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

- **Making It Real**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Begin here if you are studying this lesson on your own prior to, or after, studying it in a Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God apply to you personally. If you need more space to write, check out the Notes pages at the back of the study guide.

WHY THE BIBLE STORY APPROACH? (teacher introduction)

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

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

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

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

Welcome to Cornerstone Connections.

— The Editors

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

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*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 www.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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2. The Serpent  
3. Cain and Abel  
4. Seth and Enoch  
5. Noah  
6. Tower People  
7. Abraham  
8. Isaac  
9. Lot  
10. Rebekah  
11. Jacob and Esau  
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13. Israel | 1. Joseph  
2. The Brothers  
3. Moses  
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5. Fleeing Slaves  
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8. Aaron  
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13. The Bronze Serpent | 1. The Borders Revisited  
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6. Crossing Jordan  
7. Rahab  
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9. Gibeonites  
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11. Last Words of Joshua  
12. Annual Feasts  
2. Samuel  
3. Eli  
4. Philistines  
5. First King  
6. Saul’s Death  
7. Anointed  
8. Fugitive  
9. Lunatic  
10. Crowned King  
11. Incumbent  
12. Sinner  
13. Absalom |
| 2008 | 1. God’s People  
2. Solomon  
3. Temple Builder  
4. Proud Potentate  
5. Repentant Author  
6. Rehoboam  
7. Jeroboam  
8. Asa, Ahab, Jezebel  
9. Elijah  
10. Evangelist  
11. Coward  
12. The Sabbath  
13. Jehoshaphat | 1. Ahab  
2. Elisha  
3. Prophet  
4. Naaman  
5. Jonah  
6. Hosea  
7. Isaiah  
8. Jehovah  
9. Ahaz  
10. Hezekiah  
11. Assyria  
12. Manasseh  
2. Approaching Doom  
3. Last King  
4. Captives  
5. Daniel  
6. The Dream  
7. Three Hebrews  
8. Nebuchadnezzar  
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10. Daniel  
11. Daniel 7  
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2. Zechariah  
3. Temple Two  
4. Esther  
5. Queen  
6. Ezra  
7. Nehemiah  
8. Builders  
9. Plotters  
10. Reformers  
11. Jesus  
12. Deliverer  
13. Future Glory |
| 2009 | 1. Jesus  
2. It’s Time  
3. Mary  
4. Simeon/Anna  
5. The Wise Men  
6. The Child Jesus  
7. The Voice  
8. Victory  
9. Messiah Found  
10. Marriage Feast  
11. The Temple  
12. Nicodemus  
13. John the Baptist | 1. Samaritan Woman  
2. The Nobleman  
3. The Lame Man  
4. John the Baptist  
5. The Anointed One  
6. Peter  
7. Capernaum  
8. The Leper  
9. Levi-Matthew  
10. The Sabbath  
11. The Disciples  
12. The Centurion  
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2. The Seventy  
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7. The Trial  
8. Calvary  
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10. Mary Magdalene  
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12. By the Sea  
13. Jesus’ Ascension |
| 2010 | 1. The Mission  
2. The Holy Spirit  
3. The Lame Man  
4. Ananias/Sapphira  
5. God’s People  
6. Stephen  
7. Paul  
8. Peter  
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11. Spreading Good News  
12. The Thessalonians  
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2. Investigative Judgment  
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October

2—Know Yourself, Know God [p. 11]
Only when we know ourselves and the person we are becoming through Christ’s working in us are we able to transform our lives into gifts to our families, friends, coworkers, and communities.

9—Shut Door. Open Books? [p. 15]
God will pronounce everyone who confesses their sin and claims the blood of Christ for their life “not guilty.” Forgiven. Pardoned. Restored. But now is the time to make that choice.

16—The SINdrome [p. 19]
One of the greatest mysteries in the human story has to do with understanding the origin of evil. Ultimately, what people think about God becomes the most important thought any human will ever have.

23—Between Angels and Demons [p. 23]
A spiritual war is taking place—a war beyond what human eyes can see. Thus, the question remains, How does God’s power over evil get fleshed out through His people in the days in which we are living?

30—The Deadly Lie [p. 27]
The subject of death is one of the most controversial issues in the church. Media portrays it, pastors preach about it. Is it that important to understand? See what God says about it.

November

6—Power Gone Sour [p. 31]
Headlines abound with stories of corruption and abuse. How can we Adventists live and give a message of uncompromising conviction for this generation?

13—The World’s Worst Terrorist [p. 35]
The evil one has launched an all-out terrorist attack, seeking to destroy as many as possible. Are you prepared for it?

20—Discovering Daily Disciplines [p. 39]
Few of us would say no to a lasting and meaningful relationship with God—at least not consciously. But what are we willing to do to make it happen?

December

4—The Time of Trouble [p. 47]
The time of trouble is one of those phrases that fills Seventh-day Adventists and others who look for Jesus’ appearing with trepidation. Yet even though trying times are ahead, God has promised that His faithful followers will endure to the end.

11—The End of the World as We Know It [p. 51]
We oftentimes focus on the difficulty of the end-times and forget to focus on the power of God to deliver us. We need to remember that we are not alone, and we are truly safe with God!

18—Wiping the Slate Clean [p. 55]
God destroying the wicked is not a comfortable image. But we will have the opportunity to ask our questions, to see why God did what He did, and to let Him prove His goodness to the cosmos.

25—Extreme Makeover Heaven Edition [p. 59]
This chaotic world is not all there is. One day the great controversy between God and Satan will be over. The earth will be made new. And we will see our Maker face-to-face.
know yourself, know God

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Being emotionally healthy and having an authentic spirituality are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is impossible to be spiritually mature and emotionally immature (Peter Scazerro, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality).

Often we hit a wall in our growth despite years of repeating the patterns of Christian disciplines, activities, and behaviors. This wall is the result of deeply rooted dysfunctional emotional habits from our past. This wall prevents us from savoring the sweet experiences of an authentically mature life in Christ.

Few of us make the time to reflect inwardly on how deeply (and subtly) outward influences affect our decisions, words, and feelings. Without this awareness of who we are and how our circumstances affect us, we are unable to tackle exposure to the pressures and forces at work against us. Socrates said, “Can we ever know what art makes a man better, if we do not know what we are ourselves?”

We end up living someone else’s life, someone else’s expectations. Like a boat without oars or rudder, we are tossed and turned by every which way the winds of approval blow at us.

Only when we know ourselves and the person we are becoming through Christ’s working in us are we able to transform our lives into gifts to our families, friends, coworkers, and communities.

Nurturing a growing and authentic spirituality requires intentional and purposeful planning. If we do not plan, we could end up saying, as one church member did, “I was a Christian for 22 years, but instead of being a 22-year-old Christian, I was a 1-year-old Christian 22 times! I just kept doing the same things over and over again.”

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand themselves better— their “new true” self. (Know)
- Realize that knowing the truth is only the first step; true spirituality is being able to choose to do the right, despite opposition and pressure. (Feel)
- Be challenged to begin the journey of relinquishing their “old false” self so that they can live authentic Christlike lives as their “new true” self. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Self-awareness
- Growth/transformation in Christ
- Knowing God

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.
Before class starts, prepare stacks of six-inch-square pieces of aluminum foil (at least two per student), black and red indelible markers, and a mirror.

Hold up the mirror and ask the class why we look into mirrors. (To check our hair, clothes, makeup, and so on.) Just like we regularly check to see how we look on the outside, we also need to examine ourselves on the inside.

Take out the prepared squares of aluminum foil. Invite students to come forward and take a piece of foil. Explain that this foil is like a mirror. With a black marker, write on their “mirror” the negative messages they have heard or think in their heads but don’t say out loud. Then on another piece of foil, with a red marker, write down a positive message they have heard or believe about themselves. Which one was easier to fill up? Why? Is there any truth to the black writing?

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

In his short story “The Necklace,” Guy de Maupassant tells about a young woman named Mathilde who was desperate to be accepted by high society. Her husband was a common worker but they were invited to a grand ball. Feeling that she had to make a good impression on the people at the ball, Mathilde borrowed a beautiful necklace from a wealthy friend. She was accepted by the aristocracy at the ball but the evening was far from a success because she lost the borrowed necklace!

Mathilde was too embarrassed and instead of just telling her friend, she convinced her husband to borrow 40,000 francs to replace the lost necklace.

For the next 10 years, Mathilde and her husband both worked two jobs to pay back the 40,000 francs. They ended up selling all they had and living in a slum.

One day, Mathilde ran into the friend who had loaned her the necklace. Mathilde looked so haggard from all those years of hard work and deprivation that her friend almost did not recognize her. She confessed to her friend what had happened and it was only then she found out that the original necklace had been made not with real diamonds, but with fake gemstones! It was worth less than 500 francs! Mathilde and her husband had worked so hard and suffered all those years just because Mathilde had tried to keep up appearances.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Do you ever feel that way about your spiritual life? That you’re always having to keep up appearances? You know just enough of the Bible to know how much you don’t know. You’re enough of a Christian to know the rules, but not good enough to know the joy of living them. It sounds like you’re enough of a Christian to make yourself miserable.

God doesn’t want you to settle for that! He wants to take you to the next level, where the real thrill of knowing Him lies.

**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 David is in here? What is happening to him?
- Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.
- David faced criticism and unrealistic expectations when he wanted to fight Goliath. What are some criticisms and unrealistic expectations you have encountered when you shared your dreams or hopes?
- How did David manage to stand firm against the powerful pressures that were trying to force him to be someone he was not?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 18:14; Romans 4:5.*

**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.*

According to The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, when Saul rejected Samuel’s inspired counsel, God called for another to be trained according to His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). “David’s training, like that of Christ, was carried on in the face of jealousy and hatred. Although David sometimes fell into transgression of the law he revered and advocated, he always humbled his heart before that law as supreme. As a result of David’s cooperation with the principles laid down by God through Moses and
Samuel, Israel gradually subdued all her enemies” (vol. 2, p. 449).

In 1 Samuel 17:39 (NIV) David says politely, “I cannot go in these . . . because I am not used to them.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary explains that this is evidence of both his faith in equipment that he has previously tested, crediting God with his victories even over wild animals. His faithfulness in little things (i.e., tending his father’s sheep) prepared him for greater tasks (i.e., slaying Goliath). “The procedure he chose was determined by his own spiritual convictions rather than by the unsanctified judgment of others, irrespective of position. . . . David could not fight in Saul’s armor—he must be himself. God designs that every man shall work in his own harness. We see a man in public life who takes well with the people, and we copy his mannerisms, hoping to find success through them. But God wants men who will be themselves, men who will learn from each day’s experience what they need to know in order to solve tomorrow’s problems” (vol. 2, pp. 538, 539).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary continues to elaborate that in 1 Samuel 17, David scored three victories:

The first is when he rose above Eliab’s taunting. He refused to be drawn into a petty exchange of verbal barbs, and showed he was in control of his emotions. Instead of retorting Eliab with an equally insulting comment, David simply asked disarmingly, “What have I done? . . . Can’t I even speak?” (verse 29, NIV). “Had he not learned patience with his sheep, he could not have been shown patience with his jealous brothers” (vol. 2, p. 539).

The second victory was attained by staying firm in his beliefs, even in the face of opposition from an authoritative figure. “Never dreaming of the possibility of a supernatural intervention, Saul planted seeds of doubt in David’s mind, and tempted him to wear the king’s own armor. But again with courteous deference David won the victory over doubt by adhering to his heaven-inspired purpose of maintaining faith in, and total dependence on, the Lord” (vol. 2, p. 539).

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

*Provide an Outline*

During the last five minutes of your lesson, give your students an outline of everything that you expected them to get from your lesson. Go over the outline with the students and ask them if there are any questions they may have. Be patient. Sometimes the students are unresponsive, but if you ignore the awkward silence for a minute or two, they may speak up after a while. Alternatively, pass out pieces of paper on which they can write a question they may have. Collect the questions (but let them keep the outline) and tell the students that you will address the questions when you return next week.

**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 Great Controversy. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

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

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
The final victory was the very public slaying of Goliath—the enemy that even Saul, the king who stood head and shoulders above his countrymen, was afraid of. “It was a victory of spiritual forces over material brute strength” (vol. 2, p. 539).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

If your class feels safe and comfortable enough, have them share what they wrote for Thursday’s Making It Real. Allocate about a minute for this section and let each student know beforehand that they just need to pick one of the questions and read aloud what they wrote. Resist the urge to give advice or dissect their answers. Simply let them share their innermost thoughts without hearing overt or implied judgment. If you detect an alarming problem (e.g., suicidal thoughts), you can address the issue prayerfully and privately when the class is over.

Summary

Share the following story in your own words:

The sixteenth president of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln, was attributed with saying, “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.”

We can try to hide who we are by conforming to the standards and acceptable behaviors that portray us to be someone we are not. However, sooner or later, the truth will come out. How we live, act, speak, and treat others will often make more of an impact on people’s perception of us (and of Christ) than our words do. We don’t run away from the culture we live in, but when people see us, they should see Jesus.

*Fundamental Belief No. 11.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Great Controversy, chapter 27.

