalem.

Why did the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem want Paul dead? Paul’s insistence that Gentiles be welcomed into the fellowship shook the foundations of Jewish Christians. It was hard enough to imagine that they crucified the Messiah, but to undermine their heritage was too much for many to bear.

Why did they arrest Paul?

For Paul, the lines between Jew and Greek (Gentile) were blurred, and the only distinction he made between people had to do with whether they believed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, or not. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV) Paul says: “We were all baptized into one body,” and to the church at Galatia Paul admonished: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28, NKJV). When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, the Asian Jews claimed they had witnessed Paul taking Trophimus (an uncircumcised Gentile) into the Temple where no Gentile had been allowed to enter on pain of death. The people came and practically killed Paul by beating him until the authorities arrived and secured him. The people came and practically killed Paul by beating him until the authorities arrived and secured him. The peo-

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.
people who were looking to arrest Paul found a reason, and that reason pivots on the primary problem of the church in the New Testament: how do Gentiles who come to believe in Christ fit in and relate to the church?

Paul’s contrived arrest is almost as dubious as Christ’s several years previous. Keep in mind that while Paul worked tirelessly for the Gentiles his heart had been with the Jewish people, and he simply longed for them to understand. In his mind, his own peril was not as important as the Jews fully surrendering their prejudices for the kingdom of Christ.

III. CLOSING

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

Divide the class into three groups and have each group read one of the three accounts of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9; 22; 26). Ask: “What are the main features of the story—the most important details?” Gather the groups together and draw on a large piece of paper or a chalkboard three large overlapping circles. Leave a large portion where the circles overlap (this is where the groups will share common features of the story) and leave some room in each circle for unique parts of the story. Ask: “What are the events that are similar and what details are different?” Each story is told to an entirely different audience and while the basic story is the same, some elements are added or subtracted, probably for a reason. Invite the students to imagine what that reason is. You might even ask them to choose one of the stories they appreciate the most and why. Conclude by inviting them to begin thinking of their own story and what that would look like when delivered to different groups of people.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Even though Paul knew that the Jews were just waiting to pounce on him, he made his way to Jerusalem because he believed the cause of Christ was bigger than his own safety. The Jews who had come to Jerusalem to attend the feasts saw their heritage slipping away as many Gentiles became believers in Christ. The new era of Christianity ushered in and signaled the end of the old era of the Jews. Paul’s arrest was primarily about this kind of prejudice, a quality that has no place in the church. But Paul knew that his story would sear in their memory more than any argument he could construct, so he elected to quiet the crowd and speak directly about the experience of transforming from Saul to Paul. If you are called upon to speak, what experience would you relate? What story of God’s direction and grace would you deliver? Do you know Christ in such a way that you too, like Paul, have a story to tell?

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 37, 38.

*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
This week’s lesson features one trial scene of many that the apostle Paul faced during the last two years of his life. While Paul knew that going to Jerusalem would be dangerous, he did not know the plan God had for him to go to Rome, where he would write and encourage believers as well as citizens and leaders in Rome to follow Christ. In fact, Paul was ready to die in Jerusalem if that would awaken more to the gospel. In this lesson Paul stood before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. He was falsely accused by the leaders of the Jews. When the Jewish leaders seemed to be losing influence and their false accusations did not convince those judging Paul, they organized a plot to have him assassinated. Furthermore, when Paul was before Festus he appealed to the authority of Caesar, and with those words he was set on a journey away from the tyranny of the Jews to the secular court of Rome. This journey taken by land and sea offered many moments where God’s hand guided and covered His servant, demonstrating the truth that God has a plan and no ruler or king can thwart His cause.

Nevertheless, there is also the theme of personal integrity and character that emerges in this lesson as well. Young people are challenged to face the uncertain future of trials by preparing today by living a life devoted to Christ. As their character is shaped by their faithful walk with God, they will be able to stand as Paul did, with the conviction and peace that transcends human power.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Discover the way character is revealed in trials. (Know)
• Sense the camaraderie with others who take their stand for God. (Feel)
• Determine to practice their faithfulness today so they can stand tomorrow. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Justice
• Integrity
• Persecution

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.

Either/or activities call for students to take a side and defend it. More often than not, the theme is such that either point of view is true, but taking a side helps to see deeper into the issues than simply agreeing or disagreeing. In this lesson the activity calls for students to evaluate what is worse: unjust punishment or unimaginable mercy. Some students may struggle with the idea that just because criminals miss the judgment
of men does not mean they escape the judgment of God. However, arguably when innocent people suffer unfairly God knows and will hold others to account as well as reward those who suffer. Some may even say, “We all have sinned and deserve death.” And while we wouldn’t argue that point, we do feel unsatisfied by justice when it is given solely by human wisdom.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

“If there are two truths that are embedded deep within our human experience, they are our need for justice and our love of mercy. We love justice when someone who deserves it gets it, and we embrace mercy when we, who need it, receive it.

“For example, consider a few convicted felons now walking the streets today: Gregory Wallis served 17 years of a 50-year sentence; Michael Anthony Williams served 23 years of a life sentence; and Alejandro Fernandez served 10 years of a death sentence.

“How does it make you feel to know these men were convicted of violent crimes and only served less than half their time?

“They are currently out on the street walking free today, and free they should be. These men were released, not prematurely, but much later than they should have been because they were convicted based upon mistaken identity and, in some cases, false testimony. It was only after new technology with DNA testing and the earnest effort of an organization called the Innocence Project that they were exonerated. Recently, more than 200 people who were falsely convicted, sentenced, and served time in prison have been set free.

“How do you feel when the guilty go free and the innocent get punished? Very few emotions are stronger than our sense of justice. How do you feel when you don’t get what you deserve—whether it is good or bad? How do you feel when you or others get mercy when they don’t deserve it?” (From Twenty Questions God Wants to Asks You, by Troy Fitzgerald)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We all long for mercy when we need it and are terribly passionate about justice when it has to do with bad people receiving their punishment. In this week’s story, Paul was falsely accused and mistreated by people who were supposed to be leaders of God’s people. This petty self-absorbed behavior revealed their true character, as it also showed what kind of man Paul was. Read the following story of Paul’s trial and answer the questions that guide you through the study.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• How would you describe the attitude and behavior of the chief priests and the Jewish leaders in this story?
• How do you think the Jewish leaders could justify a plot to murder Paul before he was even tried?
• How do you see Paul’s confidence in God’s leading in this story?
• What lessons for life do you see growing out of this story?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

• What other stories in Scripture display people who are doing evil, thinking they are doing what is good? How do those stories compare with this one?
• How would you describe Festus in this episode? Read chapter 40 in The Acts of the Apostles for more insight into this exchange between the Jewish leaders, Paul, and Festus.
• What do you think is the key phrase or verse in this passage? Why?
• Paul would rather be tried by a judge that was not a believer than by the Sanhedrin. What does that say about the integrity of the Jewish leaders? Why do you think Paul would trust a secular judge?
• What qualities of Paul were brought to light as he was treated so unfairly? If it is true that adversity reveals your true colors, what were Paul’s?
• When Paul appealed to be tried by Caesar, as was his right as a Roman citizen, he chose a path that would take his case to Rome. How did Paul know he was doing the right thing?
• How should we regard human authorities who are entrusted with the awesome responsibility of meting out justice? How do you know when to submit to authorities or stand up and call for a higher authority?
In what ways have you noticed the way trials expose the true nature of our character?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Psalm 26:1-3; Proverbs 11:3-5; 21:3; Acts 24:1-9, 22-27; 26.

Sharing Context and Background

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

This lesson features one courtroom scene but covers chapters 24-28 in the book of Acts. The primary focus of the lesson is on Paul’s character in trials and his appeal to be tried as a Roman citizen by Caesar. However, the names of some of the other people are obscure and may not be well known, so a brief description of who they are as background is given below.

Chief priests—Levites from the line of Aaron who served God in the Temple and were key leaders of Israel and political power brokers in the Sanhedrin, the legal ruling body of the Jews.

Ananias—The Jewish high priest who was corrupt and tried to falsely accuse Paul of sedition. Ananias had been tried for unlawful violence to Samaritans in Rome, but was acquitted through his relationship with Agrippa. Ananias was eventually murdered by a Jewish mob at the outset of the Jewish War around A.D. 67.

Tertullus—A professional speechmaker hired by the Jewish leaders to prosecute Paul. He tried flattery in Acts 24:1-4. This was false, however, because Felix was a bad man and everyone knew it.

Felix—A Roman procurator (like Pilate) of the region of Judea. Felix was a horribly immoral man and an evil ruler. He had three wives and believed he was capable of doing whatever he wanted because he had so much influence with the authorities. It was during the time of Felix that the Sicarii or the Zealots multiplied because justice was nowhere to be found during his rule.

