 WHY THE BIBLE STORY APPROACH?

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

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

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

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

Welcome to Cornerstone Connections.

—The Editors

PS. Don’t forget to check out the reading plan.
what tools are provided for teaching the stories?

(Bolded text helps you review the suggested steps at a glance.)

❶ With each lesson in this Teacher’s Guide you will find an Explore section with topics listed that relate to this week’s story. **Use these resources to create a “program” that is relevant to your group.** At www.cornerstoneconnections.net you will find a variety of resources for exploring the topic you choose—from discussion questions to illustrations, from reader’s theater scripts to learning activities.

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

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

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

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

❹ 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.

❹ 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.

❹ 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.

For resources that provide discussion questions, activities, and illustrations, go to www.cornerstoneconnections.net and click on Topical Resources.
### 2011

**1st Quarter**
1. Adam and Eve  
2. The Serpent  
3. Cain and Abel  
4. Seth and Enoch  
5. Noah  
6. Tower People  
7. Abraham  
8. Isaac  
9. Lot  
10. Rebekah  
11. Jacob and Esau  
12. Jacob  
13. Israel  

**2nd Quarter**
1. Joseph  
2. The Brothers  
3. Moses  
4. Egyptians  
5. Fleeing Slaves  
6. Unhappy Campers  
7. Chosen Nation  
8. Aaron  
9. The Tabernacle  
10. Miriam and Zipporah  
11. Twelve Spies  
12. Korah  
13. The Bronze Serpent  

**3rd Quarter**
1. The Borders Revisited  
2. Balaam  
3. Questionable Neighbors  
4. Law Review  
5. Moses’ Death  
6. Crossing Jordan  
7. Rahab  
8. Blessings and Curses  
9. Gibeonites  
10. Canaan Divided  
11. Last Words of Joshua  
12. Annual Feasts  
13. Early Judges  

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

### 2012

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

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

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

**4th Quarter**
1. Haggai/Zerubbabel  
2. Zechariah  
3. Temple Two  
4. Esther  
5. Queen  
6. Ezra  
7. Nehemiah  
8. Builders  
9. Plotter  
10. Reformers  
11. Jesus  
12. Deliverer  
13. Future Glory  

### 2013

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

**2nd Quarter**
1. Samaritan Woman  
2. The Nobleman  
3. The Lame Man  
4. John the Baptist  
5. The Anointed One  
6. Peter  
7. Capernaum  
8. The Leper  
9. Levi-Matthew  
10. The Sabbath  
11. The Disciples  
12. The Centurion  
13. The Demoniac  

**3rd Quarter**
1. Woman/Jairus  
2. The Seventy  
3. The Disciples  
4. Misunderstandings  
5. Broken Barriers  
6. Jesus’ Ministry  
7. Who Is Jesus?  
8. Lawyer/Ruler  
9. The Children  
10. Lazarus’ Family  
11. Zacchaeus  
12. Mary  
13. James and John  

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

### 2014

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

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

**3rd Quarter**
1. First Believers  
2. Seekers  
3. Wycliffe  
4. Luther  
5. Zwingli  
6. French Reformation  
7. English Reformers  
8. French Revolution  
9. American Reformers  
10. William Miller  
11. Prophecy Fulfilled  
12. The Sanctuary  
13. God’s Law  

**4th Quarter**
1. Renewal  
2. Investigative Judgment  
3. Origin of Evil  
4. Snares  
5. Great Deception  
6. The Papacy  
7. Spiritual Challenge  
8. The Bible  
9. Last Chance  
10. Time of Trouble  
11. Deliverance  
12. The End  
13. The Beginning
### 1st Quarter

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<td><em>3rd Quarter</em></td>
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1. **The Trust Test**
   - Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 2; 3:1-11.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 39.

2. **Greed: The Bottomless Pit**
   - Scripture Story: Numbers 22–24.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 40.

3. **Roads to the Soul**
   - Scripture Story: Numbers 25.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 41.

4. **Law and Love Revisited**
   - Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 4–6; 28.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 42.

5. **Last Longing Look**
   - Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 31–34.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 43.

6. **Promises Don’t Die**
   - Scripture Story: Joshua 1–5:12.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 44.

7. **Behind the Walls**
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 45.

8. **First Things First**
   - Scripture Story: Joshua 8.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 46.

9. **Oops!**
   - Scripture Story: Joshua 9; 10.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 47.

10. **Real Estate Section**
    - Scripture Story: Joshua 10:40-43; 11; 14–22.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 48.

11. **Line in the Sand**
    - Scripture Story: Joshua 23; 24.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 49.

12. **Famines and Feasts**
    - Scripture Story: Leviticus 23.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 50, 51, and 52.

13. **Knowing God (‘Will)**
    - Scripture Story: Judges 6–8; 10.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 53.

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1. **Fatal Attraction**
   - Scripture Story: Judges 13–16.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 54.

2. **Prayer Power**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 1; 2:1-11.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 55 and 58.

3. **Eli’s Bad, Bad Boys**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 2:12-36.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 56.

4. **Turn It Around**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 3–7.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 57.

5. **Trading Leaders**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 8–14.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 59 and 60.

6. **So Long, Saul**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 15; 28; 31.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 61, 66, and 67.

7. **Giant Faith**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 16; 17.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 62 and 63.

8. **Green-eyed Monster**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 18–27.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 64 and 65.

9. **A Sad End**
   - Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 29; 30; 2 Samuel 1.
   - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 68.

10. **When Will I Be King?**
    - Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 2–5:5.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 69.

11. **The Golden Age of Israel**
    - Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 5:6-25; 6; 7; 9; 10.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70.

12. **The Fall and Rise of David**
    - Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 11; 12.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 71.

13. **Fatal Fallout**
    - Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 13–19; 24; 1 Kings 1;
      1 Chronicles 21; 28; 29.
    - Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 72 and 73.
January

1—The Way of Two Worlds [p. 11]
Both Creation and the fall of Lucifer begin the story of God’s uncompromising plan to be in relationship with humanity.

8—Law Meets Love [p. 19]
Adam and Eve break trust with their Creator and open the door of death and destruction that would ultimately cost Him His life.

15—Out of Control [p. 27]
The story of Cain and Abel provides the first recorded contrast between those who trust and obey, and those who rationalize and choose their own way.

22—A Very Long Walk With God [p. 35]
Enoch lives the story of how much God wants to be in relationship with us, and how a life of trusting togetherness will restore us back to permanent companionship with Him.

29—Noah Way! [p. 42]
Noah also walks with God in a story very parallel with ours today. He lived a life of faithful diligence in preparing for the storm ahead.

February

5—Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door [p. 51]
The futility of trying to find a way to save ourselves is exemplified in the story of the Tower of Babel. Only a life of trusting obedience brings ultimate and lasting safety.