*A special adaptation of The Great Controversy 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.
This week’s lesson brings students to the sobering reality that there will be a judgment. In truth God is doing the work of judgment today and Adventists refer to this phase as the investigative judgment, the time before Christ returns and everyone’s life is accountable to God. Ellen White wrote about the judgment: “Every man’s work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness” (The Great Controversy, p. 482). Throughout the Bible the theme of accountability continues to emerge in direct and clear terms. Even the image of an open book conveys the courtroom atmosphere of the investigative judgment. Malachi wrote: “A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name” (Malachi 3:16, NIV). The world today is reticent to hear about this truth, and yet around the world the three angels’ messages cry out, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come” (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

One of the tasks for this lesson will be to remind the students that God will pronounce everyone who confesses their sin and claims the blood of Christ “not guilty.” Pardoned. Redeemed. Forgiven. Restored. Righteous—according to the eyes of heaven. Students need to be challenged with the truth that today is the time of judgment and they need to make the choice to follow Christ. The story of Noah is perfect because the antediluvians needed to make the decision to come in before the Flood came. It may appear to young people, and the rest of the world, that decisions about loyalty to God can wait. This attitude is pervasive and as old as the world, but it is foolish. This week is a crucial time to urge young people to confidently, but seriously, face the truth about the judgment.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Discover the reality and the rewards of the investigative judgment. (Know)
• Grasp the need to live each day with the knowledge that the books of heaven are open. (Feel)
• Choose to be faithful and loyal to God’s rule and reign in their life today. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Judgment
• Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary
• Experience of Salvation

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 What Do You Think? activity involves choosing key words that relate to the message of God’s judgment of all who have lived. As they share the
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Throughout history there have been many sad moments when men stood in the place of God and passed judgments, condemning others to death. God alone is Judge, and His judgment is not only fair, but merciful.

Although mankind may pretend to deliberate truth and justice, there is only one Judge, and He has declared that the books are open! As you reflect on the story of Noah and the Flood, consider the awesome message and the opportunity for salvation that was freely offered to all. The same sobering message of judgment and salvation goes out today. How will people respond? Will it be like the days of Noah, where only a handful paid attention?

Out of the Story for Teachers

• Read every word and phrase carefully and underline the parts that you think are crucial to the story.
• As you read this story, what insights do you see in the account of the Flood that relate to people living at the time of the end?
• Read Matthew 24:39 and note the way the story of the Flood is likened to the judgment scene at the end of time. How is this story a perfect illustration of the judgment scene? How might it be different?
• Read Daniel 7:1-10 and note especially the judgment scene in verses 9 and 10. What is the connection between the judgment that came in the time of Noah and the judgment that is currently taking place today?
• In Matthew 25 there are three parables that describe the judgment scene at the end.
  — How is it that so few responded to Noah’s message? What might be different about “the end” that is before humanity today and the “then end” that was before Noah and the antediluvians long ago?
  — By the time the door shut and the floodwaters came, everyone had decided how they would stand before God—alone on their own merits, or like Noah, who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” When does the judgment take place? How does the day of atonement and

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

During the mid-1500s the Anabaptists were severely persecuted in Germany and the Netherlands. Hans Smit and Hendrick Adams were meeting in a home near the German-Dutch border for Bible study and prayer. Suddenly the entire house was surrounded and they were all arrested, brought before a judge, and sentenced to prison. The councilor Aix-la-Chapelle bitterly and viciously sought to put these two men to death for speaking against “the church.” They were both tortured and brought again and again before the judgment seat and pressed to recant. While the hateful leaders wanted to execute the Anabaptists, it was in their best interests to have the leaders recant and stop the revival. But Hans and Hendrick stood firm each time they were brought to face questions about their faith. The vindictive councilor screeched out a verdict shouting, “Away with them, away with them, to death and the fire . . . no pardon should be offered them anymore!” Clearly, Aix-la-Chapelle was out of control. Hendrick Adams looked him straight in the face and calmly prophesied, “You will not live to see my death.” Hans Smit sang joyfully as they led him through the streets and he walked deliberately to the stake, where the bloodthirsty church leaders ended his life and his body was burned. However, it was clear to all present that day that this man answered to a different judge and a higher court. Hendrick Adams looked him straight in the face and calmly prophesied, “You will not live to see my death.” Hans Smit sang joyfully as they led him through the streets and he walked deliberately to the stake, where the bloodthirsty church leaders ended his life and his body was burned. However, it was clear to all present that day that this man answered to a different judge and a higher court. Three days later, Hendrick Adams was led to the stake with the same brave enthusiasm for truth, and was executed. But the councilor who eagerly sought the deaths of these two men became stricken with an illness shortly after he pronounced their death sentence. He confessed in his final moments that he had sinned and God would judge him for his bloodthirsty behavior. He died before Hendrick Adams was led to the stake for execution, fulfilling the words that were spoken to him three days prior.
the heavenly sanctuary speak to this part of the last-day message to the world? Read Chapter 28 in *The Great Controversy* for a thorough explanation.

• On what basis can believers today be confident that God is declaring them “not guilty”?
• What other stories or events in Scripture remind you of the judgment scene depicted in this lesson?

**More Questions for Teachers:**

• Take a poll in your class about the attitude of people to the idea of a judgment. What are the sentiments of people today about being accountable to God about the truths He has revealed?
• How do you think the last-day message of Revelation 14:7 will be received?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:* 1 Kings 18; Genesis 6; 11; Jeremiah 36; Exodus 5:2.

**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 has a couple of different angles to discuss the judgment. 1. There is a personal approach for each student to be accountable to God, genuinely and purposively. 2. There is the big-picture approach to the judgment, looking at the prophetic view of the “investigative judgment” prophesied in Daniel and portrayed in the doctrine of the sanctuary.

**Personal angle:** Throughout Scripture there are many passages that describe being accountable to God personally about our decision to repent and receive the provision God has made, or trust in our own way. As a result, there tends to be three classes of people described in Scripture, as noted in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*:

“Human beings belong to one of three classes: (1) the wicked, who reject God’s authority; (2) genuine believers, who trusting in the merits of Christ through faith, live in obedience to God’s law; and (3) those who appear to be genuine believers but are not” (p. 361). There are various parables (Matthew 6:25; 7:23; 13; 20, and especially chapter 25) that depict a judgment scene where individuals have to face the results of their own choices.

**The investigative judgment angle:** The message of the sanctuary is not simply an afterthought of the Exodus, but is an earthly portrayal of a heavenly reality. The ministry and message of the sanctuary captures God’s plan of salvation, which includes the work of judgment. This topic will take more time than can be achieved in a Sabbath School class, and it is suggested to use *The Great Controversy* as a key resource. You might consider breaking the topic up in three parts, mirroring the outline given in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*:

“The events of the Day of Atonement illustrate the three phases of God’s final judgment. They are (1) the ‘premillennial judgment’ (or the ‘investigative judgment’) which is also called the ‘pre-Advent judgment’; (2) the
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 Great Controversy*, chapter 28.

*A special adaptation of *The Great Controversy* 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.

As to protect their privacy. On the Day of Atonement (judgment) everyone who wanted to be pardoned placed their hands on the lamb, and they leaned on it so as to represent putting their sin on the lamb. This was an act of confession and repentance.

Then in groups of two or three, invite the students to make a list on another piece of paper of all the things they can remember that Christ did that would be considered “righteous acts” of obedience to God. Have the students report what they compiled. The key issue of the judgment is: do you want to answer by your own works (good and bad) for yourself, or do you want God to judge you based on Christ’s righteousness?

You can have the students press their folded papers down on the table and then cover all of the papers with the pages that have the works of Christ, as a symbol of God’s pronouncement of their redemption.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

We need to convey a sobering message to young people today, not by guilt or by fear, but by the clear and pressing truth that we are living in the hour of God’s judgment. It is through our hope in Christ’s righteousness that we can bravely face each day knowing that as God looks at the list of our deeds, the word “PARDONED” is written. You could say something like this: “If there is one thing that I want more than anything else, it is that all of you will choose to have God pardon you and write your names in the book of life. It doesn’t happen just because you want it, you must deliberately choose it. Confess that your list is not good enough to cover you. Lean fully on the work that Christ has done for you. And claim the truth that God has judged you ‘not guilty.’”

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1. Fundamental Belief No. 24
2. Fundamental Belief No. 10
I. SYNOPSIS

One of the greatest mysteries in the human story has to do with understanding the origin of evil. Compared to other topics in the Bible, there is very little revealed about how sin began and what elements fostered the disease of sin in the heart of Lucifer, the glorious angel in the throne room of God. The three passages that tell the story of the birth of sin are found in Revelation 12, Ezekiel 28, and Isaiah 14. The mystery of sin’s starting point is complicated by why it was even possible. The answer is typically, “Because God gave His creation the power of choice.” While this is true, the presence of sin opens the door to so much pain and destruction that it is hard to see the enduring value of such freedom. But God could not govern the universe any other way. Ellen White claimed that in order for sin to be eradicated, “evil must be permitted to come to maturity” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 499). It is this topic that paints the big picture of salvation’s story, and the same story is really central to the highest purpose in the universe: saving God’s children and certifying His character to all.

In *The Great Controversy* chapters you will discover that the human problem with sin extends far beyond Adam and Eve, but to every creature who waits to see how God responds to the claims that Lucifer has made. In Genesis 3 the evil one draws Adam and Eve to disobey God and to aim for the same target that Lucifer made for his mark. The essence of the lie misdirects what people and angels think about the Creator. Ultimately, what people think about God becomes the most important thought any human will ever have.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Discover the origin of sin in the fall of Lucifer. *(Know)*
- Experience a renewed sense of confidence in God’s approach to the problem of sin. *(Feel)*
- Resolve to respond to God’s appeal rather than stubbornly resist. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Sin
- The nature of man
- The great controversy

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

**Activity**

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

This week the students are invited to defend a line of thought. Both statements are defensible, but as students choose a theme to illustrate, support, or explain, they are challenged to think. Evidence of extreme evil and extreme good make it hard to deny the existence of God and Satan. In other words, do you think about God’s goodness because you see evil looming in stark contrast, or are you more likely to cel-
ebrate God’s character when you see people exemplify it in acts of goodness?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of a husband and wife who discovered their toddler had quietly meandered into the storeroom in the house and commenced to explore. When the parents finally discovered his whereabouts, they knew immediately he had ingested something poisonous. Their child’s coloring was wrong. His behavior was lethargic. They called the poison control center and described what they thought the little boy had put in his mouth. The parents were urged to hurry and get their child to an emergency room and under no circumstances were they to let the child lose consciousness. To do so would be deadly.

They placed the child in the car seat and drove anxiously to the hospital. Along the way the little boy’s eyes began to droop and he started to fade off to sleep. As the father drove, the mother cried out to her son to stay awake. She tried everything. After a while the only thing that would keep her son awake was to pinch him. She pinched him hard enough to bruise him at times. But he remained awake because of the pain. With tears in her eyes and only a few minutes from the hospital she was forced to drastic measures again. When her child no longer responded to pinching, she slapped him. Not out of anger, but out of desperation to keep her child awake. Never before had she ever had to do something so agonizing, and yet it was the only thing she could do to save her child’s life. When they arrived at the hospital they were met by the emergency team and had the child’s stomach pumped. When their son’s life was out of danger they debriefed with the nurses and the doctor about how awful they felt hurting their child, just trying to keep him awake.

The nurses nodded but affirmed the couple, saying, “We know that must have been painful, but once they go to sleep we rarely ever save them without permanent damage. Just last week we lost a little girl because the parents couldn’t keep the child awake. The pinches and the slaps will heal. But your son will live.”

What do you think other travelers might have thought if they observed the mother in the back seat pinching and slapping a child? Knowing so little of the big picture, what conclusions could be made? How wrong are those conclusions?

How does this story depict the way people perceive God, the presence of sin, Satan, and the reign of evil in the human experience?

What are some comparisons of this story to the plan of salvation? How does our perception of God in the way He deals with sin shape our relationship to Him during the hard times?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It is likely that God would do “whatever it takes” to get humanity to know Him and dwell with Him for eternity. God would even take us to the horror of sin coming to its full fruition if it was the only way to take us home with Him. Knowing the bigger picture enables us to see the way sin works and how our perceptions of God are crucial. As you read the following sections of Scripture, consider how they tell the story of the beginning of sin. Answer the questions provided and consider how God’s plan for dealing with the problem of sin is the only way.

Out of the Story for Teachers

- As you read the portions of Scripture that depict the birth of evil, what do you think is the most important verse in the story? Why?
- What key words and phrases are used to describe Lucifer’s nature before he fell?
- What does the Bible say that caused Lucifer to become corrupt?
- In this story of Lucifer’s fall, how would you explain God’s apparent inactivity? Why didn’t God cut the work of sin short? (Read The Great Controversy, chapter 29.)
- In what way does this story deepen your view of God’s love and expand your hatred of sin?
- Who, in the Bible or in history, seemed to fall the same way Lucifer fell?
- What warnings or examples can you take from observing the way sin began in Lucifer? How does knowing Satan’s story help you live differently?

More Questions for Teachers:

- How would you distinguish the difference between sin, evil, and suffering?
- What would you like to know more about? Why?
- The details of what happened in heaven with Lucifer?
- More insight on the incident in the garden with
Satan (the snake) and what God did to respond to their disobedience?