Festus—Festus replaced Felix as procurator of Judea. Felix had put Paul in prison where he remained until Festus came to rule. Festus had scruples and a sense of law. He did not allow the Jews to conspire to assassinate Paul and, instead, sent Paul to be tried by Caesar upon Paul’s request.

King Agrippa II—His father was the same Agrippa I who persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem, and his grandfather was Herod the Great. Agrippa II desired to see Paul before Paul was sent to Rome.

True to form, the Jews broke their own vows and laws to try to beat, prosecute without witnesses, and even assassinate Paul, whose message of Christ threatened their position among the Jewish people. It was against Jewish law even to bring charges without witnesses. It was against the law to assault or physically harm anyone who had not been proven guilty. It was well beyond the spirit of Jewish law to kill someone who was acquitted. In fact, Jewish law was designed to protect the innocent even if it let the guilty go free. There was a sense that God would judge and issue punishment when man’s efforts fell short.

It is also important to note that Paul remained in...
prison in Caesarea for more than two years, between the time of Felix and Festus (A.D. 57-60). The voyage to Rome happened in A.D. 60, and Paul remained in Rome for another two years in prison there before he was executed.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Choose three people in the Bible (or in your church) who are beyond reproach that would be good candidates to put on trial. Ask the question: “What would be a ridiculous charge to put against this individual?” For example, you could never question in court Esther’s love and courage on behalf of her people. It would be hard to say about Joseph that he was not faithful when life went against him. It would be false to say about Peter, “He was quiet and should have spoken up more.” You can even pair up in the class and make statements about each other (be nice) that everyone knows would be untrue because their life speaks differently. Share these false accusations and celebrate your own court where you affirm the character and life of people in spite of accusations. The goal of this activity is to demonstrate how character and the way you live can speak to your defense the way it did for Paul in his season of trials.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The more you watch Paul in action, the more you admire his devotion and wisdom. Under the duress of persecution it seemed that Paul was alone in his defense of the gospel—not to mention his own life. But Paul stood tall before authorities who used every ounce of energy available to convict him and put him to death. Although his accusers were liars, they were powerful. And in our world when it seems as though the people in power are determined to follow their own evil desires, God is still in control and His plan will not be thwarted. In fact, this story urges us to be devoted to Christ and let God be our judge. While we submit to earthly authorities, people are often selfish and wrong and they do not always follow the promptings of God’s Spirit. Only by our continual trust in God’s grace and His promise to lead us through our trials will we emerge victorious. It has everything to do with how you choose to relate to Christ today! People who are true in the peaceful times are victorious in persecution, even in death. Paul was willing to stay faithful to God whatever the outcome. Are you?

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Acts of the Apostles, 39, 40, 41, 42.

*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 Christian life is a difficult journey. In fact, life in general can be tough. However, we can take comfort in the knowledge that God did not design for us to go through life alone. We are made to be sociable, and compassion is a key component in surviving the challenges in life. Compassion means we carry each other’s burdens. In Colossians 3:12 Paul writes: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (NIV).

To be compassionate is to have a keen sympathy for the sufferings of others, accompanied by a deep urge to help. As followers and emulators of Christ, we need to exemplify the attitudes of mercy and pity, even when the aggrieved is ourselves. This is not to say that we allow injustice to prevail. Rather, when faced with sincere repentance, we must dig deep to find the compassion to forgive and, if possible, restore relationships.

Ellen White writes: “The apostle reminded Philemon that every good purpose and trait of character which he possessed was due to the grace of Christ; this alone made him different from the perverse and the sinful. The same grace could make the debased criminal a child of God and a useful laborer in the gospel” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 457).

It is the aim of this study to have the students consider the meaning of compassion; what it looks like; how to apply it; and why it is a key element in the Christian life.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand the biblical meaning and application of compassion. *(Know)*
- Be challenged to acts of compassion. *(Feel)*
- Perform acts of compassion as led by the Holy Spirit. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Forgiveness
- Repentance
- Grace and mercy

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

**Activity**

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

Bring two identical sets of clothes (preferably oversized) and two balloons. Get four student volunteers. If you prefer, you can divide the class by gender and have the boys compete against the girls. One person from each pair of volunteers will be the contestant; the other will be the assistant. The aim of the game is to put on all of the clothes over their own, while keeping the balloon in the air. The only person allowed to touch the balloon is the contestant. The assistant’s duty is to
get the clothes ready and pass them to the contestant. If the balloon touches the ground, the contestant must take off one of the items of clothing and start again. The first team to get all the clothes on their contestant wins!

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

In the movie *Patch Adams* the character Patch Adams is a medical resident who wants to do things differently. At one point in the movie, he says, “You treat a disease, you win, you lose. You treat a person, I’ll guarantee you’ll win.” It is this philosophy that Patch Adams applies to his medical career. He works hard to help patients feel better emotionally as well as physically.

In one particularly memorable scene, Patch and two other fellow residents sneak into the hospital ward one night and fulfill the fantasy of a terminally ill patient. This patient has always wanted to go big game hunting. Armed with balloons and a rubber dart gun, Patch and his friends recreate the big game hunting experience for the patient. Although the patient cannot be cured, he feels much better knowing that Patch really listened to him and remembered his deepest wish to go on a safari.

Patch felt for his patients and tried to help them. He is a great example of a man filled with compassion. Jesus had the same kind of reaction many times. The Bible records many stories of how Jesus was moved to help other people.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

*Ask the students if anyone can remember any stories of Jesus showing compassion and helping people. Then share the following stories from Scripture in your own words:*

- Matthew 14:14 (Jesus heals the sick.)
- John 4:4-26 (Jesus visits with the Samaritan woman at the well.)
- Luke 5:17-26 (Jesus heals a paralytic.)
- Mark 10:46-52 (Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus.)
- Matthew 9:18-26 (Jesus heals a dead girl and a sick woman.)

It is easy to say that Jesus could do all of these because He is God. However, we can still show compassion and help others in our own way.

**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 actors in this story.
- **Underline** the parts of the story that are essential to understanding it.
- **Share** any aspects of the story that are new to you.
- Paul offered to repay Onesimus' debt if it made it easier for Philemon to accept him back into the household. Discuss what this teaches us about compassion.
- What new thing about God have you learned from Onesimus’ story? Explain.
- **Draw a rectangle** around the emotions, actions, and adjectives that enrich this story.
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
- **Put a star** next to the words or phrases that capture the various emotions of this story.

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

- Read Colossians 3:12 and compare Paul’s actions to help Onesimus. Why do you think Paul would choose to help Onesimus to this extent?
- Read Ephesians 4:32. Imagine if you were Philemon. What would your response be toward this wayward servant after having read Paul’s impassioned letter?
- Read Philippians 2:1-4. What does a follower of Christ behave like?

**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. **Understanding the historical setting of slavery in Rome during Paul’s time**

   According to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, slaves were an accepted part of society and considered to be members of their master’s household. It was so common that the proportion of free men to slaves was three to one. At that time in Rome a slave had no rights, and their masters held power of life and death over them. This was not to say that the life of a slave was arbitrarily torturous. In fact, some slaves were known to be teachers, doctors, and managers of their master’s estates.
2. Applying the compassion of Christ

Ellen White offers this commentary on Paul’s letter to Philemon: “Paul voluntarily proposed to assume the debt of Onesimus in order that the guilty one might be spared the disgrace of punishment, and might again enjoy the privileges he had forfeited. ‘If thou count me therefore a partner,’ he wrote to Philemon, ‘receive him as myself. If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.’ How fitting an illustration of the love of Christ for the repentant sinner! The servant who had defrauded his master had nothing with which to make restitution. The sinner who has robbed God of years of service has no means of canceling the debt. Jesus interposes between the sinner and God, saying, I will pay the debt. Let the sinner be spared; I will suffer in his stead” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 458).

3. Paul’s compassionate rhetorical skills toward Philemon

Although Paul could have leveraged on his standing as an elder and an apostle and demanded that Philemon take Onesimus back (verses 8, 9), that would run contradictory to the compassionate response that Paul was trying to evoke from Philemon. How could Philemon make a charitable decision if he felt coerced? Compassion cannot be forced. As much as Paul was a compassionate advocate of Onesimus, he also treated Philemon with compassion, and in turn, asked that Onesimus be treated the same.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Positive Reinforcement

It is not unusual for some students to find lessons boring or overwhelming. Try positive reinforcement. Don’t give empty praises but do take note of any progress made and acknowledge it, no matter how small.

If you made any agreements with your students about their homework (e.g., you will allow snacks for everyone if they come with lessons prepared), then make sure you follow through on your agreement.

Finally, be positive and supportive. Teens respond not just to the work but to the person conducting the lessons. They will be more open and cooperative if they know that they can trust you.