12—Long, Strange Trip [p. 59]
Abraham’s name is a synonym for, and his life an example of, the kind of faith that God looks for in His friends.

19—Boy Wonder [p. 67]
The story of the miraculous birth of Isaac is the story of how God keeps His promises even when the most enlightened human reasoning pronounces the situation hopeless and impossible.

26—No Laughing Matter [p. 75]
By choosing a life close to the evils of his age rather than one as far away as possible, Lot laid the groundwork for the destruction of his family.

March

5—Winsome . . . And Then Some [p. 83]
The story of God, the matchmaker, provides encouragement in this age of shaky relationships. Rebekah also portrays the virtue of going the second mile in service to others.

12—Identity Theft [p. 91]
Through the story of Jacob and Esau we can explore themes of identity, delayed gratification, and integrity—all very relevant themes for coping with life today.

19—Struggle by a Stream [p. 99]
The life of Jacob points out the unconditional acceptance of God. Persevering through his problems, Jacob was able to experience joy as he trusted the broken pieces of his life to God.

26—Family Fiascoes [p. 107]
The effects of sin as well as the evidence of God’s healing grace are vividly portrayed in the story of Jacob and his family. Through it we are called to trust God with all our family challenges.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The book of Genesis introduced the human story with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” but the story really began before the earth was created. God and the angels lived in perfect harmony by the basic rule of love until selfishness grew inside Lucifer. The selfishness that stirred in Lucifer’s heart soured the music of heaven, and many began to suspect that something was different about the musically gifted angel.

The Father in heaven made personal appeals to Lucifer to surrender his pride, but the honored angel responded to God’s kindness with only deeper resentment. As Lucifer’s jealousy of the Son of God intensified, open conflict in heaven became inevitable. Both God and Lucifer drew their weapons. Lucifer’s primary weapon was to deceitfully undermine the character of God with a well-placed lie. God, however, chose the only weapon His nature would allow: He chose to continue His rule of love and allow the fruit of sin to ripen in the arena of His creation. Love’s response to sin would not be to destroy it, but to pay for it and patiently allow sin to run its horrible course. God chose to create the world, including Adam and Eve, according to His perfect plan and expose the glorious world to the deceiver.

Many have wondered whether the world would have been better off if God had dealt with Lucifer quickly and quietly. This lesson leads us to wonder, “Why did God choose to create the world and mankind when the imminent danger of sin waited to corrupt God’s plan?” Ellen White says, “Had he [Lucifer] been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 42).

When God commenced with the plan of creation, He was fully aware of the danger that lurked for His beloved children. Nevertheless, Adam and Eve and the inhabitants of the earth were created. The Sabbath, marriage, the joy of work, and communion with God became rich blessings for Adam and Eve. Their perfect world would remain as long as they were loyal to God and His rule of love.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand that the central rule of God’s government is love, which is why He allowed sin to begin and why He created humanity. (Know)
- Experience a sense of confidence in God’s law of love and His creative design. (Feel)
- Be encouraged to live patiently with a more resolute trust in God’s character. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Sabbath
- Marriage and family
- Creation / Evolution

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

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
A nurse in California recalled working tirelessly with the emergency room staff on a sweet-natured toddler who repeatedly showed up with breathing problems. Over the course of a year the little boy underwent examination after examination, each resulting in a diagnosis of asthma. The source of the illness eluded the doctors and nurses, and each time the little boy was examined the mystery of his struggle to breathe continued to baffle everyone involved. There was no prior history of asthma as an infant, and the notion of allergies was ruled out after further testing. Every symptom seemed to point to asthma, and so he was treated and sent back home.

But sure enough, he would experience difficulty with his breathing and show up in the emergency room again and again. While the staff grew to love the youngster, they were mystified as to how to fix the real problem. One day, when the child was again rushed into the emergency room struggling to breathe, an intern decided to take a look up the little boy’s nose. The doctor discovered a black jellybean lodged way up in the child’s nostril (probably placed there by his brother). The doctor and staff victoriously removed the obstacle, and the problem was solved. Can you imagine the relief that young boy felt when he finally was able to breathe properly?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
As humans, we see the symptoms of sin, but do we understand what is causing the problem? God rarely answers our “whys” about His actions. What are the questions we should be asking to get at the source of the problem? What are the things we should be asking about the character of God and the character of Lucifer, the fallen angel?

When sin reared its ugly head in heaven, the solution might have seemed obvious: Stop Lucifer—at all costs! Keep the devil away from Adam and Eve! Erase Satan and sin will be no more! God looked much more deeply at the sin problem, and in light of His desire to create you and me He chose to banish Lucifer from heaven and continue with His plan of creation on earth. Our story today has two pictures: (1) a snapshot of the beginning of sin, and (2) a snapshot of God’s perfect world.

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

• What are some key facts in these passages that show who Lucifer was? What was his role in heaven? What was he like? What was his downfall? What did he ultimately desire more than anything else? What was God’s response?
• Why do you think there are no reasons given in this passage as to why God allowed sin to continue? Are there reasons given in the Creation story as to why He created the earth and humanity?
• Highlight what you think are the most significant aspects of the Creation story.
• What do you think it means to be made in the image of God? How were Adam and Eve “like” God? Was it physical? emotional? moral? Are we like God in the same way or in a similar way? What is the difference?
• What do you think is significant about the fact that humans were created in the image of God? How do you think people would be different today if they had a better understanding of why sin was permitted?
• What do you think is significant about the fact that the Sabbath, marriage, work, and long walks with God existed before sin entered the world? How do you think people would be different today if they knew God’s ultimate reason for creating the world and people?
• What are some insights from this reading that you have noticed for the first time?
• Underline the verse that you think is the most important part of the story. Why do you think so?
• What do you think is more important to understand—why God let sin continue, or what God was thinking when He created the world and
humanity? Explain. (You may want to connect the student responses back to the opening activity in the Getting Started section by saying: Who would benefit from an explanation of sin’s existence? Who would benefit from more insight into God’s mind at Creation? Why?)

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Ephesians 1; Revelation 20; 1 John 4:8; Isaiah 46:10; John 12:31; John 14:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. The cryptic story of Lucifer’s fall still seems to baffle those who read it. Why was sin permitted? Another question to ask might be: What kind of God would make creatures who had the power to choose whether to serve Him or themselves, and then wipe them out the moment they made the wrong choice?