• Thoughts in God’s mind about why He allows this world to continue in sin?
• How would a broader understanding shape your view of God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 4; Job 1; Genesis 3; Revelation 21; Mark 5:1-20.

Sharing Context and Background

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

This week’s lesson story about the origin of evil is gathered from several parts of Scripture. The portions of the story from Isaiah and Ezekiel are similar in that they describe the internal workings of sin at its inception in one being created by God. As these two sections in the Old Testament reflect the poetic style and genre of the Hebrew literature, they posit Lucifer as “the king of Babylon” or “the king of Tyre.” The book Seventh-day Adventists Believe (p. 114) claims that “the kings of Tyre and Babylon are figurative descriptions for Lucifer.” This is made clear when the one who is being described is:

• a covering cherub
• residing in the presence of God
• perfect, wise, and beautiful
• present in Eden

Furthermore, both Isaiah and Ezekiel describe the source of Lucifer’s fall in the same way:

“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

“You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. . . . Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor” (Ezekiel 28:15, 17, NIV).

Clearly, these passages tell the story of the internal work of sin in Lucifer (who becomes Satan) that is revealed in no other place in Scripture. We see Satan at work, but the awful work that brought Lucifer to rebel is mentioned in only a few places.

The context of the third story is almost at the very center of the book of Revelation, and many scholars have discussed chapter 12 as the centerpiece or the central theme of the book. In other words, what happened in heaven with Lucifer, sin, and God’s provision in Christ are the essence of what the revelator saw when he wrote the apocalypse. Those who overcome do so by “the blood of the lamb,” “the word of their testimony,” and because “they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” These three qualities are directly opposite the attitude and behavior of Lucifer/Satan. Those who overcome are mentioned again at the end of this chapter and are described as people “who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17, NIV).

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

• Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Although the story of the Fall (Genesis 3) is not included in the story, it is another passage that depicts the sly and selfish way Satan tricks God’s children to follow the same path.

III. CLOSING

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

An object lesson that works well for describing the origin of evil and how Lucifer fell can be used with a simple broom handle, a long, straight stick, or even a baseball bat. Try balancing the broom handle upright in your hand and have the students time how long you can keep the stick balanced. You might even get a dexterous young person to serve as a volunteer. In order to balance the pole you must look at the top of the pole as a reference point. As soon as you look down at your hand where the bottom of the stick is resting, it is only a matter of seconds before the pole will fall. Invite various students to try, first looking at the top and being able to balance the pole for a time. Then have the students shift their focus to their own hand. You might ask: How is this experience like what happened to Lucifer? How does our focus/reference affect the way we stay balanced and upright in our walk with God?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

That sin began is troubling enough, but that God let it reign has caused many to wonder about God’s character. God doesn’t mind people who have questions, but when we see such a small window into what God is doing to save humanity and His name, it doesn’t hurt to handle the topic with some humility. When we press God to explain Himself before we are willing to surrender, we stymie the work of faith in our lives and miss the mark on how we participate in the plan of salvation. Lucifer fell because He chose pride instead of devotion—selfishness instead of worship. As this sin made it into our world through Adam and Eve’s disobedience, we tend to lean toward selfishness without even thinking about it. But the more we think about it, the more we become aware that there is another way. The message of Revelation is “the accuser . . . has been cast down,” and we overcome the evil one “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of [our] testimony, and [because we do] not love [our own] lives to the death” (Revelation 12:10, 11, NKJV). The story of Lucifer’s fall tells the story of a God who longs for us to serve Him out of love instead of fear, which is why God did not immediately eradicate the fallen angel or anyone else for that matter.

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 Great Controversy, chapters 29, 30.

*A special adaptation of The Great Controversy 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.
between angels and demons

Scripture Story: Mark 5:1-19.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 31, 32.
Key Text: Mark 5:15.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The spiritual war between Christ and Satan is not some isolated contention between two equal superpowers in the heavenly realms. First, God is supreme, all-powerful. Satan has already been sentenced and his end is inevitable. Second, angelic beings created by God are at work with the tasks of the kingdom of God. Fallen angels who sided with Lucifer are also working furiously to inflict damage as their own doom draws near. Clearly, fallen humanity senses that something is going on beyond what the eyes can see. Christians know from Scripture that God has claimed victory over sin, but Satan still works to deceive and undermine the plan of salvation by seeking to “devour” and “steal” and “kill” those who would choose to claim their place as heirs of God’s kingdom. This battle for souls is so clearly depicted in the story of the demoniac, possessed by thousands of demons and banished into Satan’s domain. In Mark 5 and Matthew 8 the work of Satan’s forces is revealed in the desperate plight of a man who, compelled by what must have been a mustard seed of faith but more prominently a band of demons, runs at Jesus.

The storied event is rich with a visceral look at the reality of evil angels and the ultimate victory of Christ’s powerful hand of grace. Also emerging from this story is the way God’s power goes with us when we testify of His great acts of salvation and His mercy. In fact, this lost and despised young man becomes perhaps the first Christian missionary sent to the Decapolis, a region of 10 cities bankrupt of true religion. What seems unavoidable is the question in this study: how does God’s power over evil get fleshed out through His people in the days in which we are living?

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Open their eyes to the world of evil and angelic forces. (Know)
• Sense that the power over death and evil is sure. (Feel)
• Choose to align themselves overtly and eternally with God and His kingdom. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Angels
• Spiritual warfare
• Prayer

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 students discuss how people perceive the reasons why demon possession seems less frequent today than in New Testament times, invite them to add other reasons that might not have been mentioned. It
is also helpful for the discussion if they share where they are in regard to the question. Take a poll and see which answer is most prominent and which is least. Affirm everyone who participates and acknowledge those who may not answer out loud but may have thought and answered the question in their mind.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:
The story is told of John Paton, a missionary in the New Hebrides Islands. Late in the evening a large band of hostile natives encamped and besieged the local mission station where Paton served. The goal was to burn out the missionary family and their colaborers. When they emerged, the natives were to take them and kill them. Possessed by an outright hatred for the Christians, they surrounded the compound. The Patons and the others waited and prayed throughout the terror-filled night for God to protect and sustain them. When daylight came they stood in amazement as their would-be attackers left. A little over a year later, due to the continued faithful work of the Patons, the chief of the tribe was converted to Christ. The same chief who a year previous had prepared an assault on the Patons made a decision to follow the living Christ. Remembering the event, Paton asked the chief what kept him from burning down the compound house and murdering all of them. The chief replied in surprise, “We almost attacked but were surprised to see that we were outnumbered. Who were all those men guarding your house?” What a good question! Paton knew that no men or contingent of human guards stood watch outside his house that night. The chief feared to attack and decided to run when he saw hundreds of large men with swords circling the mission station.

Is it possible that we go through our days unaware of the angelic presence protecting us? To what degree do you think God still promises to support and defend His people with sword-bearing angels today?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
This story teaches us at least two things: (1) God protects us against demons and evil in ways that we are not aware; and (2) our devotion and prayer to God about this unseen world open our eyes to the possibilities of extending the gospel to others when we might be afraid to launch out in faith. Read the story and answer the question given about this amazing event that took place in a region of the world that desperately needed someone to testify to God’s mercy and power.

Out of the Story for Teachers

• As you read the story of the demoniac, what are some of the key sentences/phrases that are central to this story?
• Why do you think this story is included in the Gospels? What purpose does it serve? Why would the message in this event be important?
• How is the demoniac described?
• According to the text, how do villagers—even the disciples—relate to this man who is known to be “demon-possessed”?
• What is demon possession? How would you describe it? How do you think it happens?
• Are people who are demon-possessed really completely out of control?
• What are some other examples in Scripture that discuss this phenomenon?
• What is the reaction of evil angels when Christ is near?
• Why do you think the people reacted the way they did? Is it because they did not want people disturbing life with the forces of good and evil? What was their motivation in asking Jesus to leave the region?
• Why do you think the man who had been freed of the demons did not want to part company with Jesus? Why do you think Jesus gave this man the command to tell others what God had done for him? Why would this task be helpful to the man healed of the evil spirits?
• What does this story tell us about the nature of evil and its real presence in the human experience? Why do you think the obvious presence of demons seems rarer today than it seemed to be in the time of Christ?

More Questions for Teachers:
Where on the spectrum would you place yourself in regard to angels and demons:
In regard to angelic forces of God and the demonic spirits of Satan I would . . .

1 2 3 4 5 6
Rather not know See the battle more clearly
translated “demoniac.” One of the key conversations that may be helpful to have is how Satan enslaves in a way that controls individuals in contrast to God’s angels who convey truths, protect, encourage, and guide.

The context of the story occurs after Christ has miraculously fed thousands of people and they seek to take refuge from the crowds by boat to the region of the Gadarenes. This area is populated by Greek-speaking people who are not Jewish in their practice of faith. One evidence of this is that they were keeping herds of pigs, whereas no Jews would defile themselves in that manner. Also, the inhabitants of this region urged Jesus to leave when such a profound demonstration of spiritual power had been displayed. While the deliverance of this man is covered in the story and study portion of the lesson, it is critical to note that he goes to the Decapolis (10 cities) and declares what Christ has done. It is likely that Jesus gave this man the missionary task to build his confidence that he was restored and the demons would not return, but also to prepare a witness for their return, which is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels:

In Mark 5:20, 21 the story reads: “So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake” (NIV). A couple of chapters later the impact of the formerly demon-possessed man is noted:

“Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the

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 story of the demoniac opens up an important discussion for the church today, and especially for young people, on the nature of angels and demons and their work on behalf of the kingdoms they serve (Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8).

Two words are used in the New Testament that refer to demon possession. First, the Greek word, daimonizomai, usually translated “to be possessed by a demon,” is used to describe the effect of agents of Satan at work in people. How that happens and to what degree people are “possessed” or “controlled” completely is debated. When referring to a person, it is

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 Great Controversy. 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.
region of the Decapolis” (Mark 7:31, NIV; also echoed in Luke 8:26-40).

Initially, the people that were nervous about how Jesus manifested such spiritual power of evil forces was resisted, whereas after the man tells his story throughout the 10 cities, they receive Jesus gladly and the gospel does great work against the kingdom of Satan.

Activity

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

Divide the class into groups of two or three and give them each a piece of paper and a pen. Ask the students to write any angel sightings they can remember in Scripture. Urge them to think of examples in which heaven and humanity collide and the supernatural forces that are unseen are unmistakable. The goal is to try to get them to collectively exhaust the list of examples from Scripture. As the students report their lists, write them on the board. Ask the students: “When angels and demons show up in the stories in the Bible, consider what is at stake. How real is the battle between heaven and the agencies of evil? To what degree do we need to pay more attention to this war in our world today?”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

A friend once told me that “80 percent of snake venom is made up of protein.” Even though we all need a daily source of protein in our diet, it does not follow that snake venom is an appropriate source for protein. The 20 percent will kill you. Yet many have given a foothold to the enemy of souls thinking that the unseen world either is not so dangerous or they are smart enough to outsmart Lucifer.

God will send His angels to help us. Hebrews 1:14 tells us that they are “ministering spirits” (NIV) sent out to give service to those who belong to God. The Bible has plenty of other instances in which angels aided believers in times of need. (See Ps. 34:7; 91:11; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 John 5:18; Acts 12:5-11; 1 Kings 19:5-8; 2 Kings 6:8-17.) Angels even ministered to Christ after His temptation by Satan (Mark 1:13). And they are there for you. Know that it is true.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The subject of death has been one of the most controversial issues in the church. Many people view the soul as immortal; some don’t believe in an afterlife at all; some believe in the end-time resurrection; and some aren’t quite sure what they believe.

Today’s lesson will give us more insight on what the Bible says happens at death. It will also show how belief in an immortal soul can lead to cultic things such as spiritualism. Death is not limbo, hell, heaven, or purgatory. It is, simply put, “nonexistence.” The soul does not live on outside the body; it does not have thoughts or a personality; it is simply disintegrated. Bodies don’t have souls, bodies are souls. All throughout the Bible we have seen examples of this. Nowhere in the Bible does it attribute the soul to anything that is conscious after death. Many believe the idea of the immortal soul was thought up by ancient Greek philosophers. Plato was definitely a big believer in this teaching. He referred to the body as a husk, the shell which the soul leaves upon death. However, the Bible clearly contradicts this belief. “For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, KJV).

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand what happens when death occurs. (Know)
• Be more conscious of the fact that the majority of Christians don’t share the same belief and need to hear it. (Feel)
• Be willing to share this truth with others. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Death and resurrection*
• Occult
• Heaven

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 idea of the immortal soul is constantly circulated through our society today. You see it in movies, hear about it in music, pastors preach about it, and even some nonreligious people have tended to lean toward the idea of soul immortality because it’s been so engrained into their minds from the media.

Have the students use note cards and pens to
write down all of the examples they can think of, even specifying particular popular movies as well as popular songs that make this false belief sound true. After they finish, have everyone compare what they’ve written down. There will probably be a lot more examples than you think.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A young woman had been in a terrible accident; taken to the hospital, she was in critical condition. While in the emergency room, she actually died, in the sense that her heart stopped beating and her breathing stopped, too. The doctors worked furiously in order to try and revive her. After about two minutes it worked. She started breathing again and her heart started pumping. The crisis was over. Though severely injured, she would survive.