In what variety of means and mediums can we apply Christ’s compassion?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Invite the students to create a list titled “Top Ten

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

Summary

Share this story from Brian Cavanaugh’s book The Sower’s Seeds:

There is an old Chinese tale about a woman whose only son died. In her grief, she went to the holy man and said, “What prayers, what magical incantations do you have to bring my son back to life?”

Instead of sending her away or reasoning with her, he said to her, “Fetch me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. We will use it to drive the sorrow out of your life.” The woman went off at once in search of that magical mustard seed.

She came first to a splendid mansion, knocked at the door, and said, “I am looking for a home that has never known sorrow. Is this such a place? It is very important to me.”

They told her, “You’ve certainly come to the wrong place,” and began to describe all the tragic things that recently had befallen them.

The woman said to herself, “Who is better able to help these poor, unfortunate people than I, who have had misfortune of my own?” She stayed to comfort them, then went on in search of a home that had never known sorrow. But wherever she turned, in hovels and in other places, she found one tale after another of sadness and misfortune. She became so involved in ministering to other people’s grief that ultimately she forgot about her quest for the magical mustard seed, never realizing that it had, in fact, driven the sorrow out of her life (www.inspirationalstories.com/1/130.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 43.

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I. SYNOPSIS

The Flashlight quote of the week speaks about the apostle Paul’s trials and his imprisonment for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The trials that Paul faced were instrumental in drawing more attention to the gospel. It even gave him opportunity to witness to the prison guards in Caesar’s court. In your presentation of the lesson for this week you can show how the daily challenges and difficulties we may face in school, at home, on the job, or in our neighborhoods can be opportunities for witnessing, simply in the way we choose to handle these difficult situations. It may even be that God allowed certain circumstances to arise in our lives for the specific purpose of blessing, helping, or witnessing to someone else. There are several Bible examples that can be used in comparison to Paul’s experience. Joseph found himself in a dreadful situation because of betrayal, but the Lord used his circumstances to help save the lives of thousands of people during a time of famine (see Genesis 41:55-57). In the story of Mordecai and Esther, Mordecai challenged Esther to have courage in facing the king when he said, “Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14, NKJV).

Though none of us want to face difficulties and trials, we can see these times as opportunities for lifting up the name of Christ in our words and deeds. Just as in the cases of Joseph, Queen Esther, and Paul, in the end we will be rewarded for our loyalty to the Lord.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that trials and even persecution may be opportunities for witnessing. (Know)

• Feel the desire to be Christ’s representatives in word and deed in every circumstance of life. (Feel)

• Make the commitment to be a blessing and a light to others. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Evangelism/witnessing

• Influence

• Reputations

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Have the class participants work in twos or threes to complete the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. Tell each group to add at least three things that are not listed that they consider to be everyday acts of faith. After a few minutes, discuss with the class the correlation between our actions and our influence on those around us. Be prepared to give a couple of examples yourself.
Illustration
Read the following quotes from The Great Controversy, pages 39 to 41, to the class, or share the account in your own words. It depicts the state of the early Christian church not long after Jesus left the earth and ascended into heaven:

“The fires of persecution were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They ‘endured a great fight of afflictions.’ Hebrews 10:32. They ‘had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.’ Hebrews 11:36. Great numbers sealed their testimony with their blood. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike slain without mercy.”

“Christians were falsely accused of the most dreadful crimes, and declared to be the cause of great calamities—famine, pestilence, and earthquake.”

“Wherever they sought refuge, the followers of Christ were hunted like beasts of prey. They were forced to seek concealment in desolate and solitary places. ‘Destitute, afflicted, tormented . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.’ Verses 37, 38.”

“Under the fiercest persecution these witnesses for Jesus kept their faith unsullied. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. With words of faith, patience, and hope they encouraged one another to endure privation and distress. The loss of every earthly blessing could not force them to renounce their belief in Christ.”

- Why do you think the early Christian church experienced such persecution?
- Are people persecuted for their religious beliefs today? If so, give an example.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Have you ever been accused of doing something you didn’t do? Have you ever been punished when you were innocent of all charges? This week we will discuss the imprisonment of Paul the apostle, who was placed on house arrest and tried, even though he committed no crime. And we will learn that many other Christians were persecuted and punished for preaching the gospel. We will discover that in our own experiences as Christians we may face unjust treatment. But even in the face of such trials, we must persevere and continue to uplift the name of Jesus by our words and actions.

Out of the Story for Teachers
Read or review the Into the Story section with your class. Then complete and discuss the following activity with the group:
1. Name three positive things that happened as a result of Paul’s imprisonment.
2. Give an example of something in your own life that reminds you of Paul’s experience.
3. Name someone else in the Bible who was thrown in prison or punished for preaching or for their loyalty to God.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Genesis 41:37-57; Esther 4:1-16.

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following information to shed more light on specific aspects of the story for your students.
1. Before Paul became a believer he persecuted Christians. He really believed that they were going against the will of God by preaching that Jesus was the Son of God. When he was converted and became a Christian himself, many believers were afraid of him. They were not convinced that he had been converted. After hearing about his experience on the road to Damascus, of how Jesus appeared to him and changed his name from Saul to Paul, and how Paul became a true follower of Christ, the Christian believers finally accepted him and welcomed him into their fellowship (Acts 9:20-28).

2. From the very beginning of Paul’s ministry the Jews sought to kill him, the man they had known as Saul (Acts 9:23). After his conversion, he spent some time in Damascus preaching and teaching about Jesus. He then went on to Jerusalem and stayed with the believers there. Again, the Jews tried to kill him for speaking out about their pagan practices. So Paul moved on to travel to other regions, preaching the gospel. (See Acts 9:20-31.)

3. Believers were first called Christians in a place called Antioch (Acts 11:26). In many places the gospel was preached only to the Jews. But in Antioch the message of the gospel was preached to the Greeks also (Acts 11:19-21). Paul spent a whole year in Antioch with a faithful man name Barnabas, preaching and
teaching in the churches there (Acts 11:24-26). The Lord spoke to the ministers in Antioch, telling them that He had a very special work for Paul and Barnabas. So they laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and prayed a special prayer of blessing over them. Then they sent the two missionaries off to do the work that God had called them to do (Acts 13:1, 2). Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel not only to the Jews, but to the non-Jews also (Acts 13:16, 43-48).

4. Paul and Barnabas traveled to many regions. On one occasion they returned to Antioch. There they found a dispute among the believers about whether or not the non-Jewish believers should be circumcised. Some of the Jewish Christians thought that those who were not circumcised could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas spoke to the people about their ministry to non-Jews, and of how many people were converted and accepted Christ. They spoke of the many miracles that had been performed among the non-Jewish believers. Peter was there also, and gave testimony of how God also had called him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. After much discussion, many of the Jewish Christians agreed that some of the old Jewish laws were not a requirement for salvation (Acts 15:1-35).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Hand out paper and pencils to class members. Have each person write a short paragraph describing something they will do differently in the upcoming week to show the love of Christ, or to be a witness in word or deed to someone they may interact with on a regular basis. Tell class members to focus on situa-

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.
those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:14-21, NIV).

Summary

Share with the class the following passage, which was written by Paul to the Romans:

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:14-21, NIV).

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Acts of the Apostles, chapters 44, 45.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

To illustrate the theme of this lesson, we look to the words of Ellen White: “The desire for love and sympathy is implanted in the heart by God Himself. Christ, in His hour of agony in Gethsemane, longed for the sympathy of His disciples. And Paul, though apparently indifferent to hardship and suffering, yearned for sympathy and companionship. The visit of Onesiphorus, testifying to his fidelity at a time of loneliness and desertion, brought gladness and cheer to one who had spent his life in service for others” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 491).

This lesson helps students see that being a follower of Christ does not mean automatic immunity against the struggles of life. There are still irritations, loneliness, doubts, and frustrations. Staying focused on godly things and perspectives can prove difficult while dealing with their own self-disappointments and questions. This is why God created the church and sacrificed His own Son, so that we can be adopted into this spiritual family (see Ephesians 1:5).

The church is meant to be a spiritual family that will love and honor each other. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul exhorts them to “do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10, NIV). Paul himself was blessed to experience the very comfort and “good” deeds of fellow believers during his time of imprisonment and loneliness. His experience of authentic fellowship is underscored in 2 Timothy—this week’s Scripture story. God provided comfort to Paul through the loving-kindness of Onesiphorus and other like-hearted believers.