2. The Hebrew word for Satan means adversary. In the New Testament the name for Satan is Diabolos, which means “one who slanders or accuses.” Every time Satan shows up in Scripture he attempts to bring down the character of God. For examples:
   (A) In Eden: “You will not surely die. . . . For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4, 5, NIV).
   (B) With Job: “God said to Satan, ‘Have you noticed my friend Job? There’s no one quite like him—honest and true to his word, totally devoted to God and hating evil.’ Satan retorted, ‘So do you think Job does all that out of the sheer goodness of his heart? Why, no one ever had it so good! You pamper him like a pet, make sure nothing bad ever happens to him or his family or his possessions, bless everything he does—he can’t lose!’ ” (Job 1:8-10, Message).
   (C) At the temptations of Christ: Feed Yourself by turning stones to bread. Save Yourself and mystify everyone watching with Your power. Make it easy on Yourself, and I’ll give you back the world and you won’t have to die for it (Matthew 4 and Luke 4).

3. This lesson is not only about the Fall and the impact of Lucifer’s sin, but about God’s character and the way He chooses to create humanity in the very presence of an enemy.

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? The word image in the Hebrew means a “copy or a shadow or reflection of an original.” Bible scholars agree that this word does not mean humans are an exact duplication of God, but rather the effects of God’s internal

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

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

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

Activity

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

Bring a mirror to class or take the students to a mirror. If the mirror is clean, the reflection will be pretty accurate. If you rub an oily substance on the mirror, it reflects a smeared image. But some of the attributes are still identifiable—just not clear. Talk about this dynamic with the students. If we are a reflection of God (“made in the image of God”), then His attributes are evident in the mirror. The mirror isn’t God. Ask the students to consider what things may dirty up the mirror the most.

Ask: What can we do today to better reflect to others who God is?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The story of Lucifer’s tragic fall and deception provides snapshots of the way sin works us away from God’s way of life. In all of the unanswered questions about what God should or should not have done with sin, there is still the truth about what He did do. God looked at the long road ahead. He saw the decay. He could sense the pain and horrible future of the human race during these dark times. What prompted God to create anyway? You! God wanted you to be able to be there with Him. In Psalm 139 and Ephesians 1 the Scriptures say that you were on God’s mind before anything was created. The questions about what happened in the beginning and what will happen in the end are interesting, but not as crucial as knowing that God wants you to know how much you matter to Him. Created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26), you can’t help being awesome!

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Teaching With Punch

A teacher can ask the students, “What does Psalm 139 say about God’s love and plan for our lives?” The problem with that question is: (1) The teacher is only asking the student to restate what has already been stated, and (2) The question fails to get the students to truly interact with the meaning in the text. One approach that might engage students to interact personally with the Bible would be to say: “Read the Punch Lines and choose the verse that speaks to you personally about God’s plan for your life.” This enables the students to think for themselves and internalize the message. Also, students feel safer to answer a question when the teacher has removed the fear of potentially being wrong.

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 Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 1 and 2.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets 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

Fundamental Belief No. 20.
Fundamental Belief No. 23.
Fundamental Belief No. 6.
KEY TEXT

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” (Revelation 12:7-9, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Perhaps the most challenging question Christians have ever asked is why God permitted sin to corrupt His perfect world. With so much pain and suffering in the world, how do we explain God’s decision to others? Who below do you think would be the hardest person to explain it to? Why? (Rank them from one—hardest, to five—easiest.)

• An open-minded atheist who is looking for a logical answer to life’s biggest problems
• A 17-year-old girl who contracts the AIDS virus from a blood transfusion
• A father who discovers that a distant member of the family molested his 6-year-old boy
• An employee who gets falsely accused and then fired because of his race
• A disaster-relief volunteer faced daily with the trauma caused by natural disasters

What basic beliefs are needed to be able to understand this issue? What evidence or testimony would you give to explain why a God of love would permit such tragedies? Which person above do you think would benefit most from a deeper understanding of the purpose and plan of Creation?

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a 2009 study, the notion that Satan, or the devil, is a real being who can influence people’s lives is considered fiction by most Americans. Only one quarter (27 percent) strongly believes that Satan is real, while a majority argue that he is merely a symbol of evil. Mormons are the group most likely to accept the reality of Satan’s existence (60 percent), while Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists are the least likely (just one fifth).—www.barna.org.

INTO THE STORY

“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! 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.’”

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

(Israel 14:12-14; Revelation 12:7-9; Genesis 1:26, 27; 1:31–2:3, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• What are some key facts in these passages that show who Lucifer was? What was his role in heaven? What was he like? What was his downfall? What did he ultimately desire more than anything else? What was God’s response?

• What do you think it means to be made in the image of God? What do you think is significant about the fact that humans were created in the image of God?

• What do you think is more important to understand—why God let sin continue or what He was thinking when He created the world and humanity? Explain.

• Underline the verse that you think is the most important part of the story. Why did you choose that one?

PUNCH LINES

• “You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you. . . . Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you” (Ezekiel 28:13-15, NIV).

• “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:14-16, NIV).

• “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NIV).
• “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:3, 4, NIV).

• “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10, NIV).

OTHER EYES
• “Sin would have few takers if its consequences occurred immediately.”—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century U.S. scholar, writer, preacher.
• “Sin will keep you from the presence of God or the presence of God will keep you from sin.”—Unknown.

MAKING IT REAL
Sabbath
In the What Do You Think? section, you are challenged to rank types of people according to how difficult it would be to explain the reason for God’s allowing sin to continue in this world. With whom do you think it would be the most difficult to discuss this and why? What approach would you take to answering this question? What key points would be most effective in communicating with the type of person you selected?

Read John 10:10 and consider how Jesus described God’s plan and Satan’s plan for life on earth. How does this saying of Christ add to the discussion about God’s seeming nonresponse to Satan’s work on earth?

Imagine that Lucifer had rebelled against God and then suddenly disappeared from heaven with no explanation. How would the rumors about what might have happened to him affect the way the other citizens would relate to God?

Sunday
Read the selection of Scripture that tells the story of Lucifer’s fall in the Into the Story section. While the information about how sin began is limited, if you use the study questions in Out of the Story you will discover the basic elements of sin’s origin. What are some of the positive, beautiful truths about God’s character that you see in the way He deals with rebellion and the way He created humanity? What aspects of this whole story are still difficult to understand?

Monday
Read the Key Text from Revelation and try to imagine what this scene looked like. While some want to downplay the reality of Satan and his demonic forces, the presence of an evil adversary is actual and relevant. Notice in Did You Know? that the majority of people in America believe Satan is only a symbol for evil, not an actual person. However, the reality of an evil being is more widely believed in other parts of the world. What is the good news, if any, in the text? How should believing in a literal devil impact the way we live in the world today?

Tuesday
Why do you think God’s style of government and His desire for a service of love seem so foreign to us? The quote in the Flashlight section unpacks the central issue of free will in our relationship with God. As you read and reflect on this quote think about someone you know who loves and serves God freely with devotion as opposed to doing these things from fear or obligation. How is their attitude toward God helpful to you as you relate to the Savior? What evidence do you see in their life that reveals to you that they follow God freely and willingly? Do you think this attitude is rare or common? Explain.