What’s fascinating, however, is that after she left the hospital she talked about what she believed she experienced while “dead.” She said she went through a kind of tunnel, and at the end she met a being of light, who spoke to her kindly. He asked her to review her life, and then told her that she was going back. The next thing she knew, she found herself in the hospital bed.

Her story is not uncommon. In recent years there has been a phenomenon known as near-death experiences (NDEs), in which people die—the heart stops beating, they stop breathing, and are assumed dead. Yet they are revived and tell fantastic stories about an afterlife. Accounts like these have made many believe that NDEs are “proof” of an immortal soul.

Yet why do most come back from NDEs with no sense of a need for Christ or for His saving grace? If these people were really taken to heaven, or were talking to God’s angels, or to other dead (as some have claimed), or even to God Himself, then why didn’t the angels, or the dead, or even the Lord tell them about the need for Christ to cover their sins, the most basic biblical teachings? Many of these folks were not professing Christians when they “died,” and they rarely come back as ones either. Why? Because, in most cases, nothing happened during their NDE that prompted them to accept Christ.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The Bible tells us in clear and direct terminology that the “dead know nothing.” Nowhere in the Bible will you be able to find a verse that espouses the doctrine of immortality directly at death. In fact, the word “immortal” is used only once in the Bible and it is in reference to God. Also, in 1 Timothy 6:15, 16 the word “immortality” is used to describe God, saying that He alone is the one who has it.

Sharing Context and Background

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

What is a soul? Mankind did not receive a soul at Creation. When God breathed into mankind’s nostrils the breath of life, mankind became a living being (Gen. 2:7). The formula is as follows:

Dust of the earth + the breath of life = a living being, or soul.

Actually, this breath of life is not limited to humans. The Bible attributes the breath of life to animals as well (Gen. 7:15, 22).

There is no text that indicates that the soul survives the body as a conscious entity. Scripture teaches that immortality of the soul was conditional on mankind’s obedience (Gen. 2:16). God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16).

What a soul is not. The concept of the immortality of the soul originated with the Greeks. When Greek thought and Hebrew-Christian thought came into the Early Church, unfortunately, the Greek thought prevailed. “This view says, in effect, that there is a portion of me, my soul, that will continue to exist. During my lifetime here on earth this immortal soul is lodged in my mortal body. What happens at death is that my body dies and turns to dust, while my immortal soul is released and made free so that it can continue its immortal existence without being hamstrung by confinement in a body” (SDA Bible Student Source Book, p. 481).

This concept that our souls are finally “free” may seem like a great idea, especially for people who have had many physical challenges in this life. But what this view leads to, then, is to regard the body as unnecessary; maybe even evil. But when God created the world, and mankind, “God saw everything [emphasis supplied] that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Understanding the error of this belief is important
for teens in light of its significance regarding the relationship between mind, body, and spirit. How we take care of our minds affects our bodies and spirits; how we take care of our bodies affects our minds and spirits; and how we take care of our spirits affects our minds and bodies. (See The Ministry of Healing, p. 77, for an example of the mind-body-spirit connection.)

- How can taking care of my mind affect my body and spirit?
- How can taking care of my body affect my mind and spirit?
- How can taking care of my spirit affect my mind and body?

Receiving Immortality. While immortality was conditional on our obedience, we will again receive immortality—but only when Christ returns. “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . .” (1 Cor. 15:51-53, NKJV).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Talk about how many people see beauty in the idea of going to heaven as soon as death occurs. When someone first hears it, the teaching can sound like a comforting idea. However, ask the students thought-provoking questions such as: “How would you find the idea comforting that the deceased are looking down on all this suffering from heaven?” “How do you think the dead would feel in heaven if they are witness to such atrocities happening down here?” “How does that view fit in with the description of heaven that there will be no more pain, no more sorrow?” Use these questions to begin a brief discussion.
**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Genesis 3:5 contains the first lie ever recorded in history: “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (NIV).

Satan knew that the thought of being immortal like God would be appealing to Eve, but, unfortunately, she was in for a rude awakening.

Satan is cunning. He is skilled in the art of beauty and is a master at deception. The Bible refers to him as appearing to be an angel of light. He is good at making himself and his lies appealing to the senses and emotions. The only way we can decipher the truth is through Jesus Christ. We must constantly allow ourselves to spend time in His Word as well as to pray. We must be open to the truth and allow God to show it to us. We can do this by praying to God to reveal the truth to us and by removing any preconceived notions of what we think is right. We must let Christ reveal His truth through the Bible, not through traditions of men or of our own desires.

This verse sums up the reality of Satan’s deception: “[God,] who alone has immortality: dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:16, NKJV).

*Fundamental Belief No. 26.

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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 Great Controversy*, chapters 33, 34.

*A special adaptation of *The Great Controversy* 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

Teaching this lesson requires great wisdom to find that delicate balance between speaking truth as Ellen White presents it in *The Great Controversy* and showing sensitivity to others who are not of our religious persuasion. This subject matter has arguably been the biggest reason for many strained tensions between Seventh-day Adventists and other denominations. With this in mind it is important to prayerfully present this topic in a manner that builds up other faiths and yet does not soft-sell the vital Adventist message of uncompromising personal conviction in the face of corrupt politics, abusive power, and counterfeit worship.

One of the ways to make this teaching on the papacy more palatable is to emphasize the fact that the church has always played a central role in God’s story of redemption for humankind. As Seventh-day Adventists we are indebted to our leaders who have shaped the church throughout the centuries. Part of our heritage, of course, includes dark chapters of corruption and abuse. But rather than pointing an accusing finger at the pope or slandering our Catholic brothers and sisters, we ought instead to own our history and admit that some of our forefathers have done unspeakably evil things in the name of religion. These atrocities, however, were committed by “us,” not “them.”

The prophecies of Revelation 13 can help us to understand the strategy of the evil one in the last days as he works through governmental power in the name of God. If church and state unite, Satan knows that many will be deceived, false worship can be enforced, and our religious liberties denied. This lesson can enlighten students of prophetic happenings behind today’s headlines. As earth’s final events unfold, use this opportunity to remind students that the only safe place to reside is “in Christ.”

II. TARGET

The students will:

• See current events in the light of Bible prophecy. *(Know)*
• Sense that God has always been and remains in control even as the world seems to unravel. *(Feel)*
• Be challenged to live in Christ as we anticipate His soon return. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

• Politics
• Personal convictions
• Worship

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. Discuss their responses. Ask the students to report the results of surveying church members.
As an alternate activity, provide students with resources (computers to do Web searches, news magazines, newspapers, etc.) to search current events that inform our understanding of Ellen White's warnings in chapter 35 of The Great Controversy.

Discuss:

• What examples can you find in the news today of abuse of power in government?
• What is in the news about the pope? Can you find things that are a direct fulfillment of Ellen White’s warnings about the papacy?
• Could you find anything about the enforcement of national Sunday laws? Are there forces at work that might compromise our freedom to worship? If so, what are these forces?

Illustration

In the book The Cure for the Last Daze Karl Haffner shares this letter that he received:

“Dear Pastor:

“A week or so ago, I received a mailing from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. . . . I felt disgusted and sick to my stomach as I read through the booklet. You probably are thinking that I bought into what you set forth as the truth and was disgusted at the thoughts of ‘pope-worshipping’ and the pope as ‘beast.’ On the contrary; I was disgusted that your denomination would send out such hate literature in a time when Christian denominations could be working together in peace to make our world more like that which Christ wanted. . . .”

She ranted on for another two pages (single-spaced), but you get the idea. After stewing on the letter for a few days, Karl called the woman and explained he did not hate Catholics.

“Really?” The woman seemed stunned.

Karl went on: “And I wouldn’t invest a dime of my money or my local church’s money in those pamphlets or billboards.”

“Well,” she stammered, “that’s good to know.”

Karl explained his understanding of the church’s prophetic role along with an impromptu Bible study on the mark of the beast. He spoke of the corrupt church system in the Dark Ages but always with an emphasis on Christ as the means of our salvation.

“Well,” she sighed, “I still don’t think I’ll become an Adventist, but you have dramatically changed my views of your church.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Give the young people an opportunity to share how they would respond to that letter. Invite them to consider the counsel of Ellen White, who warned us not to get too cocky when pointing the prophetic finger at other denominations. Consider this collection of quotes: “We may have less to say in some lines, in regard to the Roman power and the papacy.” The essential message of Daniel and Revelation is that “the human agent is to be kept out of sight, hid in Christ, and . . . the Lord God of heaven and His law are to be exalted.” “Be not too ready to take a controversial attitude.” “Let Daniel speak, let the Revelation speak, and tell what is truth. But whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope.”

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following material to help them go a little deeper with some of the concepts in Revelation 13.

The Mark of the Beast

Share the following excerpts and discuss.

Morris Venden writes in The Pillars:

“The mark of the beast is self-worship. The mark of the beast is salvation by works. The mark of the beast is trying to save yourself—either from your past sins or from your present sinning or from the world of sin—by anything that you can do. And the seal of God, which is the opposite of the mark of the beast, is worshiping God, coming to Him, falling on your knees before Him in total dependence upon Him, learning to trust in Him.”

• Discuss: Do you agree with Morris Venden’s ideas about the mark of the beast and the seal of God? Why or why not?

Charles Scriven writes in The Promise of Peace:

“When I was an eighth-grader in Spokane, a visiting evangelist . . . singled out Roman Catholics in particular when he spoke one Sunday night on ‘The Mark of the Beast.’ Spokane was strongly Catholic, and during the week that followed, rumors about anger and possible threats against the evangelist began to surface among the Adventists in town. The next Sunday night the topic was ‘The Antichrist.’ Everyone wondered how it would go. I was amazed, when I got
there, to see police officers in the hall, standing to each side, peering into the crowd.

“No tempers flared, however, and we Adventists left the hall relieved and newly assured of our own worth, our own superiority. That was a long time ago. Now the mere telling of the story evokes discomfort.”

- Discuss: Do you feel “discomfort” when identifying traits of the Roman Church and its leaders as descriptive of the beast power in Revelation 13 and the antichrist? Why or why not?
- How do you understand Ellen White’s clear teaching against the abusive power of the pope?
- Does the traditional teaching of Adventists (which identifies the beast power as the Roman Catholic Church and the antichrist as the pope) support our “worth” and/or “superiority” as a church? Explain.

Sharing Context and Background

What does the Bible say about the antichrist? Since there are only a handful of verses in Scripture that mention the antichrist, let’s consider every reference.

The first place the antichrist is mentioned is in 1 John 2:18, 22. “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. . . . Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son” (NIV).

The second reference to the antichrist comes in 1 John 4:2, 3. “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world” (NIV).

Notice that this spirit of the antichrist is already in the world. Moreover, the antichrist does not acknowledge that Jesus is from God. In other words, to deny Jesus is to act in the spirit of the antichrist.

There is one more mention of the antichrist in 2 John 7. In this verse we see that the antichrist denies Jesus as coming in the flesh. “Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist” (NIV).

Every time the word “antichrist” is used in the Bible it is in the context of undermining Jesus. The antichrist denies three things about Christ: that He is the anointed one, that He came from God, and that He came in the flesh. Simply put, the antichrist denies Jesus.

So, who might that be? Who is the antichrist?

Well, theories proliferate. Some of the most influential theologians in history have pointed to the persecution of Christians carried out by the Roman church and interpreted the events as the work of the antichrist. Historian Michael de Semlyen writes:

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

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

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

Activity

Challenge the students to get real practical with the idea of living “in Christ.” Living in Christ would be the exact opposite of living as the antichrist. So have the students think through an ordinary day “in Christ.” When the alarm clock rings, what would it mean to get out of bed “in Christ”? What would it look like to eat breakfast “in Christ”? How would a student ride a school bus “in Christ”?

By taking the students through an activity that details the specific actions of living in Christ, you can give them practical tools to resist the temptation to live in the spirit of the antichrist.

Summary

The spirit of the antichrist can reign within every believer—for the actual title of antichrist literally means “instead of Christ.” We usually think of “anti” as “against.” To be more precise, it really means “instead of.” Is not every follower of Jesus vulnerable to the temptation of living “instead of” Christ?

The fundamental question surrounding a study of the antichrist is simply this: will I live “in” Christ or “instead of” Christ? Ultimately, this is not a study about the pope; it’s a study about you and me. The question is not “Who is the antichrist?” rather, “Will I live in Christ or instead of Christ?”

1 Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 112.
2 White, p. 112.
3 White, p. 118.
4 Morris Venden, The Pillars, p. 38.

“Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Cranmer; in the seventeenth century, Bunyan, the translators of the King James Bible and the men who published the Westminster and Baptist Confessions of Faith; Sir Isaac Newton, Wesley, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards; and more recently, Spurgeon, Bishop J. C. Ryle, and Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; these men among countless others, all saw the office of the papacy as the antichrist.”

No doubt the spirit of the antichrist has been at work in this world—even through the influence of the church. This is not to slam any person or church. It is not about any one person, but rather it’s about a corrupt religious-political system that undermines Jesus.