However, we do not help others out simply because it is a command from our Father. We help because it can also alleviate our own pain. Instead of focusing on our own needs and becoming consumed with self-pity, focusing on the needs of others enables us to channel our energies in a more productive manner. Paul exemplified this in 2 Timothy 4:17. Despite imprisonment, his goal was still to share God’s message of hope and healing.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that being a Christian is not without challenges. (Know)
- Realize that God formed the church—His spiritual family—to be His extension of encouragement and empowerment. (Feel)
- Be challenged to assess their role and commitment as a part of God’s family and reach out to other hurting people around them. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Community
- Fellowship
- Loneliness
- Church family

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

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

There is a misconception that when you become a Christian you will never feel angry, sad, depressed, lonely, or any other negative feeling. However, that cannot be further from the truth. Look in the Bible and you will find that many of the great leaders, at some point or another, felt despair. Elijah was persecuted and fell into a state of depression, while Paul was imprisoned and no doubt experienced bouts of loneliness. Both had their pain alleviated by a simple, caring gesture from another human being. We were not meant to live alone. We were made to live as a community.

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 is the situation that Paul is in here? What is happening to him?
• Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.
• Paul mentions some people who have helped him and some who have hurt him. What can we learn from their actions and consequences?
• What are your goals in life? What do you spend your time on and what do you need to start spending more time with?
• Are your relationships your first priority? What can you do to ensure that they are? What sacrifices do you need to make?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Romans 1:12 (NLT): “When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.”

It is easier to stay consistent in our faith when we are surrounded with nurturing and caring fellow believers. Repeatedly in the New Testament we are told to do different tasks for “one another” and “each other.” You are not responsible for the rest of the church family. However, you are responsible to them. God expects you to do your best to help each other.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light
Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Effective Praise

The book Common Sense Parenting describes a technique called “effective praise,” which is more powerful than merely saying “Good job” or “Fantastic.” It consists of three steps:

1. Showing your approval (e.g., Thanks for preparing this week’s lesson at home).
2. Describing the positive (e.g., I’m really glad that you took the time to fill in all the questions and look up each Bible text).
3. Giving a reason (e.g., Preparing in advance shows that you’re committed to these sessions and that my efforts to teach you are rewarded).

For really exceptional behavior, you may want to add a fourth step: reward. It doesn’t have to be a gift, even a special privilege will suffice.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Sit the students in a circle. Give each student a piece of paper and a pen. Instruct them to write their name at the top. Now pass the paper clockwise (or counterclockwise). The person receiving the paper should look at the name and write down an encouraging word, a note affirming the contributions that perimeter connections have made to their learning.

on specific aspects of the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Setting. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary reveals that this was Paul’s last letter, written when he was virtually alone in prison, except for Luke “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11, NKJV). At the time of writing this letter to Timothy, the emperor, Nero, had already sentenced Paul to death.

2. Theme. This letter has been referred to as Paul’s last will and testament. It is a personal letter to Timothy but also to the church in general. Interspersed through this letter, Paul asks for visits from his friends and for his scrolls. In these last words he reveals his loneliness and strong love for his family in Christ.

3. Outline. Paul pours his heart into this last letter, and it reveals his priorities and goals. In this letter he exhorts Timothy to be a faithful successor, encouraging him to continue the work of building God’s church. He also gives an insight into the traits of a good leader, advising believers on the methods of communicating God’s truth, and offers warnings of perilous times to come and final words of encouragement and edification. This reveals a man with steadfast faith, confident endurance, and a lasting love.

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.
son has made to the group, or compliments on their unique qualities, etc.

When the papers have completed the round, each students should get back their own paper. Allow some time for your students to read their papers and then ask: Do you feel differently about the group now that you have had a chance to read the positive messages other people have written? Was it easy to write positive messages? How did it feel?

Summary

Share the following story in your own words:

Randy Frazee has written a book called The Connecting Church. He has a son who was born without a left hand. One day in Sunday School the teacher was talking with the children about the church. To illustrate her point she folded her hands together and said, “Here’s the church, here’s the steeple; open the doors and see all the people.” She asked the class to do it along with her—obviously not thinking about his son’s inability to pull this exercise off. Then it dawned on her that the boy wouldn’t be able to join in. Before she could do anything about it, the little boy next to his son, a friend of his from the time they were babies, reached out his left hand and said, “Let’s do it together.” The two boys proceeded to join their hands together to make the church and the steeple. Frazee says, “This hand exercise should never be done again by an individual because the church is not a collection of individuals, but the one body of Christ.”

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Acts of the Apostles, chapters 46, 47.

*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.
alone but not defenseless

Key Text: 2 Timothy 4:8.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Share the following with the class as an introduction to the lesson:

The apostle Paul had to stand trial before Nero, but he did not have an advocate. There was no one willing to speak in his behalf—no one to defend him. We may find ourselves in situations where we have to stand for what is right, for what we believe in, and there may not be anyone else to side with us or to defend us. We may have to stand alone. Are you willing to stand for the truth, for the Word of God, even if it means standing alone? That is a question every Christian will have to answer someday, if not today. Many believers must stand for the right on their jobs, or at school. Sometimes young people must make the choice to stand for the right among their friends or peers, and they may have to stand alone, because no one else is willing to speak up or to side with them.

There will come a day when all must stand before the Great Judge of the universe. “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10, NKJV). But on that day we can be sure that we will not have to stand alone. It’s a promise. First John 2:1 tells us that Jesus is our Advocate, and Jude 24 tells us that He is able to present us faultless before the throne of God. Since we know that He will stand for us and with us on that day, let us make the choice to stand for Him today, even if it means we must stand alone. But we know that we are not really alone. He is with us—even today.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand that every Christian will have to defend his faith. (Know)
• Feel the heartfelt desire to stand for what is right even if it means standing alone. (Feel)
• Choose to do the right thing no matter the consequences. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Perseverance
• Courage
• Witnessing

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Have class members work in twos or threes to complete the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. After a few minutes, have each group share their examples with the entire class. Which of the Bible examples given had to stand alone? Which of the examples had someone to stand with them or support them?
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words.

In March 2009 two American journalists, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, were filming in China near the North Korean border. The two young women were soon arrested by North Korean authorities, and charged with crossing into North Korean territory with hostile intentions. Although they were innocent of any crime, the two journalists were sentenced to 12 years of hard labor. Often innocent people are accused falsely and even punished for crimes they did not commit. This week we will continue to study the life of Paul. False accusations were raised against Paul, which led to his arrest and trial before Nero, and later his death.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words.

We must make choices every day. What clothes should I wear today? Should I finish my homework? Who will my friends be? What should I watch on TV? What music will I listen to? Will I obey my parents? Everything that we do and say is the result of a choice. Often, we aren’t even aware that we are making a choice. It’s just second nature. We do it without thinking about it. In this lesson we will focus on choosing or making the decision to stand for what is right, whatever the outcome may be.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Read or review the Into the Story section with your class. Then complete and discuss the following activity with the group:

1. Name three things that Paul says will happen to people in the last days. How should Christians respond to the people who do these things?
2. What is the reason Paul is suffering and how does he feel about it?
3. Was there ever a time you were ashamed or embarrassed to speak out about something but you had to anyway? Share this experience with the class.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on specific aspects of the story for your students.

In Acts chapters 21 though 28 we read of Paul’s trials and persecution by the Jews in Jerusalem who wanted to kill him because of his teachings. We read of his arrest and imprisonment in Rome. Read through these chapters to get a fuller understanding of the suffering that Paul experienced. Use this information to help you with your presentation of this week’s lesson.

“St. Paul, whose earlier Hebrew name was Saul, was ‘of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews’ and in religious respects ‘as touching the law, a Pharisee’ (Philippians 3:5). Acts identifies Paul as from Mediterranean Tarsus, (in present-day south-central Turkey), well-known for its intel-

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Socratic Questioning

Socrates was a great educator who taught by asking questions. He used six types of questions, attempting to challenge accuracy of thinking as well as completeness. Critical thinking skills are important for our youth so that they can be thinkers and not mere reflectors of others’ thoughts and opinions.

Below are listed the six types of questions he used, as well as a sample from each category.

1. **Conceptual clarification**—Get them to prove the concepts behind their argument. *What exactly does this mean?*
2. **Probing assumptions**—Get them to think about their presuppositions. *You seem to be assuming . . .*
3. **Probing rationale, reasons, and evidence**—Dig into their reasoning. *How do you know this?*
4. **Questioning viewpoints and perspectives**—Show that there are other, equally valid viewpoints. *What alternative ways of looking at this are there?*
5. **Probe implications and consequences**—Do the logical implications make sense? *How does . . . fit with what we learned before?*
6. **Questions about the question**—Bounce the ball back into their court. *Why do you think I asked this question?*

(Taken from http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic_questions.htm.)
lectual environment. Acts also claims Paul said he was ‘a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee’ (Acts 23:6).

“According to his own testimony, Paul [as Saul according to Acts] ‘violently persecuted’ the ‘church of God’ (followers of Jesus) prior to his conversion to Christianity (Galatians 1:13, 14; Philippians 3:6; and Acts 8:1-3).

“Paul asserted that he received the gospel not from [any] person, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11, 12).