Wednesday
Read the verses in Punch Lines. Highlight or note key phrases in each verse that you think a friend of yours might need to understand. Choose one of the verses that spoke to you personally and paraphrase it. (Try not to use any of the major words used in the text.) Be ready to explain how evil came to be and how God continued with His plan for humanity because of His deep love for them. Is there someone in particular you know who is confused about the origin of sin and the creation of the world? Pray about how you might effectively be a witness to them with the insights gained in this study.
Thursday

Read Patriarchs and Prophets,* chapters 1 and 2, with your Bible open to glimpse a powerful picture of what happened in heaven and what eventually happened on earth at the creation of the world. As Ellen White comments on specific aspects of the fall of Lucifer and on the week of Creation, specifically note the insights that are new to you.

Friday

A popular T-shirt among some Christians reads “Can’t Help Being Awesome—Genesis 1:26, 27” and refers to the stated truth that we are created in the image of God. How does this truth encourage and elevate your own sense of value and worth? Can we become so focused on the wonderful work of creation that we lose sight of the Creator? Read Isaiah 14:13, 14 and Ezekiel 28:17 and note the cause of Satan’s fall. How do you see the same kind of self-absorbed focus in the world today? What will you do this week to be aware of the great controversy between good and evil and freely worship God out of a heart full of adoration?

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
The perfect atmosphere of Eden provided Adam and Eve with an abundant life. However, every good quality (wisdom, beauty, influence) that Lucifer possessed in heaven became a tool for the dark purpose of his self-absorbed existence. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the only place that Satan was permitted to interact with Adam and Eve—but it was enough. The deceiver intrigued Eve not only to doubt God’s word but also to mistrust His motives. Satan tempted Eve to suspect that God forbade them to eat the fruit because He didn’t want them to become like Him. Eve took the bait, and Adam simply loved Eve more than He trusted God.

When God’s voice was heard in the garden, His question was, “Where are you?” Lost. Hiding. Broken. Afraid to face God. They tried to excuse their behavior or blame someone else. Selfishness leads to self-preservation. But God’s selflessness led to a solution to their problem. There was only one way fallen humanity could be restored, and that was for someone to pay the wages of sin. Romans 6:23 says that “the wages of sin is death,” and Hebrews echoes the unbendable law of life—“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22, NIV). Paul describes the rule that since one man caused sin to enter the world, then one perfect life of obedience and sacrifice could pay the price (Romans 5:17-20). Only one in the universe could pay such a price—the Creator Himself. In the garden God revealed the future to Adam and Eve, as well as a promise about Satan’s demise.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Understand the significance of the events that took place in the Garden of Eden. (Know)
• Experience the enduring love that prompted God to personally restore fallen humanity. (Feel)
• Be given an opportunity to fully embrace God’s provision of grace, and reject the sin and lies with which Satan snares humanity. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Temptation (dealing with)
• Obedience
• Great controversy*

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

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.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
Cody grew up in a small town with friends who played music and competed on the baseball team. When Cody turned 16, he became interested in cars, while his core group of friends didn’t seem to share the
same interest. Morty, one of the older boys at school, invited Cody to join the auto mechanics class with him. Cody would go over to Morty’s house and they would work on an old car together. Cody quit the baseball team and the band and began to spend all his time with Morty and his friends.

One day, while Cody was hanging out at Morty’s house, two police cars pulled up to Morty’s house and arrested Morty and his friends. Cody stood alone in the yard holding a greasy wrench. With each footstep toward home he was reminded of the distance that had grown between him and his lifelong friends.

The next day the paper reported that Morty and his friends were convicted for a hit-and-run accident, as well as possession of stolen equipment. Cody couldn’t bear to look his lifelong friends in the face. He avoided them at school. When it was time for auto mechanics class he was there alone with the teacher. Then, just as the bell rang, the door to the shop flew open, and six students rushed in with pink slips for the teacher to sign. It was Cody’s old friends. They crowded around the surprised teacher as he signed the papers allowing the new students to join the class.

The shame and fear that haunted Cody began to melt away as his old friends quietly took places around the big, square table in the shop. One picked up a wrench and asked the teacher, “So, what do you call this thing?” They all burst out in laughter, but Cody fought back the tears as he laughed, because he had been such a fool.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Adam and Eve failed to trust God’s word, and the temptation to try to become like God was so strong for them that they gave in. Their disobedience marked every person since their fall with a broken relationship with their Creator. But God came to them in their shame and made a way for them to be redeemed and restored—completely. Over time the fruit of sin would ripen, but so would the seeds of God’s love for humanity. By putting the condemnation on His Son, and promising justice for Lucifer one day, God fulfills His promise to make things right. God secures for anyone who believes a chance to live with Him again.

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.

- Who are the main characters?
- Underline all the questions that are asked. What is significant about each question? Look carefully at the way Satan twists the words around.
- What key words, phrases, and actions are crucial to the message of the story? Circle the key words and indicate why you think they are important.
- Divide the story into at least four scenes and create an appropriate title for each part of the narrative.
- As you read this story, is there: a warning to heed, an example to follow, a prayer to pray, a promise to claim, a sin to confess, a truth to believe?
- If you were to pick three verses from this reading that were key to understanding the plan of redemption, which three would you choose?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 3:16, 17; Revelation 12:10-12; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 5:8; Isaiah 53.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. The Law of God

While there are no “Ten Commandments” in the Garden of Eden as such, there is a law. The same law that Lucifer defied in heaven exists as the foundation of God’s kingdom. The law is about complete loyalty to God and a selfless love toward others. The Hebrew word for law, or Torah, actually means “to throw the rock.” It grows out of the ancient act of throwing a rock when traveling at night so as to negotiate your way in the darkness. When a traveler would reach an uncertain place in the road, they would throw a rock in the darkness and listen for evidence of what they could not see. If there was water, they would hear a splash. If there was a tree, they would hear a crack. If they heard nothing, it was probably a steep drop-off. If they heard someone yell, it was safe to assume that someone was on the road ahead. The rules of
God’s kingdom inform us about the right way to go. God’s Word and His law are trustworthy (Psalm 19:7).

2. The Temptation
Another important feature of this story is the way Satan twists the right words around to make them mean something slightly different. Satan didn’t come right out and overtly undermine God to Adam and Eve. Compare God’s words in Genesis 2:16, 17 with Satan’s question in Genesis 3:1. Eve corrects the serpent but gets caught in verses 3 and 4 when the serpent causes her to question why God might have such strict rules. And so God’s motives become suspect.