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 Great Controversy, chapter 35.

*A special adaptation of The Great Controversy 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

Tying into the theme of terrorism shouldn’t be a difficult challenge these days. Current examples often hog the headlines.

Pollster George Gallup surveyed Americans to discover how the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, affected their lives:

- 20 percent of Americans knew someone who was missing, hurt, or killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, or the plane crash in Pennsylvania.
- 58 percent of men and 82 percent of women say they have cried as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11.
- One third of Americans will change aspects of their personal lives in order to reduce their chances of becoming a victim of terrorism.1

The Bible warns believers that just before Jesus returns the world will be plagued by chaos and confusion. The evil one will launch an all-out terrorist attack that will destroy as many as possible.

This lesson presents an ideal opportunity to talk straight with your class about what’s happening in our world today. The scenario painted by Ellen White more than a century ago is now being played out on the global stage.

If there ever was a time to talk about the themes of this study—spirituality, authority, respect, and obedience—it is now! Jesus is coming again! Challenge your students with the question: “Are you ready?”

Pastor Dwight Nelson writes: “‘Are you ready for Jesus to come?’ is really the invitation to step into the embrace of His forever friendship every day and every night until He comes. It’s that simple.”2

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See the relevance of Bible prophecy in current events. (Know)
- Sense that the second coming of Jesus is at hand. (Feel)
- Be challenged to be ready to meet Jesus. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Spirituality
- Authority/respect
- Obedience

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. Discuss other methods that Satan might use in the last days to deceive even the most elect.

As an alternate activity, ask your students to create a simulation exercise to play a spiritual war game. Just as the military regularly practices war scenarios,
and young people often engage in virtual war games on the Web, so your students can benefit by replicating a global strategy center whereby half the class represents Satan and his forces in the ultimate showdown against God’s remnant. Allow the youth to be creative and formulate strategies of offense and defense. Encourage them to make it as real as possible—tying into current events that expose the great controversy between God and Satan.

Illustration

It’s been labeled the single greatest upset in Olympic history. On September 27, 2000, 29-year-old Rulon Gardner, who grew up on a Wyoming dairy farm, walked into the Exhibition Hall in Sydney, Australia. That’s when the “miracle on the mat” happened—he pocketed a gold medal after defeating the world’s greatest wrestler of all time, Russian Alexander Karelin.

Mind you, this Russian had never lost in international competition. He’d never even been scored on in 10 years! He pummeled opponents despite broken ribs, torn muscles, and opposing coaches who would spend years designing strategies just to beat him. Karelin was considered the most intimidating athlete in Olympic history, so feared by opponents that two prior finalists essentially quit on the mat rather than to keep absorbing the pounding. And, according to legend, the Russian once carried a refrigerator home from the store and up seven flights of stairs.

So no one expected the American to win. In fact, the International Olympic Committee chairman even showed up at the match in order to present the Russian his fourth gold medal—the medal he wouldn’t get.

After the historic match, reporters swarmed around Rulon. “When did you think you could beat him?” they asked.

“When did I think I could beat him? About 10 minutes ago,” Gardner replied. “I kept saying, ‘I think I can. I think I can.’ But it wasn’t until it was over that I knew I could.”

Turns out that Gardner used a simple strategy to counter Karelin’s dreaded lifts and relentless pressure. He approached the match with only two things on his mind: to stay focused and hang on. And for nine excruciating minutes that’s exactly what he did. Now, Gardner is a legendary hero.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

When you think about it, Gardner’s strategy is a good one that extends beyond the wrestling mat. After all, it’s easy to lose our focus in the spiritual battle that we all must fight. The great controversy between God and Satan rages around the world. Satan seeks to destroy you. But in the end, if you stay focused and hang on to Jesus, you will be triumphant.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Compare 2 Peter 3:8-17 from the Into the Story section with 1 Peter 4:1-11.

The apostle Peter says when you see the “debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry” (1 Peter 4:3, NIV) in this world you can know this: “The end of all things is near” (1 Peter 4:7, NIV).

Jesus is coming again! Ours is a dark and evil world, but don’t despair, Jesus is coming again. So what are we to do as we wait for the second coming of Christ? Peter poses this question in the passage from the Into the Story section: “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NIV).

In 1 Peter 4:1-11, the apostle unpacks what it means to live “holy and godly lives.” Peter calls us to do three things as we wait for Jesus to come.

First, Peter tells us to pray. “Therefore,” he writes, “be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray” (1 Peter 4:7, NIV). As Christians we may not be able to mend the moral corruption of our world, but we can pray. Prayer is the practice of living in Christ.

Second, we can love. Next, Peter writes: “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8, NIV). As we wait for Jesus to come, we are called not only to be a community of prayer, but a community of love.

Finally, Peter calls us to serve. “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:9, NIV). While we wait for Jesus to come, we are to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace.

Sharing Context and Background

On February 28, 2007, the day after the Dow Jones Industrials plunged over 400 points, a reporter from CNN interviewed a financial expert. The reporter
The apostle Peter makes a similar observation: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief” (2 Peter 3:10, NIV). Remember that Peter was with the other disciples when Jesus said, “But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into” (Matthew 24:43, NIV). Thus, Peter reminds us that the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Peter then writes: “The heavens will disappear with a roar.” There’s an interesting word picture associated with this Greek word translated “roar.”

The expert’s answer struck a familiar chord for Adventists—that is, for those waiting for Jesus to come. The financial analyst gave simple advice: “Wait and watch.”


Jesus gave the same counsel when He spoke about the chaos in the last days. “Don’t panic,” He said. In Matthew 24 we find an extensive list of signs that alert us to the nearness of His coming—earthquakes, wars, increase of knowledge, and so on. Jesus then trumpets the punch line in verse 42: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come” (NIV). Then again, in Matthew 25:13 Jesus said: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

Note, Jesus did not just say to “wait,” suggesting a passive activity. Rather, He commanded “wait and watch.”

Watching is not a spectator sport. As Oswald Chambers put it: “The only way to wait for the Second Coming is to watch that you do what you should do, so that when He comes is a matter of indifference. It is the attitude of a child, certain that God knows what He is about. When the Lord does come, it will be as natural as breathing.”

The apostle Peter makes a similar observation: “Given the violent volatility of the market, what should we do with our investments at this point? Should we buy? Sell? Or hold?”

The expert’s answer struck a familiar chord for Adventists—that is, for those waiting for Jesus to come. The financial analyst gave simple advice: “Wait and watch.”

When teaching on the topic of “The Impending Conflict,” it is important to focus on hope, not fear. Don’t scare the bile out of kids with the “good news” that Jesus is coming again! Of course we might be tortured for our faith. The pastor may betray his own congregation. Iran might blow up the world.

But the truth is this: we don’t know how the final days of this earth’s history will unfold. So encourage your youth with the words of Jesus: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. . . . I go and prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-3, NIV).

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Hope, Not Fear

When teaching on the topic of “The Impending Conflict,” it is important to focus on hope, not fear. Don’t scare the bile out of kids with the “good news” that Jesus is coming again! Of course we might be tortured for our faith. The pastor may betray his own congregation. Iran might blow up the world.

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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 Great Controversy. 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.
same word, *rozedon*, is used to describe the sound a spear makes as it sails through the air. The idea here is that faster than a speeding bullet, “the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

Peter tells us that the Second Coming will catch many by surprise. So Peter urges us to wait and watch. “You ought to live holy and godly lives,” he says, “as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NIV).

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

Close by reading 1 Peter 4:7-10. Ask the kids to brainstorm a list of specific things they can do in the week ahead to live out the commands “love each other deeply” (verse 8); “offer hospitality” (verse 9); and “serve others” (verse 10, NIV). Explain that this activity will take a week and they are to come back the next Sabbath prepared to share stories of what they did to put these verses into action.

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**Summary**

Clearly, there are specific things we ought to be doing while we wait for Jesus to return. William Miller, the Adventist pioneer who erroneously interpreted Daniel 8:14 to mean Jesus would come on October 22, 1844, discovered this in his later years. Shortly before his death, he confided to his friend Hendrix: “I now know when Jesus will come.”

“Oh really?” his friend replied. “You were quite wrong last time. Now when do you think Jesus will come?”

The aged Miller replied, “Jesus is going to come today, today, today... until He comes.”

We too know when Jesus will come. He’s coming today, so let’s pray. Today, so let’s love. Today, so let’s serve. Today... until He comes.

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**PREPARING TO TEACH**

I. SYNOPSIS

Few of us would say no to a lasting and meaningful relationship with God. At least not consciously. The challenge is that while we want a deep communication with Him, we never seem to pause long enough to spend the time needed to cultivate that relationship with Him. Often our distractions are insidiously disguised as purposeful activities—fulfilling work deadlines, studying hard to maintain good grades. We are addicted, not to drugs or alcohol, but to tasks, work, and “doing.”

However, God has an answer to our problem! He has given us a way to deeply root our lives in Him—daily communication and Sabbath rest. Prayer is one form of communicating with God. Other forms include reading His Word, and contemplating His Word and the experiences He has brought us through. Daily communication is simply setting aside time each day to talk, listen, and reflect with God. With Sabbath rest we are called to stop, slow down, center our thoughts on God, and enjoy being in His presence.

It is critical to remember that daily communication and Sabbath rest are not meant to be other “to-do” items in our long checklist of deadlines and commitments. It is rethinking the way we live each day. The key is not the length of the communication but the frequency. It is going against the grain of our fast-paced culture and choosing instead to create regular times in our day to pause, for no other reason than to simply experience being loved and loving in return. These times anchor us to God and serve as oases of time to reflect and reorder our lives.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand that in order to develop an authentic relationship with God, we have to spend time with Him. *(Know)*
- Realize that knowing the truth is only the first step; spiritual disciplines (such as prayer and daily study of the Word) are necessary to build the psychological and emotional “muscles” needed to stand up against opposition and pressure. *(Feel)*
- Be challenged to begin taking the steps needed to build up their spiritual strength and root themselves in God’s Word. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Self-discipline
- Spiritual disciplines
- Sabbath

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. Discuss their responses to the activity.

Let friends pair themselves up. Then tell them you are going to test which pairs of friends know each
other best. Have one person from each pair leave the room. Ask the remaining students what answers they think their partners will give to the following questions:

1. If you could have an all-expenses-paid dinner with any person in the world (alive or dead), who would it be?
2. Knowing that you were going to crash anyway, which would you choose to be riding? A bicycle or a skateboard?
3. If you had to choose one punishment, would it be watching your baby sister for an entire week after school or having your car keys taken for the week?

Bring their partners back into the room and ask them to give their answers. Which answers were close? Or wrong? Now tell the class you are going to give them five minutes to chat. They can talk about anything and then it will be their partner’s turn to try to guess their answers to the same questions next.

Was it easier to know more about someone before or after spending some time talking to each other?

**Illustration**

_Share this illustration in your own words:_

In his book _A Hidden Wholeness_ Parker Palmer tells a story about farmers in the Midwest who would prepare for blizzards by tying a rope from the back door of their house out to the barn as a guide to ensure they could return home safely. These blizzards came very quickly and were highly dangerous. When they blew at full force, you could not see the end of your hand. Many farmers froze to death in these blizzards because they could not see where they were going. If they lost their grip on the rope, they could not find their way home. Some froze to death just a few steps from their front door, never seeing how close they were to safety.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

_Share the following in your own words:_

Many of us live in a blizzard—we are overwhelmed with work, tasks, to-do lists, and responsibilities. Multitasking is seen as an admirable skill, but we multitask so much that we are overscheduled, burned out, hurried, tense, pressured for time, and our overproductivity becomes counterproductive. We have no time to spend cultivating relationships with our family, our friends, our God.

Then when troubles and trials blow into our lives suddenly and unexpectedly, we become lost and lose our way. We need a rope to guide us home.

**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 Daniel is in here? How did he get there? What is happening to him? What roles do the other characters play?
- Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.

Daniel was taken by force from his home and country. In Babylon he was given a prestigious education and a high-level job in government. The pressure on him to conform to the worldly, pagan values of Babylon was great. What were some examples of problems that he faced? How did he resist them?

- Sabbath is engaging in a regular pattern of stopping, resting, delighting in, and contemplating God for 24 hours each week. What are you doing now to experience this Sabbath rest? Is there anything stopping you from fully embracing this time of rest and reflection?
- What might you want to consider changing in your life after thinking about these things?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 6:25-27; Genesis 2:1-3.

**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.

According to _The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary_, the name Daniel means “God’s judge,” “God is judge,” or “God is my judge.” Daniel was born into a noble family from the lineage of King David.

Although Daniel was just a young man, his skills in administration and interpreting dreams were quickly displayed and he served as a high-ranking government official in four dynasties of Babylonian and Medo-Persian power.

Daniel’s faithfulness to God (and God’s resulting blessing upon him) exposed him to attacks by jealous
rivals. Knowing his unwavering fidelity to God, his enemies had him thrown into the lions’ den for praying to a God other than King Darius.

Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary writes about Daniel’s persistence in prayer despite knowing about Darius’s decree: “Persecuting laws are always made on false pretences; but it does not become Christians to make bitter complaints, or to indulge in revilings. It is good to have hours for prayer. Daniel prayed openly and avowedly; and though a man of vast business, he did not think that would excuse him from daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable are those who have but little to do in the world, yet will not do thus much for their souls! In trying times we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we are guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. All who throw away their souls, as those certainly do that live without prayer, even if it be to save their lives, at the end will be found to be fools. Nor did Daniel only pray, and not give thanks, cutting off some part of the service to make the time of danger shorter; but he performed the whole. In a word, the duty of prayer is founded upon the sufficiency of God as an almighty Creator and Redeemer, and upon our wants as sinful creatures. To Christ we must turn our eyes.”

To quote The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: “The plotters did not have to wait long to see Daniel disregard the king’s prohibition. Decree or no decree, this man of God felt that he should continue his regular prayer habits. God was to him the

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Orchestrating Your Teaching

Good teaching should be entertaining. However, does this mean that it lacks in substance? No. Effective teaching is not about reading word by word from a guidebook or having your eyes fixated on a slide projector while you drone on. Good teachers work the room and every student in it. They realize that they are the conductors and the class is the orchestra. All students play different instruments and at varying proficiencies. Here are some ideas for engaging students:

- Greet your students, by name, at the door when they enter the classroom.
- Start the class on time.
- Encourage students to ask questions at the beginning of the class. Write these down on the whiteboard (or chalkboard) and check each off as you answer them during your lesson.
- Note who is absent. Write a personal note or call them.
- During the week, call your students and ask about their day. Listen attentively and respond kindly (no nagging!). Before ending the call, ask permission to pray for them over the phone.

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 Great Controversy. 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.
source of all his wisdom and success in life. The favor of Heaven was dearer to him than life itself. His conduct was the natural result of his trust in God" (vol. 4, p. 812).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Using a stereo, play a favorite Christian song as loud as you can stand it. Read a favorite Bible verse very quietly while it is playing. Stop the music when you’ve finished reading. Ask the students if they could hear you clearly? If not, why not?

Our lives are sometimes filled to the brim with noise—the noise can be the busyness of work or our pride pushing us to do more and more to prove our worth. But if we are surrounded by so much noise, and do not take the time to stop the loud music, we cannot hear God’s still small voice.

Summary

Share the following story in your own words:

There is a story told of a wagon trail of Christians traveling on their way from St. Louis to Oregon. This community observed the habit of stopping for the Sabbath during autumn, but as winter approached some in the group began to panic. They feared they would not reach their destination before the snows began. So the ones who were afraid suggested that they cease their practice of stopping for the Sabbath and travel seven days a week. Not everybody in the community agreed with this proposal. So the wagon train was divided into two groups. One would press on for seven days a week; the other would stop every Sabbath to rest.

It turns out that the group that rested arrived in Oregon first. Their horses and people were so rested by their Sabbath observance that they could travel more efficiently the other six days.*

* Marva Dawn, Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting, pp. 65, 66.

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 Great Controversy, chapter 37.

*A special adaptation of The Great Controversy 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.
run for your life

Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 38.
Key Text: Revelation 18:4, 5.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

From God’s initial warning to Adam and Eve not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17), to the admonition delivered by the angel of Revelation 18, much has transpired. God’s counsel has fallen on some deaf ears, while others have made it their duty to obey. However, whatever the past record of humanity’s adherence or disdain, Revelation 18 signals the end of God’s patience with sin.

The angel John sees in vision illumines the entire earth with its brightness. The message borne is reminiscent of the second angel of Revelation 14:6-13, who declares that the world’s system of confusion—Babylon—is fallen, broken beyond repair. But the angel in Revelation goes further. Not only is Babylon fallen, it has become the “dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird” (Revelation 18:2, NKJV), and human beings are caught up in it.

Students need to know that the progression from Revelation 14 to 18 depicts the fearful state of the world as we near the second coming of Jesus. Contrary to human prognosticators, the world is not getting better, argues the angel of Revelation 18. The truth, as it is in Jesus, has been rejected by this time. Human minds and hearts have become deadened to sin, and those who adhere to truth are subjected to terrible privations—even death—especially as they hold true to God’s holy Sabbath.

As the world plunges deeper into peril, God’s Holy Spirit will give special power to the proclamation of the final warning to the world, represented by the message of the Revelation 18 angel. Your students need to know that God is playing for keeps this time. Now is the time to heed God’s warning to come out of the world’s system of confusion, renounce all sin, and prepare to meet Jesus in peace.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Know that God will not allow the world’s system of sin and confusion to continue forever. (Know)
- Accept God’s call to separate from Babylon and its system of sin. (Feel)
- Share God’s message of warning with their friends. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Decision-making
- Sabbathkeeping
- Forgiveness from God

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

The answers to the What Do You Think? activity
are: A. 4, B. 1, C. 2, D. 3.

The objective of this activity is to consider some of the warnings God has given people in the Bible. Ask the students to share some of the times in their lives when they heeded a warning and were thankful that they had. Have the students also share times in their lives when they failed to listen to warnings and suffered for it.

Make the point that God always gives us a final warning before judgment.

Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

I was in the north of England in 1881, when a fearful storm swept over that part of the country. A friend of mine, who was a minister at Evemouth, had a great many of the fishermen of the place in his congregation. It had been very stormy weather, and the fishermen had been detained in the harbor for a week. One day, however, the sun shone out in a clear blue sky; it seemed as if the storm had passed away, and the boats started out for the fishing ground. Forty-one boats left the harbor that day.

Before they started, the harbor-master hoisted the storm signal, and warned them of the coming tempest. He begged them not to go; but they disregarded his warning, and away they went. They saw no sign of the coming storm. In a few hours, however, it swept down on that coast, and very few of those fishermen returned. There were five or six men in each boat, and nearly all were lost in that dreadful gale. In the church of which my friend was pastor, I believe there were three male members left. . . . I lift up the storm signal now, and warn you to escape from the coming judgment!

(Source: Moody’s Anecdotes and Illustrations, pp. 115, 116)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

If we are honest, we would have to admit that the thought of a coming storm seems a bit far-fetched when the sun is beaming in the sky. Weathersons have been fooled countless times by the vagaries of Mother Nature, hence our skepticism at their predictions.

Is it any wonder that we tend to treat God the same way? The idea that we could be threatened for our faith seems far-fetched, especially in Western democratic countries. We must realize that God has been to the future and seen the difficulties we will one day have to face, and He has returned to tell us to stand apart from the world, lest we partake of its punishments (Revelation 18:4).

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- The angel speaking in Revelation 18 has some specific attributes. The angel has “great authority” and illuminates the world with its glory. These special traits will also be seen in the lives of the end-time remnant who deliver God’s final message of warning.
- Babylon, the great harlot, has seduced “all the nations.” They commit fornication with her. She has also made the merchants of the world rich because of her many luxuries. Do we see these practices in the world today? If Babylon represents the world’s system of corruption and open rebellion against God, what practices in particular might God be referring to here? Unpack some of these for the students.

Beginning with verse 9 of Revelation 18, we see the people of the world mourning the fall of their bankrupt lover. One need only look at the response to rises and falls in world financial markets to see that much of our planet has put its trust in the things of this world—chiefly money.

- Babylon’s sin has come before God. There is a sense in Revelation 18 that her sins have been mounting over time, carefully catalogued by God. The pronouncement of judgment by the angel is accompanied by many scrupulous details about her crimes. What does this tell us about the way in which God views sin.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Revelation 14:6-12; 7:1-8; Ephesians 6:10-19; Isaiah 48:20.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. **The Set-up.** Understanding Revelation 18 is
made easier by reading Revelation 17. In chapter 17 Babylon is described as a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, with a golden cup in her hand, sitting upon a beast. Revelation 18 builds on this description and fast-forwards her narrative to a time when she is judged for the damage she has caused in the world.

2. **Demonic Possession.** There is a tendency among many, particularly the young, to believe that demonic possession is evidenced by frothing from the mouth, loud shrieks, and other such phenomena. Babylon seems to give the lie to that idea. The angel describes Babylon as a sensual woman who entangles humanity by her charms and luxuries. This is hardly the picture of demonic activity.

Yet Revelation 18:2 depicts Babylon as wholly possessed, the place “foul spirits” call home. The picture is one of total perversion and apostasy, but to those in her embrace, none of this is seen. They are simply enjoying their time with Babylon.

Revelation 18 is serious because it unmasks the true identity of the world’s system of corruption and evil, and God’s desire to save His people from its destruction.

3. **Historical Parallel.** Read Isaiah 48:20; Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6, 45. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary notes: “As God’s people formerly came out of literal Babylon in order that they might return to Jerusalem, so His people today are called out of mystical Babylon in order that they may be accounted worthy to enter the New Jerusalem. Presumably, all who are truly His people will hear His voice and heed His call” (vol. 7, p. 861).

4. **Humble Instruments Wanted.** “As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open” (The Great Controversy, p. 606).

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Guess Who’s Coming to Sabbath School?**

For this lesson you might want to have a woman from your church dress up in the garish manner of the woman described in Revelation 17 and 18. She should be adorned in jewelry, makeup, and clothing of someone seeking attention.

Invite your guest of honor to class and have the class try to guess who she is based on how she is attired. When the guesses stop, have her put on a sash—or hold up a sign—that reveals her identity—BABYLON.

This activity ought to get the class thinking and exploring the subject matter.
III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

Close this week’s lesson by asking each student to pray silently, asking God to reveal areas in their lives where Babylonian ways and values have crept in. Perhaps it’s in their entertainment choices, their online lives, or their friendships.

Let this personal prayer time end the Sabbath School time together.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The final scenes of earth’s history will be fearful ones. Jesus said as much in Matthew 24 and 25, though the disciples could scarcely grasp His meaning at the time. Though they could not fully understand their Lord, Jesus still warned them of what was to come, much of it coming thousands of years after their deaths.

Revelation 18 shows a remarkably consistent God, one who suffers long with human beings and gives them every opportunity to be saved. The world’s system of confusion and sin will one day be shattered. God will return to save those who remain faithful to Him. But in the meantime, those faithful ones have a work to do. They must lay bare the sins of Babylon, so that men and women can make a choice for or against God.

Lightened with the power of the Holy Spirit, the faithful will stand on God’s Word, choosing death and privation rather than give up the Sabbath or disobey any of God’s laws. Their sacrifice will lead countless others to heed the call to come out of Babylon.

It is a singular honor to be trusted with such an all-important message. Let us not fail God!

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Great Controversy*, chapter 38.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The time of trouble is one of those phrases that fills Seventh-day Adventist believers and others who look for Jesus’ appearing with trepidation. Even if one is supremely at peace with God, they cannot discount the fearful scenes that will signal the close of earth’s history.

By the time of the proclamation found in Daniel 12:1 the record of all humanity is sealed. The filthy will remain so; the holy will be sealed in their holiness. Jesus will cease to mediate on behalf of humanity, and Satan will be freed to use all the power available to him to persecute the followers of God and lead the fallen world to the precipice of destruction. This is one trial that will be worse in culmination than in anticipation.

As you prepare to teach this lesson, know that many teenagers in your class are fearful of the end-time, the time of trouble. Who can blame them? For many years the events that usher in the second coming of Jesus have been used to bludgeon people into following Christ. The youth have experienced this. Avoid the tendency to sensationalize the events of the time of trouble simply as a means of pressuring them to follow Jesus. Fear may take us to Christ, but it will not keep us there.

The youth need to know that even though trying times are ahead, a small remnant of faithful believers, of which they may be a part, will endure to the end. This group will neither give up their faith in Jesus Christ, nor give up the Sabbath. Like Jacob on the night that he wrestled with God’s angel (Genesis 32:24-30) they will pray earnestly, pleading with God for mercy and humbling themselves before Him. As they review their lives they see little that is good, but all they see will have been confessed and repented of.

The main point to be communicated this week is the “fierce urgency of now.” Now is the time to be right with God. Now is the time to forsake sin and surrender to God—before the time of trouble comes.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Learn that a time of trouble is coming upon the earth such as never was. (Know)
• Experience the assurance that they can stand for Christ, no matter what comes upon the earth. (Feel)
• Embrace their role as faithful members of God’s end-time remnant. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Persecution
• Abiding
• 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? sec-
tion of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Review the What Do You Think? activity with your class. Chances are you, like your students, have a strong emotional reaction to the time of trouble. It is difficult to be neutral about something that has so many far-reaching implications for one’s life.

Ask the students to share their answers. Let the students know that there is no right or wrong ranking of their emotions. The objective of this activity is to help the students take a hard look at what they think about end-time events, and whether or not their reactions are supported by the facts of what will occur before Jesus comes.

(Note: you may need to define the time of trouble for some of your students.)

Another way to approach the What Do You Think? section is to write the phrase “time of trouble” on a board and have the students call out the first thing that comes to mind. This activity will be less controlled—who knows what might come out of a teenager’s mouth?—but you will get a great “gut reaction” from which to teach the lesson.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In the early 1900s a movement known as the Boxer Rebellion began to sweep across China. Chinese territory was greatly desired by powerful Western nations, such as the United States. As powerful nations encroached upon China, Empress Dowager Tsu Hsi enlisted the help of a secretive group called the Fists of Righteous Harmony to purge the nation of foreign influence. The secret society was referred to as Boxers because they practiced a form of martial arts, and did not believe that Western bullets could stop them.