“Paul’s conversion can be dated to around A.D. 33 by his reference to it in one of his letters. According to the Acts of the Apostles, his conversion . . . took place on the road to Damascus, where he experienced a vision of the resurrected Jesus, after which he was temporarily blinded (Acts 9:1-31; 22:1-22; 26:9-24). . . .

“Most scholars agree that a vital meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem church took place in A.D. 49 or 50. Paul refers to this meeting in Galatians, and Luke describes it in Acts 15. Most think that Galatians 2:1 corresponds to the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. The key question raised was whether Gentile converts needed to be circumcised (Acts 15:2; Galatians 2:1). At this meeting, Peter, James, and John accepted Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. . . .

“[After spending some time traveling] Paul [returned to] Jerusalem A.D. 57 with a collection of money for the congregation there. Acts reports that the church welcomed Paul gladly, but [he was soon arrested]. Paul caused a stir when he appeared at the Temple, and he escaped being killed by the crowd by being taken into custody. He was held as a prisoner for two years in Caesarea until, in AD 59, a new governor reopened his case. He appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen and was sent to Rome for trial. Acts reports that he was shipwrecked on Malta where he was met by St. Publius (Acts 28:7) and the islanders, who showed him ‘unusual kindness’ (Acts 28:2).

“He arrived in Rome A.D. 60 and spent two years under house arrest. Tradition has said that Paul was beheaded, while Peter was crucified upside down. This account fits with the report from Acts that Paul was a Roman citizen and would have been accorded the more merciful execution [of death by the sword]” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Pass out paper and pencils to class members. Have each person make a list of situations in which they have had to choose between doing the right thing or taking the easy way out. After each situation listed answer the following questions:

1. What was your choice in this situation?
2. Do you think you did the right thing? If not, what will you do differently next time?

If time permits, let those who are willing share their responses with the class.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book 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 with the class the following quote taken from the book In His Steps, by Charles M. Sheldon (copyright 1985, Barbour and Company, Inc.).

The pastor of a small church made the following proposition to his congregation:

“I want volunteers from the First Church who will pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the question, ‘What would Jesus do?’ And after asking that question, each one will follow Jesus as exactly as he knows how, no matter what the result may be.

“At the close of the service I want all those members who are willing to join such a company to remain and we will talk over the details of the plan. Our motto will be, ‘What would Jesus do?’ Our aim will be to act just as He would if He was in our places, regardless of immediate results. In other words, we propose to follow Jesus’ steps as closely and as literally as we believe He taught His disciples to do” (In His Steps, p. 15).

Say to your class members: “This question has been used in many trite ways—even to market jewelry! But it’s still a valid question to consider. I challenge you, in everything that you do and say this week, first ask yourself this question—What would Jesus do?”

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 48, 49.

*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.
I. SYNOPSIS
We see John’s temperament on display when he encouraged Jesus to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans who withheld their hospitality from the Savior (Luke 9:54, 55). He was hotheaded indeed, but that defect was perhaps matched by his naked ambition. We see his thirst for prestige when he and James enlisted the aid of their mother to help them gain prominent spots in the kingdom, causing a near meltdown among the other disciples (Matthew 20). John was at best an unfinished project.

In spite of his “issues” John made it a point to hang close to Jesus. The youngest of the disciples, he was impressionable and teachable, willing to be led by a Man whose unconditional love and patience with him simply knocked his socks off. As his three Epistles testify, John had experienced the transforming love of Jesus, and this love became the rule of his life. There is no better exposition on the love of God expressed through Jesus than that found in the book of 1 John.

The core message to be communicated this week is that time spent with Jesus, time spent in the presence of God, is not wasted time. The love of Jesus purifies the character, ennobles the mind, and prepares one to communicate the love of God to others. Jesus can remove the evil traits of character in us and fit us for His service, but none of this can happen in a life that is too busy to know God.

II. TARGET
The students will:

- Know that the love of God has the power to transform their lives into the image of Jesus Christ. (Know)
- Accept the love of God as the principal rule by which they live. (Feel)
- Share the love of God with others that they, too, might come to know God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Growth/transformation in Christ
- Ambition
- Love is . . .
- Knowing God

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

II. GETTING STARTED

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

Psychologist and author Dr. Ellen McGrath wrote the following in a Psychology Today article entitled “The Power of Love”: “Love is as critical for your mind and body as oxygen. It’s not negotiable. The more connected you are, the healthier you will be both physically and emotionally. The less connected you are, the more you are at risk.”

McGrath goes on to note that the love she’s speaking about in her piece is not the “love” glamorized in our increasingly entertainment culture. The
What Do You Think? activity is designed to explore some of the misconceptions about love that we unknowingly harbor.

According to the apostle John, love is a Person, love is God (1 John 4:8). God’s love is the only love that positively changes one’s character.


Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In a March 28, 2008, article featured at Washingtonpost.com, “On Parenting,” columnist Stacy Garfinkle wrote:

“On Saturday an 18-year-old high school cheerleader from Florida died from complications related to plastic surgery. The girl was having surgery to correct asymmetrical breasts and inverted nipples, the Palm Beach Post reported, when she may have had a deadly reaction to anesthesia.

“Nearly 225,000 plastic surgeries were performed last year on teens, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Breast surgery, nose jobs and laser hair removal are among the most popular procedures. And the surgeries aren’t just happening for girls. More than 16,000 breast reduction surgeries occurred in boys.

“Teenagers seeking plastic surgery usually have different motivations than adults, says the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. ‘They often have plastic surgery to improve physical characteristics they feel are awkward or flawed, that if left uncorrected, may affect them well into adulthood. Teens tend to have plastic surgery to fit in with peers, to look similar.’”
(Source: http://voices.washingtonpost.com/parenting/2008/03/plastic_surgery.html)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In a culture obsessed with outward appearance is it any wonder that teenagers are looking for surgical fixes to anything amiss in the mirror? Our society seems blissfully unconcerned about the interior life of individuals, about what truly makes us who we are. Yet this is the chief concern of God. God is into extreme makeovers, but He tends to work from the inside out. This is the message we get from the life of the apostle John. True and lasting transformation can come only from the love of God, and He alone is qualified to perform the operation.

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.

• God Is Light. The concept of God as light may not be new to your students, but its implications will be. Because God is light, He seeks to reveal Himself to us in His perfect holiness and majesty. Light always reveals, and this is the core objective of God in sending His sinless Son to save humanity. Because John and the other disciples experienced God in all His fullness through Jesus Christ, they were transformed. Consequently, if we claim to be followers of God, then we must walk in the light, and doing so will transform us! This is the sanctifying experience that John had as he learned at the feet of Jesus. Remember, the man writing these things was once a very unloving person.

• God Is Love So We Must Love. First John 4:7-16 is perhaps the best definition of love and the demands that it makes in the lives of God’s people. Notice how John implores us to love each other. Notice how he links one’s ability to love to one’s connection with God. No God, no capacity to love. Explore with your students this link between God—who is love—and our ability to love others. The ability to love is a test of whether or not we are born of God.

• Truth Matters. The Ephesian church during the time of John was beset by false teachers, hence this admonition on which religious teachers should be welcomed into one’s home. John knew firsthand the power of the truth—he lived in close proximity to the Way, Truth, and Life. He had little tolerance for false teachers who rejected Jesus. In a time when people are willing to whitewash truth to “get along” with others, what are the implications of this message? Wouldn’t John be labeled a hatemonger today?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Romans 6; John 15:1-8; Matthew 6:43-48; John 17:3.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. The Letters in Brief. The three Epistles of John are difficult to cover in a single lesson. First John, for instance, stresses the themes of love, light, knowledge, and life as it warns against the dangers of heresy. In each case, John recognizes God as the source of all of these noble gifts, and he does so in an effort to assure the Ephesian believers of eternal life through Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-4).

Second John is concerned with how Christian truth relates to hospitality—specifically, which religious teachers should be invited to dwell in a home and which should not. At the time, certain religious teachers were using the hospitality of church members to spread heresy. Confused believers at Ephesus needed to know how to deal with these itinerant heretics, since in the culture of the day hospitality to friends and strangers was expected.

Third John encourages the Ephesian believers to extend their hospitality to genuine teachers of truth. This letter focuses on the behavior of one Diotrephes, who refused to abide by John’s counsel and also refused to welcome traveling missionaries into his home.

2. Love on Life Support. As we read the Epistles of John, we must ask ourselves why the apostle chose love to be the overarching theme of his letters. Could there have been an absence of love? Here’s what Ellen White noted about a change that took place in the church in the years following Pentecost.

“After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the disciples went forth to proclaim a living Saviour, their one desire was the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of communion with saints. They were ten-
der, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth’s sake. In their daily association with one another, they revealed the love that Christ had enjoined upon them. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts.

“But gradually a change came. The believers began to look for defects in others. Dwelling upon mistakes, giving place to unkind criticism, they lost sight of the Saviour and His love. They became more strict in regard to outward ceremonies, more particular about the theory than the practice of the faith. In their zeal to condemn others, they overlooked their own errors” (The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 547, 548).