3. Death Enters the Scene
The idea and reality of death is introduced in the Garden of Eden. Death is not just a point at which a person ceases to exist. Death in the Old Testament includes the idea of corruption and suffering that is the product of a broken relationship with God. When mankind, and the whole earth, is cut off from intimate communion with God, things get pretty warped. Adam and Eve hide from God, Cain murders his brother, Lamech takes two wives, the earth gets cursed, and everything seems to go downhill quickly after sin enters. Death is more than the ending of a life—it’s the absence of the abundant life.

4. The Prophecy of the Woman, the Seed, and the Snake
God made a prophecy about the woman and the snake. In Genesis 3:15 God says, “And 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” (NIV). Compare this passage with Revelation 12:1-11 and notice the fierce enmity between the two over time. Not only are Eve’s children and the promised Messiah enemies of the dragon, but God promises that the snake will be defeated. Paul picks up on this promise in Romans 16:20 when he writes, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (NIV). You may want to have the students gather in groups and consider how these three passages are connected to the great plan of redemption. What is significant about what Paul wrote is that God’s grace is really what breaks the back of sin and Satan eternally.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Bring a few magnets with a variety of small nails, screws, and paper clips. Have students test which...
nail, screw, or paper clip is drawn to the magnet most. Have the students move the magnet toward the elements and determine which is most likely to be drawn as well as which resists the pull the most effectively. The point of the exercise is to show that, even though the nails do not really resist the magnet, there is less in them that is drawn to the magnet. This illustrates the way temptation works in our lives.

Ask: What is it in your life that is drawn to temptation?

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:
The whole story of Eden seems so far away from life today. But when we look at what Adam and Eve were tempted with, we recognize that the true nature of sin is to get people to distrust God and focus on self. The mess that was made in Eden is awful, but God’s response to sin is awesome. Ellen White penned these powerful words about the plan of salvation: “He [Christ] bade the angelic host to be in accord with the plan that His Father had accepted, and rejoice that, through His death, fallen man could be reconciled to God. Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed, outmeasured even the anguish and sacrifice of the Prince of Life” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 65). Far beyond our brokenness and sin is the perfect and amazing grace of God that saves us.

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*RABBI 101*

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Voting**

*Voting* is a technique that takes seemingly opinionated or outrageous statements about a topic that might elicit a quick response but which become more and more clear when discussed. In a way, “agree or disagree” statements are like a paradox. A paradox is an ancient teaching method that makes a bold statement that initially seems like a contradiction, but later begins to make sense as more thought is applied to it. For example, in Matthew 16:25 Jesus says, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (NIV). In order to understand this statement, the student is required to think carefully about the content.

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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 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapters 3 and 4.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* 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
KEY TEXT

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8, 9, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“He [Christ] bade the angelic host to be in accord with the plan that His Father had accepted, and rejoice that, through His death, fallen man could be reconciled to God. Then joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed outmeasured even the anguish and sacrifice of the Prince of life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 65).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Agree or Disagree (A/D)

___ The real sin in the garden was not so much listening to the serpent’s lie as it was distrusting what God had already said.
___ The plan of salvation enables us to be closer to God than Adam and Eve were before the Fall.
___ The fact that Christ died to pay the debt of sin is evidence that God’s law of love is unbending.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Barna Research Group reported the following results from one of their polls:

1. If a person is generally good or does enough good things for others, they will earn a place in heaven.
   - 31% strongly agree
   - 20% agree somewhat
   - 11% disagree somewhat
   - 31% strongly disagree
   - 7% don’t know

2. The whole idea of sin is outdated.
   - 7% strongly agree
   - 6% agree somewhat
   - 15% disagree somewhat
   - 68% strongly disagree
   - 5% don’t know

What do these statistics say about people’s understanding of sin and salvation?

INTO THE STORY

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”?’

“The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.”’
“You will not surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’ And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’ The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’"

“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’ So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

(Genesis 3:1-13, 21-24, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• Who are the main characters in this story?
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________

• Underline all the questions that are asked in this story. What is significant about each question?
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________

• What key words, phrases, and emotions are central to the message of this story? Circle the words and indicate why you think they are important.
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________

• Break this story up into at least four scenes and create an appropriate title for each part of the narrative.
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________

• As you read this story, is there: a warning to heed, an example to follow, a prayer to pray, a promise to claim, a sin to confess, or a truth to believe?
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________

• If you were to pick three verses from this reading that were key to understanding God’s plan to redeem us, which three would you choose?
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________
  __________________________________________________________

PUNCH LINES

• “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23, NIV).
• “The time of judgment for the world has come, when the prince of this world will be cast out. And when I am lifted up on the cross, I will draw everyone to myself” (John 12:31, 32, NLT).
• “The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God’s wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17, NLT).
• “Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness
brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:18, 19, NLT).

OTHER EYES
- “Saving grace makes a man as willing to leave his lusts as a slave is willing to leave his galley, or a prisoner his dungeon, or a thief his bolts, or a beggar his rags.”—Thomas Brooks, 17th-century nonconformist preacher; served as chaplain in the Civil War.
- “It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen.”—Ellen G. White, 19th-century inspired writer and church cofounder.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath
The What Do You Think? exercise offers a few questions that you are to agree or disagree with and asks you to state why. Consider the following passage from Scripture: “Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:18, 19, NLT). What is the most meaningful part of the verse to you? Why?

Sunday
The story of the temptation and the Fall is in the Into the Story section. Which phrases or verses are the most critical to the meaning of the story? Why do you think God asked Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” What if Adam and Eve had never come out of hiding when God called to them? What kind of emotions do you think Adam and Eve were experiencing as they hid in the bushes from God?

Monday
Read the Key Text in a couple of different translations if possible. Rewrite the verse in your own words including the different emotions you think Adam and Eve were feeling.

Tuesday
Take a look in the Flashlight section at the powerful statement Ellen White makes about the glory of a redeemed world. Especially consider the phrase “The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed outmeasured even the anguish and sacrifice of the Prince of life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 65). Apparently the big picture of the plan of salvation enabled the angels to rejoice even though it meant the death of the Son of God. Do you know someone who, like the angels of heaven, has the ability to see the big picture in life? How has this person helped you see the big picture?

Wednesday
Read the verses and find the texts in the Punch Lines section and identify the phrase or sentence that comforts you the most. Which phrase or verse causes you to think about your relationship with God right now? Do you know someone who needs to experience the matchless love of Christ this week? Say a prayer for them. Write out two to three encouraging verses from this section and find a way to share them.

Thursday
Read chapters 3 and 4 of Patriarchs and Prophets and make a list of all the words that convey the emotions of God in these two chapters. What are some comments Ellen White makes that are timeless and relate to your life today? Whom do you know who has
truly accepted God’s free gift of salvation? Ask them to share how they have learned to rest in God’s grace and what specific ways they remind themselves of God’s redeeming love.