The Boxers attacked foreign diplomats and dignitaries, but they also persecuted Christians in the process. Here’s one story from that persecution.

“During China’s Boxer Rebellion of 1900, insurgents captured a mission station, blocked all the gates but one, and in front of that one gate placed a cross flat on the ground. Then the word was passed to those inside that any who trampled the cross underfoot would be permitted their freedom and life, but that any refusing would be shot. Terribly frightened, the first seven students trampled the cross under their feet and were allowed to go free. But the eighth student, a young girl, refused to commit the sacrilegious act.

Kneeling beside the cross in prayer for strength, she arose and moved carefully around the cross, and went out to face the firing squad. Strengthened by her example, every one of the remaining 92 students followed her to the firing squad.”

(Source: www.smplanet.com/imperialism/fists.html; bible.org/illustration/china%E2%80%99s-boxer-rebellion)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It was Martin Luther King who declared, “A man who won’t die for something is not fit to live.” That simple statement exemplifies the spirit that will engulf the faithful remnant who will live during the time of trouble. Like the young girl who faced down a firing squad, refusing to sacrifice her faith, God’s end-time people will love Him too much to acquiesce to the demands of the world.

We must remember that such a stand is not the product of the moment. To stand for God in times of crisis, one has to be standing consistently in times of peace.

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.

Three passages of Scripture comprise this week’s Into the Story section, each of which offers a wealth of learning about the time of trouble. Explore each passage with your students.

Revelation 12:11: This verse more than any other signals the end of God’s probation for humanity. Students need to know that there is an end to God’s mercy, that while He loves us, He also hates sin. You may wish to highlight the fact that when God pronounces His final judgment, He is simply confirming the chosen state of each human being. Those who will remain holy chose long ago to be holy. The filthy chose their filth over God. The point to be made here is that God honors our choices.

Genesis 32:24-30: A part of the time of trouble is also referred to as the time of Jacob’s trouble. This period refers to the anguish Jacob felt as his brother Esau approached him after many years on the run. Jacob, the supplanter, was about to come face-to-face with the sins of his past life, and he yearned to be for-
given, to have God’s blessing, to realize God’s promise that He would make of him a great nation. Jacob’s night of wrestling with God represents the mental turmoil that will characterize God’s end-time remnant.

**Psalm 91:1-8.** You may wish to encourage your students to read to the end of this psalm. King David knew a thing or two about trouble. For nearly 20 years he was chased and hounded by King Saul, before he ascended the throne of Israel. In hovels and caves, hungry and tired, David drew close to God and depended fully on Him for all his needs. This is the assurance he offers us in Psalm 91. Though we may be tried and in danger of death, God will protect His people. He will see us through, if we put our faith in Him.

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:* Hebrews 13:5, 6; Revelation 16; Matthew 24; Matthew 25:1-13.

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

1. **The Beginning.** The book of Revelation begins with a clear definition of its theme: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John” (Revelation 1:1, NKJV). The book of Revelation is an unveiling of future mysteries that end in the triumphant return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The first apocalyptic book in the Bible was the book of Daniel, which appeared during the time of the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century B.C. It was Daniel 12:1 that spoke of a time of trouble to come, such as the world had not previously seen. This cryptic message is unveiled in the book of Revelation, especially Revelation 16.

2. **The Issue of Worship.** The apostle John, the writer of Revelation, lived during the time of the Roman Emperor Domitian. The issue of worship proved to be a deciding element of Domitian’s reign. In the Roman provinces of Asia it was not common for temples to be built to conquering Roman generals. But no Roman emperor heretofore required subjects to worship him as did Domitian. Christians who lived during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96) had no legal protection. One scholar notes that he tried to establish his claim to deity by sending out a letter, which began “Our Master and our God bids this be done.”

Domitian executed those who refused to worship him and banished others to far-off places. It is believed that John was one of those who were persecuted for their faith during Domitian’s reign. Is it any wonder then that the issue of worship figures so prominently in the book of Revelation? John was persecuted because He refused to stop worshipping God. Those who endure the time of trouble will face the same trials and the issue again will be worship.

3. **Free Will.** When God created Adam and Eve, He gifted them with freedom to choose to obey Him or not. Genesis 2:17 is but one example of this free will. God even was clear about what the consequences would be if they chose to disregard His admonition. God does not trifle with our free will.
"The free will of man is not to be interfered with. Men are to be permitted to live the life of their own choosing, so that their true character may become apparent. Each person of each age will be made manifest in respect to the class in which he belongs, at the second coming of Christ" (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 896).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Share the following in your own words:

“Leonidas, King of Sparta, was preparing to make a stand with his Greek troops against the Persian army in 480 B.C. when a Persian envoy arrived. The man urged on Leonidas the futility of trying to resist the advance of the huge Persian army. ‘Our archers are so numerous,’ said the envoy, ‘that the flight of their arrows darkens the sun.’ ‘So much the better,’ replied Leonidas, ‘for we shall fight them in the shade.’

“Leonidas made his stand, and died with his 300 troops” (Today in the Word, August 1989, p. 7).

The most important part of standing for Jesus at the end of time is the determination to stand for Him now, right where we are. Ask God to give you and your students the solemn resolve to stand tall until we all see Jesus’ face.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The time of trouble will be a difficult time for all human beings alive at the time. Not only will Satan be unleashed in all of his terrible ferocity, but angels from heaven will pour out plagues upon the earth that will send the world into a nightmarish frenzy.

Amid the turmoil, a small bunch of die-hard believers will refuse to bow to Satan’s pressures. The Sabbath test will be the most prominent issue on which they stand firm for God, but it will by no means be the only one. Religious leaders will point to them as the source of the world’s pain and chaos. They will be persecuted mercilessly and driven underground.

But they will survive. Their sacrifice will lead countless others to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. There is no way to soft-pedal the fearful scenes soon to fall upon earth, but we hope in these words from Jesus: “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12, NKJV).

Even so, come Lord Jesus!

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 Great Controversy, chapter 39.

*A special adaptation of The Great Controversy 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

The time of trouble will be a terrifying time for people who don’t know God, but it will be a time of victory for God’s people. God will protect His people from those terrible times. While we oftentimes tend to focus on the difficulty of the end-times, we forget to focus on the power of God to deliver us!

Being frightened about the world ending is very natural. In fact, even unbelievers are nervous looking at the signs around us. People are putting their faith in an ancient Mayan calendar to tell them when the world will end. They make up conspiracy theories to explain the signs in the world around us. They say that aliens will come and destroy the earth. . . . They say that we will destroy the earth with a nuclear holocaust. . . . They say that an asteroid will hit the earth and destroy life as we know it. Why is there such a focus on the world ending? Because God has put something into our hearts to warn us. When we look to God, we know that He will come to deliver us out of our misery and pain. When we don’t look to God, we are filled with fear of the unknown, and a horrible sense of powerlessness and a lack of control.

God will protect us, and we will be delivered. That is what we need to remember! We are not alone, and we are truly safe with God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that the end of the world is not a time for us to fear. (Know)

• Sense the trustworthiness of God and His Word (Feel)

• Choose to pursue a friendship with God in order to feel safe and secure. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Experience of salvation¹

• Second coming of Christ²

• Death and resurrection³

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Invite the students to share their thoughts on the What Do You Think? section. Then have them look at these situations and decide if Jesus’ coming is “soon” for each example:

1. Stephen in Acts is stoned as a young man and sees Jesus in a vision as he dies.

2. An old man dies of natural causes at 75 after waiting his whole life for Jesus to come.

3. A teenager who thought he had all the time in the world is hit by a bus and killed.

4. An angel appears to you and tells you that Jesus will come in the next 70 years. That is the
longest you will have to get ready.
How “soon” is each person’s experience of Jesus’ coming?

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Charles Blondin (1824-1897) was a French tightrope walker. At the age of 5 he went to the École de Gymnase at Lyon. Six months later he had his first performance.

In June of 1859 he attempted to become the first tightrope walker to cross a tightrope stretched across Niagara Falls, over 1100 feet of tightrope, 160 feet above the water. A huge crowd had come to watch him. He did all sorts of amazing feats. He crossed the tightrope on stilts. He crossed the tightrope in a sack. He even crossed it with a stove and frying pan, sat down in the middle and cooked and ate an omelet! The crowd cheered their encouragement.

Finally, Charles took a wheelbarrow and crossed the tightrope blindfolded. When he came back to the thunderous applause of the crowd, he asked if they thought he could carry a person across in the wheelbarrow.

“Yes, yes, yes!” they shouted. He was the greatest tightrope walker of all time. They had no doubt that he could do it!

“Then do I have a volunteer?” he asked.

The crowd buzzed and looked around. They gasped and cheered and watched, but not one volunteered.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Sometimes we claim to believe in God and we say all the right things, but when it comes right down to it, we don’t want to trust God where it counts. Like the people watching the great Blondin doing his tightrope walk across Niagara Falls, we shout “Yes, yes, yes!” when we are asked if we trust God, but we certainly don’t step out and get into that wheelbarrow!

**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 verses that describe the time of trouble.
- **Underline** the verses that are promises for God to protect His people.
- Which verses apply to God’s people, and which verses apply to those who have rejected God?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 6:25-34; 25:31-46.*
struggling to survive against the odds. Our society’s preoccupation with the end of the world shows us that even nonbelievers have an internal sense that our planet’s time is nearly up.

The Bible tells us that the world will end, but not because of alien attacks or flipped magnetic poles. The world will end because God decides that it is time to end sin and Satan’s reign on earth. This is not a time to be afraid; it’s a time to celebrate! God will rescue His people, and sin will be gone forever. Ellen White speaks of this time as follows: “Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: ‘Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!’ Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying: ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ 1 Corinthians 15:55. And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory.”

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Go back to the students’ discussion of “how soon is soon.” Considering that the longest any of us have to wait to experience Jesus’ coming is another 70 years or so, does that affect our lives? Look at this list of “things to do before Jesus comes” and have the students put them in order of highest priority to lowest:
1. Read your Bible
2. Pray daily
3. Help the poor
4. Get baptized

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 Great Controversy. 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.
5. Stop swearing
6. Get to know Jesus better
7. Memorize the Ten Commandments
8. Make up with your enemy
9. Get rich

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
Oftentimes, we think about the time of trouble before Jesus comes with fear and trepidation. We think of enduring hardship and punishment. We are anxious about the misery we feel that God inflicts on us before He comes. But that is not the case. God has promised to care for His people through the time of trouble. If we look at the promises through the Bible about how God will care for His people and not allow them to perish, and if we look at Ellen White’s description of how God will protect His people and deliver them, we have nothing to worry about.

God’s deliverance goes further than the time of trouble, however. He will take us out of this sinful world and give us a home with no more pain or death. We will be delivered from all discomfort, and our pain and fear will be forgotten.

1 Fundament Belief No. 10.
2 Fundament Belief No. 25.
3 Fundament Belief No. 26.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Great Controversy, chapter 40.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After the Second Coming the earth will be made new, but not before the wicked are destroyed. This is not an easy topic to cover. God destroying and killing the evil people is not a comfortable image or idea. However, it is necessary before sin can be eradicated once and for all, allowing us to live in peace and happiness for all eternity.

It is a very natural emotion to pity the wicked. However, Ellen White gives us a unique view into the mental space of the wicked before they are destroyed. They are not sorry for the pain and misery they have caused, only sorry that God has triumphed. They are not redeemable.

God’s love for us, and for the irredeemable wicked, is more than we can imagine. God does not want to destroy anyone, which is why He waits so long, waiting to give everyone the last possible chance to change. God loves each of us infinitely more than we love the dearest person in our lives. His heart aches for us. He longs to be reunited and to stop the pain we must endure, but He also longs to save the lost.

The millennium will be used to put God’s goodness on trial. We will have the opportunity to ask our questions, see why God did what He did, and let God prove His goodness to the cosmos.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand the millennium and the reason for destroying the wicked. (Know)

• Sense God’s desire to have a relationship with them on a personal level. (Feel)

• Choose to seek a relationship with God to prepare for His coming. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Knowing God

• Millennium and the end of sin

• Sin/evil/devil

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.

Take a recent news story about a crime committed in your area. Show the students the news story, and ask them these questions:

1. What should be done to the person who did this?
2. What is a fair punishment and why?
3. If the person repents of what they did and changes their life, does your decision change, or does it make a difference?

Note the different responses from different students. Each person will likely have a different idea of what is fair.
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

When Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933) was vice president of the United States, he had a reputation of being a man of few words. He was a very eloquent speaker, but in his private life he was quiet, earning him the nickname “silent Cal.” At one dinner party, a lady sitting next to him said that she’d made a bet that she could get more than two words out of him. His reply: “You lose.” Coolidge had a quick and memorable wit, but he was very uncomfortable in formal situations. When asked why he attended formal dinners that made him so uncomfortable, he was rumored to have said, “Have to eat somewhere.”