3. The Write Time. Many scholars believe that John wrote his letters sometime between the late A.D. 80s and early 90s. In the mid A.D. 90s, John and many other believers began to suffer persecution under the reign of the emperor Domitian.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask one of the students to read 1 John 3:1-3. Ask them to reread the last verse again: “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (verse 3, NKJV).

The word “pure” mentioned in verse three comes from the Greek word hagnos. This word describes a person who is clean, modest, undefiled, morally faultless, and without blemish. It describes Jesus Christ.

Ask your teens to close their eyes. Speak the adjectives that describe the life of Jesus in their hearing. Then ask each student to think of one thing in their life that is getting in the way of their relationship with Christ, preventing God from transforming them.

Ask a student to pray, asking God to give each class member the power and willingness to surrender all to Him.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The apostle John spent a relatively short amount of time with Jesus, but that brief period of time changed his life. We know that Jesus saw something special in John because he was the disciple to whom Jesus entrusted the care of His mother (John 19:26, 27). Would Jesus have given His mother to an ambitious hothead? Probably not.

John was by no means perfect, even after time spent with Jesus, but he continued in the faith, carefully obeying the teachings of Jesus and surrendering himself to the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. The result was a stalwart exponent of the gospel who worked tirelessly to build up the fledgling Christian church at Ephesus.

John’s Epistles show us a believer who understands the practical, life-changing power of God’s love. He dares us to fall into the clutches of God’s love and continue to sin (1 John 3:4-9). He challenges us to tolerate no substitutes to Jesus Christ, no false teaching or false teachers (2 John). He commends all who stand firm for right in the face of the powerful (3 John). Not bad for a former bad boy!

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 53, 54, 55.

*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
Persecution. The very word discomforts believers of every faith, and Christians are no exception. We are not masochists. We take no special pleasure in pain, yet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ declared: “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 15:18, NIV).

The apostle John was keenly aware that his belief in Christ put him at odds with Jewish leaders and Roman authorities. He saw believers murdered, and endured the execution of his brother James in A.D. 44. Yet John was undaunted in his love for God and the truth. His preaching and miracles aroused the ire of the Roman emperor Domitian, who first tried boiling him in a caldron of oil before exiling him on Patmos. Many years earlier he stood with his brother James assuring the Savior that he could indeed drink the cup that Jesus would drink (Matthew 20:22). At the time he had not envisioned that Jesus’ cup would cost him so much.

As is often the case, that which humanity intends for evil, God uses for His glory, and He did this when John was persecuted.

Your students need to know that persecution is not to be feared. It was in the crucible of trial, stuck on an island in the Aegean Sea, that God revealed Himself to John and gave him a revelation of Jesus Christ and the events that would usher in the end of the world and the return of the Savior. In his senior years John returned from the Isle of Patmos with his testimony sharpened, and he used his experience to continue to build up the Christian faith. He was a faithful witness until his death—of natural causes. Whether we die from persecution or not, God has promised to give us the grace needed to endure.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that belief in God will always require sacrifice. (Know)
• Understand that God never calls us to endure that for which He does not prepare us. (Feel)
• Accept the challenge to live their faith in the face of trial. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Persecution
• Adversity/trials
• Character
• Authority/respect

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 everyday annoyances that upset many teenagers and adults today pale in comparison to the
persecution many Christians around the world are currently enduring for their belief in God. The object of this activity is to get the students talking and discussing some of the common irritants that bother them when compared with the real challenges faced by Christians in, say, China or Saudi Arabia.

After the students complete and discuss their answers, consider asking them whether or not any of the annoyances listed in the activity rise to the level of persecution. It is not uncommon to hear teens describe minor irritations in the starkest terms.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

“Nothing will happen to me. They know and respect me. Nobody will harm me.’ Those were the last words Pastor Kantheswar Digal spoke to his son Rajendra and his wife, Karpul.

“A Christian for more than 50 years, Pastor Digal was one of the few believers living in the small village of Sankarakhole, in Orissa state, India. He was well known by the Hindus who shared his neighborhood. Yet, his son says, the family lived there in relative peace.

“We had no enemies there,’ Rajendra told our VOM (Voice of the Martyrs) workers about his small hometown. ‘We could practice our faith in Christ comfortably with no problems with anybody locally.’

“Nonetheless, on Aug. 24, 2008, when Hindu radicals began violent attacks against Christians throughout Orissa, venomous threats by agitators forced the Digal family to leave their village.”

Settling in a makeshift shelter, Pastor Digal traveled back to his village to check on his home. He never made it. Several radical Hindu men dragged him from a crowded bus breaking his legs in the process. They proceeded to torture him, demanding that he return to Hinduism.

“I am a strong believer in Jesus Christ,’ Pastor Digal said. ‘You may kill me but I will never become Hindu.’’ The men did, dumping his broken body in a creek.


**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Grizzly stories, such as the one recorded above, are becoming more and more frequent. Some believe that humans are evolving into a higher, more enlightened state, but you’d never know it from the religious hatred and bigotry engulfing our world. Religious beliefs and disputes are at the heart of most conflicts creeping up around the world today.

How do we as Christians face a tide of opposition and the specter of personal bodily injury? How should we respond? Should we “turn the other cheek” and pretend that we haven’t been hurt? How does God relate to us when we face adversity?

These are a few of the questions many Christians want answered, and this week’s lesson offers us a case study from which we can glean fear-dispelling insights.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

This week’s *Into the Story* scripture introduces us to John in one of the most challenging periods in his life. Exiled to a penal colony off in the sea, John somehow remains optimistic and upbeat. As you process the Scripture with your class, be sure to pay special attention to John’s tone. He is happy in spite of his circumstances—a “skill” that every Christian must learn.

Also, consider the role that God plays in this brief narrative. What is John saying about God? What is God saying to—and through—him? Is God willing to speak to us in our times of need, or is His voice reserved for great Christian lights such as John? God is speaking to John as though he were the only person on the planet.

Finally, John’s message brims with encouragement for God’s people down through time. What do verses 4-6 tell us about Jesus Christ? What comfort can we draw from the fact that Jesus, our conquering King, overcame the adversity and trials He faced while on earth? John’s call to exalt Jesus should be a source of great hope for us because we know that one day Jesus will return to free us from this world.

**Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Acts 14:22; 2 Corinthians 4:7-11; Matthew 10:16-20; Romans 8:16-18.**

**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. The Man Who Exiled John. His name was Titus Flavius Domitianus, born on October 24, A.D. 51. Like many other Roman emperors, Domitian was insecure, and his personal insecurities led to virulent brutality. He trusted no one, and some historians report that every room in his palace had mirrors so that he could see who was behind him at all times. In political affairs he commanded strict loyalty from the Roman senate, executing some members with whom he disagreed. He insisted on being referred to as Dominus et Deus (“Lord and God”).

Persecutions of the small Christian sect in Rome began under the emperor Nero in A.D. 64. After a fire consumed nearly three quarters of Rome, Nero deflected attention from those who suspected that he started the fire for his amusement by rounding up Christians, torturing them until they implicated others, then putting scores of them to death in the most horrific ways imaginable. This persecution killed the apostle Paul, and two decades later the emperor Domitian attempted to kill another powerful witness—John. Most scholars believe that it was during the reign of Domitian—A.D. 85-96—that John wrote the book of Revelation from the visions given him by God.

2. Before the Emperor. Ellen White sets the scene of John’s trial before the emperor. “John was accordingly summoned to Rome to be tried for his faith. Here before the authorities the apostle’s doctrines were misstated. False witnesses accused him of teaching seditious heresies. By these accusations his enemies hoped to bring about the disciple’s death.

“John answered for himself in a clear and convincing manner, and with such simplicity and candor

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Keep It Simple

In a Sabbath School lesson such as this one there are many points that can be made, but you’ll certainly not have enough time for all of them. One of the teaching secrets that made Jesus effective was His simplicity. Jesus knew ordinary people—how they talked, how they thought, etc.—because He studied people, and because He came in contact with them in His father’s carpenter shop. Jesus made sure that everything He taught was applicable to some real-life challenge that His students were facing or would face. He spoke in simple language, using everyday “props” to make His points.

Jesus’ hearers often missed the deeper layers of meaning in His teachings, but they left with more than enough to pique their interest. As you teach this week’s lesson, consider what items from the teens’ world you can use to build modern-day parables around the truths in this lesson. What language would make the message most simple? Ask God to give you the gift of simplicity that Jesus had when He taught.

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.
that his words had a powerful effect. His hearers were astonished at his wisdom and eloquence. But the more convincing his testimony, the deeper was the hatred of his opposers. The emperor Domitian was filled with rage. He could neither dispute the reasoning of Christ’s faithful advocate, nor match the power that attended his utterance of truth; yet he determined that he would silence his voice.