**Friday**

What are some aspects of God’s character that you are absolutely certain about—no doubt, whatsoever? What are some aspects you wonder about?

Think of a time in your life when you unknowingly believed a lie about someone else. How did you feel after you found out that it was not true? Reflect on Adam and Eve’s experience after disobeying God in the garden and make a list of what emotions you think overwhelmed them.

If you were to answer the question “Where are you?” that God asked Adam and Eve, what would be your answer today? Write out a prayer of response to God’s offering you the same salvation He offered Adam and Eve in the garden.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Cain and Abel depicts two types of people who travel two different paths in life. While Cain and Abel were raised by the same parents, they held different attitudes about God and His character—this is where their paths diverged. Abel saw the mercy of God in the way the Creator provided for the redemption of the human race, but Cain rebelled against God in his heart (see Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 71). The distinction may not have been obvious until it came time to sacrifice.

The drama between Cain and Abel is really about the struggle between Cain and himself. Although Cain was given a chance to turn around, he held ever more tightly to his stubborn pride and stumbled further away from God. The way of Cain and the way of Abel is a discussion of monumental importance to young people. Several themes should emerge from this study:

- God’s plan for salvation is not negotiable—it is a gift.
- The human heart, when it clings proudly to self, stumbles on a slippery downhill slope of destruction.
- God constantly reaches out to those who rebel to give them an opportunity to make a turn-around (repentance).

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the basic truths about sin, repentance, and redemption as portrayed in the story of Cain and Abel. (Know)
- Experience the conviction to trust fully in God’s redemptive work. (Feel)
- Have a choice to make Abel’s way their way, instead of going the way of Cain. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Worship
- Salvation (experience of)*

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

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 which would be the hardest thing to admit. You can ask for volunteers to share their number one, or simply ask, “Who thought cheating on an exam was number one (or hardest)? Why do you think you chose that one?”

Below is an alternative thought and discussion starter.

Voting: Ask the students to vote on whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: “The only way some people will learn is the hard way—hitting rock bottom.”
**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

The hike almost ended without drama or injury. A group of 10-year-old boys with their nerve-racked leader were on the last leg of the journey. They had come to a steady downhill path that led to a grassy meadow in the park. The band of junior-aged hikers made their way down the trail. Naturally, they couldn’t just walk down. One had to lurch forward and jog, which inspired the others to follow in the same manner. Their leader was concerned and cautioned them as they picked up speed. But with the rush of adrenaline and a semblance of bodily control the young lads tumbled on down the hill.

There came a point on the trail, however, at which their speed picked up drastically, and the leader could see the excitement on their faces turn to fear as their momentum overtook their control. Their shoes smacked the ground with flat-sounding slaps as their arms flailed wildly in the air for balance. One at a time they fell at the bottom of the hill as their feet hit the thick sand at the edge of the grass. The justifiable bruises and scrapes marked them as their parents arrived to take them home.

After all the parents had communicated their disapproval of the leadership, the leader studied the trail to see at what point the disaster could have been prevented. *Exactly where had they gone wrong?* he asked himself. *Where had their walk gotten out of control?*

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The same questions could be asked of Cain. Where do you think he went wrong? If you compare the life of Cain to a hike down a hillside, at what point do you think he started running? At what point did he become out of control? At what point could he have stopped? In the case of Cain, is it possible that he got to a point at which the only thing that would stop him would be a hard fall at the bottom? The story of Cain and Abel is a stark reminder of the truth that there are two responses to the problem of sin. One response is to deny it or justify wrong behavior, and the other is to admit it and repent of it.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

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

- What parts of the story are key? *(Underline them.)*
- What aspects or details of the story are new to you?
- What words or phrases best capture the various emotions of this story most? *(Circle them.)*
- What emotions, actions, and adjectives enrich this story? *(Draw a rectangle around them.)*
- What emerges as the central lesson of this story? In other words, why do you think this story is included in the record of Scripture?
- How do you think the occupations of these two young men shaped their view of God?
- Note the points in the text (with a U-turn sign) that might have been pivotal points at which Cain might have avoided his folly?
- In verses 6 and 7, describe the attitude and approach God takes with Cain? Does it help or hinder the situation? What can we learn about God’s character in the way He speaks to Cain?
- What does it mean when someone’s face is “downcast”?
- Why was Cain angry? After all, he was the one who had disobeyed God.

**Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:** 2 Samuel 12:1-13; Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 11:1-18.

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

The story of Cain and Abel is set in the beginning of human history. Cain and Abel were born outside of the garden but were aware of the story of the serpent, the Fall, and the plan to restore humanity through the sacrifice of God’s Son. It is amazing that with such rich, vivid evidence of God’s blessing and the curse of sin, one of Adam and Eve’s children would adopt the same attitude as did Lucifer and act out his selfish pride.

Consider the following information:

1. The ritual of sacrifice was first experienced by Adam and Eve after the Fall. Notice two themes that are often emphasized by Ellen White in regard to the biblical story: (1) the awful destructive quality of sin, and (2) the amazing, abundant grace of God.

   “To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice
was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God’s dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68).

2. Consider this quote that comes from The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary on the story of Cain and Abel:

“Cain recognized the existence of God and His power to give or to withhold earthly blessings. Feeling it advantageous to live on good terms with Deity, Cain considered it expedient to appease and avert divine wrath by a gift, even though it be offered grudgingly. He failed to realize that partial, formal compliance with the explicit requirements of God could not earn His favor as a substitute for true obedience and contrition of heart” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 239).

- How are people today like Cain?
- Who did he think he was fooling? Did he think he could hide his heart from God?
- What difference does it make to you today to know that God sees your actions but more important knows your motives?

3. In Genesis 4:6, 7 God appeals to Cain with brutal honesty mixed with hopeful mercy. God emphasizes how pivotal this moment is for Cain by warning him that “sin is crouching at [his] door” (NIV). The image is of a hunting lion ready to pounce. This is Cain’s defining moment—his response to God will dramatically shape his future. This is not the only place in Scripture we see this pivotal type of moment in someone’s life. Peter heard similar words from Jesus Himself:

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren’” (Luke 22:31, 32, NKJV).

4. The Greek word for repentance is metanoeō, which means “to change one’s mind or purpose.” It implies that you have thought about things to the extent that you change the direction of your behavior. Essentially, what Cain needed to do was to seize the moment, to think about what he was doing and where he was going. Cain needed to have a change of mind and a change of heart so that he could ultimately stop depending on his own merits for salvation and begin trusting God.

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 Patriarchs and Prophets. 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.
In Genesis 4:7, 10, and 15 is recorded God’s attempt to give Cain an opportunity to repent. But Cain refused God’s offers to the end of his days. Jude 11 refers to “the way of Cain” as a stubborn refusal to embrace God’s grace and turn away from selfish pride. Surely the “way of Cain” is still evident today.