Senate debates can get rather heated. Each senator, each faction, Democrats and Republicans, see their politics in a very personal light. There is a reason why religion and politics are not polite dinner conversation—people take both too seriously to be able to chew calmly, let alone digest properly.

During a very heated debate in the Senate, Vice President Calvin Coolidge was presiding. The senators were firing back and forth at each other, and one exasperated senator shot out, “Go to hell!”

The senator who was spoken to so disrespectfully turned to Coolidge, enraged, and complained to him.

Coolidge looked up from the book he’d been leafing through and said, “I’ve been looking through the rule book. You don’t have to go.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

While Calvin Coolidge was joking in his reply to the senator, his words held truth. Hell is a very real experience reserved for the end of time when God cleanses the earth. It is an experience we can skip, however. God doesn’t want even one person to be lost. When we look at the “rule book” we can see that we don’t have to go either. Our eternal reward is a choice.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• Underline what happens to the saved people.
• What hope do we see here for those who have trusted in God?

• Circle what happens to the lost people.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 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.

It is important to remember that for literally hundreds of years people have been taught about hell. Hell is either featured as a place of horrific torment where people’s worst nightmares come true, or it is laughed off as funny. Both views are dangerous.

If we look at the first view of hell as a place of horror, it is hard to see a loving God behind it. If hell is a place where evil reigns and people are tortured in the vilest ways, then how can we believe that God is loving? Following God would simply be out of fear, not out of love.

Adolescents are bombarded with entertainment that glorifies the horrific nature of hell. Horror movies return to the theme repeatedly, and video games cash in on the shock value. If we simply accept these ideas as they are hammered into us, then our view of God becomes skewed and Satan gets just what he wants!

Laughing at hell is equally damaging. Cartoons, stand-up comics, movies, Halloween costumes, and even modern philosophy poke fun at hell. We all have seen the images of little devils with pitchforks and hooves standing amid flames. They are depicted as quite cute, while angels are shown to be boring and “killjoys.” The joke is that while everyone is trying to avoid hell, it is really the place where all the fun is. Satan has been deceiving humanity from the beginning, and this just one more lie to lure people toward destruction.

Hell, according to the Bible, is a temporary situation. The fires will burn long enough to consume sin, and then sin will be no more. The only reminder we will have for what sin did will be in our memories and in the palms of Jesus’ hands. Hell is also the opposite of heaven. Hell is a separation from God, and heaven is being reunited with the God who so lovingly created us. God created you because He wanted to have a relationship with you. That relationship pulls us away from sin and the terrible consequences sin brings, and draws us closer to paradise with Him.
When we pull away from God, we pull away from the Source of life, and the result is eternal death, not eternal punishment.

The Millennium is a thousand-year period after Jesus comes and takes those who love Him to heaven. "During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' 1 Corinthians 4:5. Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came, 'judgment was given to the saints of the Most High.' Daniel 7:22. At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: 'I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.' 'They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.' Revelation 20:4, 6. It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, 'the saints shall judge the world.' 1 Corinthians 6:2. In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.

"Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people. Says Paul: 'Know ye not that we shall judge angels?' Verse 3. And Jude declares that 'the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.' Jude 6.

"At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of 'the judgment written.' Thus the revelator, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says: 'The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.' Revelation 20:5."* It is only after those thousand years that God will wipe the earth clean with fire and destroy sin forever. First of all, God needs to take the time with us to make sure we under-

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Contract Teachers**

What do you do when you ask a question and no one wants to speak? One way to avoid this kind of situation is to make a contract with the students at the beginning of the class. Nothing they say will leave the classroom. Nothing they say will be used against them. Nothing they say can be wrong, because it is their perspective. And keep your end of the contract, even if they test you. Making a safe environment for discussion is more important than extracting "correct" answers from the students.

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**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book The Great Controversy. 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.
stand His justice. Why? Because that is what you do when you have a loving relationship. You take the time you need to understand each other.


III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

Ask the students each to think of one thing they wish to see obliterated from the earth when Jesus comes. Write each word on one side of the board in no particular order. On the other side of the board, ask the students to do the same exercise, but this time stating something they are looking forward to enjoying for eternity. What things on each side of the board are already in their lives now?

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**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words.*

Someone once said that hell proves God’s love. If God did not love us so much, He would not have given us a choice. If God did not respect us so much, He would not allow us to separate ourselves from Him, thereby destroying ourselves. God’s love is so strong that God allows His own heart to be broken. The wicked are not destroyed by God’s wish to inflict pain. The wicked are destroyed because God’s glory, which comforts those who have stayed connected to Him, is too much for the wicked, and it consumes them.

When God destroys sin and wipes the slate clean, we will finally have a chance to live without pain, frustration, anger, or depression. We will be able to live without fear, learning and growing for eternity. The best part, however, will be being close to God and never feeling separated again.

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*Fundamental Belief No. 27.

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 Great Controversy*, chapter 41.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

In his book *Our Greatest Gift* Henri Nouwen imagines twins—a brother and a sister—talking to each other in their mother’s womb:

The sister said to the brother, “I believe there is life after birth.”

The brother protested, “No, no, this is all there is. This is a dark and cozy place, and we have nothing else to do but to cling to the cord that feeds us.”

The girl insisted, “There must be something more than this dark place. There must be something else, a place with light where there is freedom to move.” Then she added, “And I think there is a mother.”

“A mother!” the boy scoffed. “I have never seen a mother, and neither have you. Who put that idea in your head? As I told you, this place is all we have. This is not such a bad place, after all.”

“But don’t you feel these squeezes every once in a while? They’re quite unpleasant and sometimes even painful.”

“Yes,” he answered.

“Well,” the sister said, “I think that these squeezes are there to get us ready for another place, much more beautiful than this, where we will see our mother face-to-face.”

As Adventist Christians we know that this dark world is not all there is. Because of another Baby, born of a virgin and placed in a manger, we now live in the hope that that same Christ Child will come again. The day is coming when we will see our Maker, face-to-face. Any “squeeze” we’re feeling now is temporary; we will outlive it.

The Bible promises that one day “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revel 21:4, NIV). The great controversy will be over. The earth will be made new. At last we will experience peace on earth and “good will toward men” (Luke 2:14, KJV).

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Learn about heaven. (*Know*)
• Be invited to live with the assurance that some day they will experience the earth made new. (*Feel*)
• Be given the opportunity to experience the peace of Christ as they wait and watch for the Second Coming. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

• Great controversy
• New earth
• Contentment/peace

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. Ask them to share the basis on which they answered the questions.
As an alternate activity, wrap up various Christmas gifts. Distribute the gifts and then discuss the following questions:

- What is the best Christmas gift you have ever received and why?
- Be honest here: do you prefer giving or receiving a gift? Explain.
- Which is a greater gift from God—to come as a baby in a manger? or to come back and take us home to heaven? Why?
- In light of the consumerism of Christmas, how can you be perfectly content with what you have?
- Discuss with your friends what you are looking forward to the most when you get to heaven.

Illustration

There is an old legend of a swan and a crane. A beautiful swan swooped by the banks of a pond in which a crane was wading about seeking snails. For a few moments the crane viewed the swan in stupid wonder and then asked: “Where do you come from?”

“I come from heaven!” replied the swan.

“And where is heaven?” asked the crane.

“Heaven!” said the swan, “Heaven! Have you never heard of heaven?” The beautiful bird went on to describe the grandeur of the eternal city. She told of streets of gold and the gates and walls made of precious stones; she dreamily described the river of life flowing as pure as crystal. In eloquent terms the swan described the tree of life and the hosts who live in the other worlds—yet failed to arouse the slightest interest on the part of the crane.

Finally the crane asked: “Are there any snails there?”

“Snails!” gasped the swan, “No! Of course there are not.”

“Then,” said the crane, as it continued its search along the slimy banks of the pond, “you can have your heaven. I want snails!”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

How often do we get distracted by the trinkets and toys of this world—even though they’re slimy snails compared to what is yet to come? Eavesdrop on conversations around any high school and you’ll hear high-powered prattle that seems to be real important, but in reality is snail talk.

“Check out my new set of wheels!”

“That blouse, like, makes you look so fat.”

“Dude! I scored three goals in the soccer game.”

Let’s face it: The stuff that often consumes our conversations on this earth is meaningless compared to what is yet to come in the new earth. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 2:9 that what’s to come is out of this world. In fact we cannot even conceive of what God has prepared for us in heaven.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Divide the class into three groups and designate to each group one of the following chapters and assignments. (If your class is small, choose one of the following assignments or do all three of them together.) After 10 minutes of working on the assignment, have each group share their final project with the rest of the class.

Revelation 20: Ask this group to prepare the chapter as a dramatic reenactment. Encourage them to be creative. They may present it as a reader’s theater with the students taking turns reading certain words and verses. They may rewrite the chapter into a very contemporary translation. They might want to have some students act it out as the chapter is read.

Revelation 21: Have this second group recreate the highlights of the chapter using pictures. Their assignment is to pretend they are hiding in a cave just before Jesus returns; but there is a language barrier with several foreigners who are also hiding in fear for their lives. These people do not know of the blessed hope that Jesus promised to come again. Using a chalkboard or an easel pad, the students are to communicate this entire passage of hope by sketching it out.

Revelation 22: This third group is tasked with the challenge of “selling” this belief that Jesus is coming again. By selecting key phrases and verses in this chapter, have the students prepare an infomercial that will make viewers long for heaven.

Sharing Context and Background

The Beginning: The great controversy between God and Satan began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed. God then said to the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15, NIV).
Satan is our enemy. He will do anything he can to get us to follow his evil, deadly path. The phrase “you will strike his heel” refers to Satan’s repeated attempts to defeat Christ during His life on earth. “He will crush your head” foreshadows Satan’s defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A strike on the heel is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is. Already God was revealing His plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.\(^3\)

**The Drama:** Ellen White captures the climactic drama of the human story with her opening statements in *The Desire of Ages*:

“‘His name shall be called Immanuel, . . . God with us.’ ‘The light of the knowledge of the glory of God’ is seen ‘in the face of Jesus Christ.’ From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was ‘the image of God.’ . . . It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God’s love—to be ‘God with us’” (p. 19).

**The End:** Angelfire.com posts this commentary on the conclusion of Revelation:

“Revelation closes human history as Genesis opened it—in paradise. But there is one distinct difference in Revelation—evil is gone forever. Genesis describes Adam and Eve walking and talking with God. Revelation describes people worshiping God, face-to-face. Genesis describes a garden with an evil serpent. Revelation describes a perfect city with no evil. The Garden of Eden was destroyed by sin; but paradise is re-created in the New Jerusalem.\(^6\)

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Wrapping It Up**

In this final lesson of the four-year curriculum based on the Conflict of the Ages Series, it would be appropriate to review the entire series beginning with page 1 of *Patriarchs and Prophets* through the final page in *The Great Controversy*. At the Web site titled “Teaching Tips: Teaching and Learning Activities,”\(^5\) education experts advise: “plan an overview.” By wrapping up our long journey through the Bible with a brief overview of the entire great controversy that begins with Lucifer’s rebellion in heaven and ends in paradise with God, students can get a heavenly perspective.

“The book of Revelation ends with an urgent request: ‘Come Lord Jesus.’ In a world of problems, persecution, evil, and immorality Christ calls us to endure in our faith. Our efforts to better our world are important, but their results cannot compare with the transformation that Jesus will bring about when He returns. . . .

“Revelation is, above all, a book of hope. It shows that no matter what happens on earth, God is in control. It promises that evil will not last forever. And it depicts the wonderful reward that is waiting for all those who believe in Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord.”\(^4\)
III. CLOSING

Activity

Ask your youth group to brainstorm a list of movies and TV shows that have dealt with heaven and hell. (You may wish to show a few examples from www.youtube.com.) Talk with your students about how Hollywood portrays heaven and hell. Do they believe these to be accurate representations of heaven or hell? Why or why not? What have your kids heard differently in church or in school? Is anything different? If so, what?

Summary

Conclude with this simple story and challenge:

“My favorite place in the whole world,” Paul exclaimed, “is Grandma and Grandpa’s ranch!”

“Yeah,” his brother Randy agreed, “and I like Grandma’s apple pies the best.”

“I like playing soccer in their big yard,” Paul added.

Grandma and Grandpa’s place was a slice of heaven: swinging on the front porch, licking ice-cream cones, swimming in the creek, and best of all, listening to Grandpa’s stories about World War II.

Then everything changed. The aroma of fresh apple pies had disappeared from the kitchen. No one pulled Paul and Randy in the wagon. And the swing was always empty. Grandpa had died, and Grandma had moved to a nursing home.

What do you think Paul and Randy really liked most about visiting their grandparents’ house? Although there were fun things to do there, what really made the ranch special were Grandma and Grandpa. Without them, the ice cream lost its flavor and the swing lost its magic.

Heaven promises great things to do—riding rhinos, flying to planets, eating apples the size of watermelons. But without question the best thing about heaven will be spending time with Jesus.

__1__ Adapted from preachingtoday.com/illustrations/article_print.html?id=25292.

__2__ Fundamental Belief No. 8.


__4__ As quoted at www.angelfire.com/sd/firstbaptistchurch/hope.html.

__5__ www.usp.edu/teaching/tips/activities.shtml.