“John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant, even as He preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace” (The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 569, 570).

God’s servant did not wilt under the pressure of the Roman emperor. John never recanted his faith, and the testimony coming from the cauldron of burning oil cut the Roman emperor to the quick. He removed John and later sent him to Patmos. If God can protect His servant under such dire circumstances, can He not do the same for us?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the class to form a circle and hold hands. Tell the class that you are going to call out some situations, and that you want each class member to pray for the person on their right and left as if the situation you call out is true for the people whose hands they are holding.

Say: What would you tell God if you were holding the hand of:

A. Someone who is afraid of the time of trouble and the end of the world?

B. Someone who loves God, but isn’t sure of whether or not they would be true to God under trial and adversity?

C. Someone who is struggling to stand for Jesus in their school?

Close with a prayer asking God to give us the strength to stand for Him!

(Source: www.creativeyouthideas.com/blog/creative_teaching_ideas/adventure_prayer.html#more)

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

This week’s lesson reminds us that Christians aren’t made overnight. Trials are one of God’s appointed means of perfecting our characters and drawing us closer to Him. John learned this several times throughout his life.

His brother James was beheaded in A.D. 44. Philip was scourged in Phrygia, thrown into prison, and later crucified in A.D. 54. Matthew was killed with a halberd in A.D. 60. James the Less, the brother of Jesus and writer of the book of James, was stoned to death at the age of 94 by Jews. And the list goes on and on.

John knew that there would be attempts on his life, yet he remained faithful to God. How can we stand strong in the face of adversity? John’s life tells us how: John gave his life to Jesus and he esteemed the sacrifice of God to be so precious that it was an honor for him to share the fellowship of Christ’s suffering. We are not to worry about whether or not we’ll be able to stand in a similar trial. Our only responsibility is to be faithful to God each day and trust Him to supply our every need in the hour of trial.

Furthermore, if we remain faithful we too, like John, will see fresh revelations of Jesus Christ.

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

* 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

With the scope of this lesson being the book of Revelation, it’s absurd to try to thoroughly cover every verse and nuance of the text. You will need to choose what passage merits your attention for teaching. Suggested topics include the gift of prophecy, the church, and the remnant and its mission. Regardless of what direction you go, your presentation should be centered on Christ. After all, it was the revelation of Jesus that John wrote about on the island of Patmos.

The lesson helps will be weighted toward the theme of the remnant and its mission. Should you pursue this topic, it is important to emphasize that God has always had a remnant people. For example, Noah and his family survived the Flood and saved the human race from extinction. The exiles who returned to Jerusalem following their Babylonian captivity were the remnant who restored the Jewish race.

Like the remnant of today, the remnant in Old Testament times were devoted followers of God. They were people who refused to compromise with the majority. For example, while most of the Israelites partied with the world, there always remained a faithful remnant that followed God. They became heirs to the rights and privileges promised to Abraham.

When the Israelites rejected Jesus as the Messiah, God rejected them as His remnant nation and transferred the promises and privileges of His remnant followers to the Christian church.

This lesson offers you the opportunity to challenge the young people in your class to align themselves with God’s remnant followers in the last days of this earth’s history. In the book of Revelation these sold-out disciples of Jesus at the end of time will have two identifying characteristics: (1) they will keep the commandments of God; (2) they will have the testimony of Jesus (see Revelation 12:17; 19:10; 14; 18:1-4; etc.).

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Study the concept of the remnant, which is a theme throughout Scripture. (Know)
• Sense the heart of Christ for His bride, the church in the last days. (Feel)
• Have an opportunity to get involved in the mission of God’s remnant people. (Respond)

III.EXPLORE

• The gift of prophecy
• Jesus
• The church
• The remnant and its mission

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.
Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words.

Have you ever noticed how often people try to shirk responsibility? This happens not only in the workplace, but in the church as well. The fact is we all have a responsibility in God’s family. When every person in the church responds to God’s call for action, Ellen White’s prophecy of the last days will be fulfilled. She wrote: “I have been deeply impressed by scenes that have recently passed before me in the night season. There seemed to be a great movement—a work of revival—going forward in many places. Our people were moving into line, responding to God’s call. My brethren, the Lord is speaking to us. Shall we not heed His voice? Shall we not trim our lamps, and act like men who look for their Lord to come? The time is one that calls for light-bearing, for action.”

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

The Remnant and Its Mission

- What does being a part of God’s remnant in the last days mean to you?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider? Explain.
- If grace is what defines the parameters of the remnant, then what do you suggest is the source of the insider/outside mentality that some people have when it comes to this idea of God’s remnant people?
- The criterion that defines the remnant in the end of time is marked in Revelation. They “keep the commandments of God, and [have] the faith of Jesus.” From your perspective can this be used as a characteristic of a denomination? Why or why not?

The Three Angels’ Messages

- How do you think most people feel about the idea of an imminent judgment day? Are most people filled with fear or hope? How would you compare your feelings about the judgment with others?
- Babylon’s sin is self-sufficiency. In what ways are people tempted to be self-sufficient today?
- Rank the three angels’ messages in Revelation 14 from the one you feel our church is most effectively sharing with the world to the one that we are least effectively sharing. Explain.
The Centrality of Jesus in Revelation

Note that this study is about “The revelation of Jesus Christ” so that we can know “what must soon take place” (Revelation 1:1, NIV).

• Do you ever feel afraid when thinking about the last days? Why or why not?
• In the first nine verses of Revelation John mentions “the testimony of Jesus” twice. Why is this significant? What does he imply about the nature of God’s revelation?

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 remnant theme moves through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. In the Old Testament six different Hebrew roots form many different words that are used hundreds of times in all sorts of contexts.

The remnant is first used in Scripture in the context of Noah’s story. Genesis 7:23 records: “Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark” (NIV). The phrase “was left” comes from the Hebrew root sha’ar meaning “to remain,” or “to be left over.” This is the most commonly used root for the remnant. After the Flood, Noah and his family were the only ones remaining, i.e., the remnant.

Note that being associated with the remnant is a choice. Being part of the remnant did not happen through inheritance or by marriage. Noah and his family all had to choose to get on the boat. Following the Flood, most of Noah’s descendents chose to ditch the remnant. They rejected God’s covenant and began construction on the tower of Babel. They did not believe God’s promise (symbolized by a rainbow) to refrain from flooding the earth again.

With Abraham a new remnant was formed. He maintained a saving relationship with the Lord in a world that didn’t. He reestablished a family remnant that would preserve the worship of Yahweh and remain faithful to the covenant conditions. The remnant language then weaves through the stories of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the children of Israel. Throughout the Old Testament God promises to preserve His remnant. One of many examples comes from Isaiah 11:11 which says: “In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people” (NIV).

The Lord was faithful to His promises. He brought back a remnant of believers to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and rebuild the nation. But this nation became so obsessed with the law that the law became their religion. While Israel had the commandments, it rejected the Commandment-Giver; it was so caught up in preserving truth that it crucified the One who said “I am the . . . truth.” Consequently, the church became the new Israel, that is, the new remnant.

As you would expect, then, the remnant theme continues through the New Testament church. The

Teaching From . . .

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• 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.
apostle Paul describes the early Christian church as the remnant: “So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace” (Romans 11:5, 6, NIV).

Grace defines the boundaries of the remnant in the early Christian church. Because of the cross, all people—including the Gentiles—comprised the remnant. All people are called into a covenant relationship with Christ. But it’s only by grace that anyone can associate with the remnant of God.

### III. CLOSING

**Activity**

Close with a pop quiz and then challenge the students to make a commitment to be a part of God’s remnant people. True or False?

- God has always had a remnant of faithful followers. *(True)*
- The remnant will be comprised only of people who have lived perfect lives. *(False)*
- In the last days, God’s remnant people are described as commandment keepers and believers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. *(True)*
- God is calling us to be a part of His remnant today. *(True)*
- God’s remnant people are saved only by grace. *(True)*

**Summary**

Share the following case study and discuss it with your students.

Jolene has made a commitment to be a part of her church youth group. Sometimes the group’s functions interfere with her social life—like tonight. There is a group planning meeting, but Jolene wants to go to her boyfriend’s baseball game. He is playing and he gets upset when Jolene doesn’t watch him play.

What would you do in Jolene’s situation?

What should you do in Jolene’s situation?

What would Jesus do in Jolene’s situation?

What commitments are most important to keep?

What kinds of conflicting commitments are we likely to face in the last days? How can we remain loyal to God? Would you agree that the distinguishing mark of the remnant church is an uncompromising commitment to God and God alone? Why or why not?