III. CLOSING

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

- Make a list of five ways that you have seen God giving people turnaround opportunities.
- How does He get our attention?
- What are some trailhead points on life’s journey that are good places to stop and examine our behavior, our motives, and our attitudes about God?

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Cain and Abel’s story is the story of how people respond to God, sin, and salvation. These two brothers represent the ways you and I think about God’s character, His plan of redemption, and ultimately what part we play in obtaining the free gift of grace. For his salvation, Abel trusted in the sacrifice of blood that pointed forward to Christ. Is that your choice? Cain chose to look selfishly at God’s plan and reject it, offering his own produce. There are two ways to pay: You can try to pay it yourself or you can have someone pay for you. Which do you choose? God offers turnaround moments to everyone. Maybe today is a turnaround moment for you. You can trust in God’s provision for you at Calvary and live a life of worship and devotion to Him, or you can refuse to turn around and keep going the way of Cain. May you take your place with Abel as one who trusted fully in the character and provision of God’s mercy.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Think-pair-share.

This strategy simply asks students to think about a question or series of questions (individually), then pair up and share their response with another person. Each student processes the question individually. Every student has the opportunity to share their response. All the students hear the point of view of at least one other person.

For example:

Step 1: Think
I want you to write down on a piece of paper three good decisions you have made in your life that you think were turning points (or high-impact choices).

Step 2: Pair/Share
Pair up with someone in the class and share your response with them.

If time permits, invite the pairs to share with the entire class what they discussed, or at least to share one of the partner’s good decisions.

*Fundamental Belief No. 10.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 5.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets 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
**STUDENT LESSON**

**KEY TEXT**

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.’” (Genesis 4:6, 7, TEV)

**FLASHLIGHT**

“Notwithstanding that Cain had by his crimes mer- ited the sentence of death, a merciful Creator still spared his life, and granted him opportunity for repen- tance. But Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against the divine authority, and to become the head of a line of bold, abandoned sinners” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 78).

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Rank in order from hardest (1) to easiest (5).

In which scenario would it be hardest to admit guilt and make a turnaround:

___ Cheating on an exam.
___ Perusing explicit material on the Web.
___ Admitting to someone that you were critical of them behind their back.
___ Lying to a friend.
___ Owning up to a peer that the reason you are unkind to them is because you envy them.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

God refused Cain's sacrifice and warned him, “Sin is crouching at the door; . . . but you must master it” (Genesis 4:7, NASB). The word “master” in the Hebrew is *maschal*, which means to rule, reign, or govern with the authority that is given. Cain was given the choice and the power to squash the stubborn pride in his heart.

**INTO THE STORY**

“Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, ‘With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.’ Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.’

“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to
the field.’ And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

“Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your broth-
er Abel?’”

“I don’t know,” he replied. ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’

“The Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.’

“Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.’

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.” (Genesis 4:1-16, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• What parts of the story are key? (Underline them.)

• What aspects or details of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

• What words or phrases capture the various emotions of this story most? (Circle them.)

• What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

• What emerges as the central lesson of this story? In other words, why do you think this story is included in the record of Scripture?

• List the major lessons that you see emerge in this story.

• What does this text tell us about how sin is not really freedom but bondage? (See Romans 7:14-25)

PUNCH LINES

• “Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple” (Job 5:2, NIV).

• “A man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3, NIV).

• “Bloodthirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright” (Proverbs 29:10, NIV).

• “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren’” (Luke 22:31, 32, NKJV).

• “It was faith that made Abel offer to God a better sacrifice than Cain’s” (Hebrews 11:4, TEV).

• “They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11, NKJV).

• “Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us” (Acts 4:12, TEV).

OTHER EYES

• “Hate is born when men call evil good. And like an infant serpent bursting from its small, confining shell, it can never be cased so small again.” —Calvin Miller, current U.S. poet, preacher, author, and teacher.

• “Speak when you are angry—and you’ll make the best speech you’ll ever regret.” —Laurence J. Peter, 20th-century U.S. educator and writer.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath

Complete the exercise in the What Do You Think? section. Why do you think it would be hard to confess and admit that particular shortcoming? What do you think makes owning up to sin difficult? Is it the shame
you feel or is it because you think that feeling might go away in time? What are the benefits of honest confession to God and others?

As you reflect on Cain’s fall down the slippery slope, in what way is his story a warning to you?

**Sunday**

Read the story of Cain and Abel in the Into the Story section of this week’s lesson and work through the study questions listed in Out of the Story. As you read the story and note how Cain’s rebellion picked up momentum, how do you see this problem among your peers today? Is the slippery slope of Cain’s rebellion still part of the landscape of the lives of young people in your world? If so, in what way? What does this slippery slope look like today?

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**Monday**

Read the Key Text and consider how much God tried to get Cain to turn from his anger and repent. Look at each phrase God speaks to Cain and note the attitude of God toward Cain. Is it possible that God is trying to get your attention today about an area of your life that can get out of control?

Everyone has weaknesses and areas of their life that can lead them on a steep downward path. What can you do today to enable God’s grace to work in your life and strengthen those weak areas?

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**Tuesday**

The quote in the Flashlight section reveals that the sin of Cain was as much in the continued resistance and pride of heart as it was in the act of killing his brother. Cain’s rebellion closely resembles Lucifer’s, and highlights the patient grace of God as well.

Think of someone you know who admits their faults right away and has learned the value of honest and immediate confession. How do other people perceive this person? What are some things you have learned from them that you think will help you respond to God’s voice promptly?

**Wednesday**

Read the Punch Lines for this week and identify the one verse that is speaking directly to your life today. What do you think God is trying to say to you in that passage? Is there an area of your life in which you might be (or about to be) running out of control? What do you think you should do to make a U-turn?

When God spoke to Cain, He warned the young man that his response to his sin would be a pivotal moment in life. What pivotal moments do you face? Do you know someone who is running out of control downhill? Take time to pray for them. Consider writing them a letter letting them know of your prayers.

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**Thursday**

Read chapter 5 in Patriarchs and Prophets and note the steps of Cain’s fall. Look for insights into this story that you may not have thought of before. For example, did you know that Cain’s self-absorbed offering was born out of his anger at God for kicking his parents out of the Garden of Eden? He began each day thinking God was unfair and arbitrary. How do our basic perceptions of God shape the way we relate to Him every day? Continue to search this chapter for new insights and make note of them.

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**Friday**

In spite of Cain’s rebellion, God labored with him still. Who has been a godly voice of reason to you—cautioning you about going too far too fast? Try writing them a note thanking them for their influence in your life and think about to whom you could be a voice of grace-filled caution this week.