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1 Fundamental Belief No. 18.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 12.
3 Fundamental Belief No. 13.
I. SYNOPSIS

This final chapter in *The Acts of the Apostles* offers an inspiring call to carry on the legacy of spiritual heroes. Ellen White writes:

“The enemy of righteousness left nothing undone in his effort to stop the work committed to the Lord’s builders. But God ‘left not himself without witness.’ Acts 14:17. Workers were raised up who ably defended the faith once delivered to the saints. History bears record to the fortitude and heroism of these men. Like the apostles, many of them fell at their post, but the building of the temple went steadily forward. The workmen were slain, but the work advanced. The Waldenses, John Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome, Martin Luther and Zwingli, Cranmer, Latimer, and Knox, the Huguenots, John and Charles Wesley, and a host of others brought to the foundation material that will endure throughout eternity” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 598).

This lesson provides an ideal chance to challenge your youth group to give their lives for a cause that will endure throughout eternity. Use this opportunity to inspire the young people to leverage their lives and employ their spiritual gifts to build the kingdom of God.

Regardless of temperament, every person in your youth group is called to be a witness. God wants every one to be active in evangelism—regardless of someone’s personality type. Thus, the primary objective of this lesson is to help erase stereotypes we might have of evangelists and inspire every student to be an ambassador for Jesus.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Consider the wide scope of evangelism. *(Know)*
• Sense the heart of Christ for His wayward children. *(Feel)*
• Be challenged to get involved in building the kingdom of God. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

• Great controversy
• Witnessing/sharing faith
• Evangelism
• 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.

As an alternate activity, read Matthew 5:14-16. Unpack the passage with your students by listing their answers on a whiteboard.

• What are some examples of light that glares? Share some negative illustrations of light that can be blinding and destructive.
• What are some examples of light that glows? Share some positive illustrations of light that can
be glowing and productive.

- Now think about the statement of Jesus: “You are the light of the world.” Can you think of examples in which that “light” has been glaring and overwhelming, i.e., damaging to the work of God? Can you think of examples in which that light has been glowing, i.e., a warm and inviting light for God’s kingdom? How can we be God’s witnesses without turning people off or offending them?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Illustration

Charlie Peacock, in his book A New Way of Being Human, shares the following story:

At 4 p.m. on May 27, 1992, in the war-torn city of Sarajevo, people hungry for bread lined up outside a bakery. Without warning, a bomb fell and split the line into pieces, killing 22 people. Not far from the scene lived a musician named Vedran Smailovic. Before the weight of the war crushed Sarajevo’s music, Smailovic had been the principal cellist with the opera. At his wit’s end and sickened by the slaughter, Smailovic made a choice that day. He decided to breathe life into the rubble of war.

Every day thereafter, at 4 p.m. precisely, [he] put on his full, formal concert attire, took up his cello, and walked out of his apartment into the midst of the battle raging around him. He placed a little camp stool in the middle of the crater that the shell had made, and he played a concert. He played to the abandoned streets, to the smashed trucks and burning buildings, and to the terrified people who hid in the cellars while the bombs dropped and the bullets flew. Day after day, he made his unimaginably courageous stand for human dignity, for all those lost to war, for civilization, for compassion, and for peace.1

Folk singer Joan Baez said of Smailovic, “His playing celebrated the marvel of survival and mourned the madness of death.”2

Once a CNN reporter asked if he was not crazy for playing his cello while Sarajevo was being shelled. Smailovic answered, “You ask me am I crazy for playing the cello, why do you not ask if they are not crazy for shelling Sarajevo?”3

Robert Fulghum wonders, “Is this man crazy? Maybe. Is his gesture futile? Yes, in a conventional sense, yes, of course. But what can a cellist do? . . . All he knows how to do. Speaking softly with his cello, one note at a time, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, calling out the rats that infest the human spirit.”4

Bridge to the Story

In our dark world that’s scarred with terrorism, date rape, cancer, divorce, alcoholism, child abuse, and every conceivable kind of hate, God calls you to be a light.

What can you do? Consider Fulghum’s answer: “All that you know how to do.” Perhaps you can play your cello at the retirement home. Or serve soup at the homeless shelter. Or mix cement for Habitat for Humanity. In whatever way that God has wired you, leverage your gifts to build His kingdom.

That’s what Vedran Smailovic did. Two years later, at the Royal Conservatory Concert Hall in Manchester, England, the legendary cellist Yo-Yo Ma performed David Wide’s composition, “The Cellist of Sarajevo.” Smailovic was there to hear it.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

Matthew 16:18

- How do you interpret the power given to Peter by Jesus?
- As you look at the church today, do you believe Jesus’ prophecy that “the gates of hell will not prevail against it” is being fulfilled? Why or why not?
- The rock on which the church of Jesus is built has been identified as: (1) Jesus Christ and His work of salvation at Calvary; (2) Peter (the first leader at the church in Jerusalem); (3) the confession of faith that Peter gave and that all subsequent followers would give. Read 1 Peter 2:4-6 and Ephesians 2:19-22 and then explain which possible interpretation seems most plausible to you.

Ephesians 2:19-22

- Based solely on this text, how would you define the church?
- How does this text inform a Christ-follower’s understanding of evangelism?
- What part does the individual play in the process of “being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”?

Revelation 7:9-17

- What does this passage say about God’s kingdom? Why do you think Ellen White chose this passage as one of those to conclude her book
The Acts of the Apostles?
• "The great tribulation" has been explained to mean the suffering of believers through the ages; another explanation posits that it refers to a specific time of intense tribulation yet to come. Which interpretation do you believe is correct? Or could both explanations contain some truth? Explain.

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.
Why is it that 93 percent of Americans claim to believe in God but only 40 percent of Americans attend church? Many people love God; they just can’t stand the church!
Now contrast the church today with the early Christian church.
Given the explosive, exponential growth of the early Christian church, it is no surprise that Acts 2:47 says that “People in general liked what they saw” (Message). So what was it that nonbelievers saw in the church that they liked so much?
This growth makes sense when you consider the culture of the ancient world and how countercultural the church was in contrast. The church was unlike anything people had ever seen, and consequently people flooded into it to be a part of this radical new institution.

1. The hierarchical culture
First, the Roman culture was very hierarchical in ancient times. People were rigidly divided into classes. There was the Roman senate at the very top, then the equestrian class, then several other class distinctions until you got to the bottom of the ladder with slaves. Everything in the culture reinforced this caste system, and it was virtually impossible to improve your standing in life.
Then a new community emerged in which people followed the teaching of the Rabbi Jesus who destroyed the social ladder. He taught that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45, NKJV). The world had never seen anything like this.

2. The culture of gender discrimination
Furthermore, blatant discrimination against women was very common in the ancient world. John Ortberg points out that “the practice of just abandoning [baby girls] until they would die outside somewhere was legal, morally accepted, widely practiced by all social classes in the Greco-Roman world.” But Jesus included women in His inner circle of friends. And His followers believed that “there is neither . . . male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28, NIV).

3. The culture of marginalizing the poor and the sick
Finally, the ancient world was a cruel place for the sick—but not in the church. Normally, sick people were cast off and left to die. But Jesus and His followers embraced the outcasts—even lepers (see Matthew 8:2, 3). There had never been a community like this.
Now is it any wonder that slaves, women, the sick, the poor, and the disenfranchised all flocked to this new community called the church? If the church served others in the same way today as it did in the first century, do you suppose it would see the same growth? Why or why not?

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Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 58.

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**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

Close by introducing your young people to Joe Sixpack.

Meet Joe Sixpack. He lives across the street from you. He attends the local high school and plays on their football team. He chews tobacco. He dates a girl who sports a tattoo on her ankle. Joe loves Big Macs, Dizzee Rascal, and fast cars. Joe’s parents divorced when he was 6. Now, he lives with his mom and stepdad.

Joe’s stepdad attends the local Catholic church, but Joe doesn’t get to church except for Christmas and Easter. He believes in God, but sees church as irrelevant and boring. In Joe’s mind, as long as we do good things, we don’t have to belong to an organized religion. That’s why Joe volunteers at the local homeless shelter. He figures the best kind of religion is the type that meets needs, not the kind that sits around in funny-looking buildings.

**Summary**

After describing Joe Sixpack above, discuss the following questions:

1. Do you know anybody who reminds you of Joe?
2. Is it important to build friendships with non-Adventists like Joe? Do such friendships compromise or strengthen your faith?
3. Are Joe’s opinions about God and church valid? Why or why not?
4. What would attract Joe to our church?
5. Would Jesus have us reach Joe? How?

After discussing these questions (and some you may wish to add), develop a master plan for reaching Joe Sixpack. You may wish to have a Friend Day on which you can invite an unchurched buddy to your Sabbath School. You may wish to plan a program designed to speak Joe’s language. For example, you could invite a professional to speak, or host a Christmas party, or have a ski day. Whatever you do, don’t ignore Joe. Joe matters to God.

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2 As quoted at www.appleseedrec.com/sarajevo/vedran/.
3 Ibid.