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a very long walk with God

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

It’s hard to imagine what it was like for Adam to live for almost 1,000 years with the memory of life before sin. And yet it was because of that memory of sweet communion with God and the promise that atonement would be made that Adam and Eve were able to pass on the lessons of their experience of God’s redeeming love and the awful consequences of sin.

The descendants of Cain, however, although intelligent and strong, continued to follow Cain’s self-centered approach to life. And the values of the deceiver’s kingdom continued through the line of Cain. As sin made its mark on the world, God made it clear that His judgment was coming. The faithful descendants of Adam and Eve lived long on the earth and witnessed the corruption of sin and the effects it had on the earth, except for Enoch.

In comparison to the other members of Adam and Eve’s family, Enoch lived a relatively short time on earth. Enoch was a man who walked so closely with God that God eventually translated him to heaven without dying. Not much is mentioned about Enoch in Scripture. The birth of Methuselah becomes a pivotal point in Enoch’s life. The Scriptures indicate that Enoch’s walk with God occurs after the birth of Methuselah. Other than he “walked with God” very little is known about Enoch. Three aspects of Enoch’s life do emerge in the limited information given in Scripture: (1) Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5:21–24); (2) Enoch pleased God (Hebrews 11:5); (3) Enoch witnessed for God (Jude 14, 15).

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Discover the attributes of Enoch’s relationship with God. (Know)
• Experience a desire to walk with God today. (Feel)
• Have a choice to live faithfully in the world but not be of the world. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Growth and transformation in Christ*
• Knowing God
• Prayer

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

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.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Henry Dempsey was piloting a commuter plane on a short trip from Portland, Maine, to Boston when he heard a conspicuous sound coming from the back of the airplane. He handed over the control of the aircraft to the copilot and made his way to the rear of the plane.
to check out the source of the noise. That turned out to be a pivotal moment for him.

The small plane encountered jarring turbulence so that Dempsey bounded hard against the back door of the plane. He soon discovered what the conspicuous noise was. The back door had not been latched properly, and when Dempsey fell against the door it flew open and sucked him out of the plane—a life-changing experience.

The copilot made contact with the closest airport to see if he could make an emergency landing and reported the loss of the pilot. A helicopter was immediately sent to search for the missing pilot in the area over the ocean where the accident had occurred. Dempsey’s body was not found in the ocean.

When the plane landed, they did find Henry Dempsey. He was found still clinging to the ladder on the outside door of the airplane. He evidently caught the ladder when he fell out and managed to hang on until the plane landed about 10 minutes later. It was all he could do to hang on to the ladder as the plane flew 200 miles per hour at an altitude of about 4,000 feet.

It was reported that when the rescue personnel arrived on the scene, it took a while for them to get Dempsey to let go of the ladder.

Isn’t it amazing how one event, one decision, one moment in time, can sometimes alter your whole life?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

One event seemed to have a life-changing effect on Enoch. The Bible says that “after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years” (Genesis 5:22, NIV). It was after Enoch had a child named Methuselah that he became what some would call a “hero of faith.” This week’s lesson is not just about a very pious man named Enoch, but also about the times in which he lived. When you read this passage of Scripture, try to look behind what might otherwise be perceived as a meaningless genealogy of some really old people. Try to imagine their stories and what life was like in their time.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• What are some initial insights you picked up as you read the passage?
• Which names are you most familiar with? Which names are new to you?
• On a piece of paper, make a time line that shows how long each person lived and how long their lives overlapped. How many descendants listed in this passage were born while Adam was still living?
• What do you think were the lessons that were passed on from generation to generation? If you could pass on godly advice to the next generation, what would you say (in 20 words or less)?
• According to the passage, when was it actually mentioned that Enoch walked with God? Why do you think the birth of Methuselah could have been that significant in his life?
• What do you think the Scriptures mean when they state that Enoch “walked with God”? What do you think that would look like today?
• Why do you think God “took” Enoch when He had not “taken” others who were faithfully devoted to Him?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Leviticus 26:12; 1 Kings 3:14; Psalm 56:13; 89:15; Revelation 3:4.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Hero of Faith. Enoch’s long walk with God has many facets to study with young people. The most popular angle is the nature of Enoch’s relationship with God. There are three clear qualities of Enoch’s character that make him a hero of faith: His walk (Genesis 5:21-24); his testimony (Jude 14, 15); and his desire to please God (Hebrews 11:5). Have students look up these passages and discuss each quality in light of what they might have looked like back then, and what they might look like if Enoch were here today—as a teenager, as a church leader, as a parent.

   There is also the question of what prompted Enoch’s urgency. The birth of Methuselah brought about a pivotal change in Enoch’s life, and while it is not explicit in the limited writings
of Scripture, *Patriarchs and Prophets* describes how the event made a profound impact on Enoch’s relationship with God. You might ask the students to look at the relationship from both angles—from the point of view of a parent, and from the point of view of a child. What are some things we can learn about a relationship with God by looking at the way parents and children relate to one another?

2. **Antediluvian Period.** The word “antediluvian” refers to the time before the biblical flood. However, your young people may be more familiar with it as a term used for something extremely old-fashioned.

   Methuselah (Enoch’s son) somehow lived to the ripe old age of 969. When Methuselah was 187, his son Lamech was born, and he lived another 182 years until Noah was born (187 + 182 = 369). So Noah was born when Methuselah was 369. The Flood came when Noah was 600 (600 + 369 = 969), which is how old Methuselah was when he died, so Scripture confirms that Methuselah died around the time that the Flood came. “Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth” (Genesis 7:6, NIV). So Methuselah died at age 969, the same year the Flood came.

3. **The Daily Walk.** Ellen White says, “Enoch’s walk with God was not in a trance or a vision, but in all the duties of his daily life. He did not become a hermit, shutting himself entirely from the world; for he had a work to do for God in the world. In the family and in his intercourse with men, as a husband and father, a friend, a citizen, he was the steadfast, unwavering servant of the Lord” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 85).

   Discuss with the students the principle of being “in the world, but not of the world.” Some of the most revered people in the Bible did not hide from the world but mingled proactively with it for the purpose of winning people to God.

### Tips for Top-notch Teaching

**Inductive Bible Study**

“How do I do a whole lesson on someone as unknown in the Bible as Enoch?” Inductive study is one approach. Using an exhaustive concordance, you can look up the name “Enoch” and find all the references to him in Scripture. With only 12 verses that mention Enoch, you can assign a verse or two to each member of the class and ask, “Be ready to tell us everything you can about Enoch that is revealed in the passage.” The details of Enoch’s life that are available can be related, and students can make inferences about the kind of person he was. Students can be led to do detective work from what little information there 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 *Patriarchs and Prophets*. 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.
This attribute of Enoch can be compared with John the Baptist’s. Ellen White, in The Desire of Ages, claims that “the life of John was not spent in idleness, in ascetic gloom, or in selfish isolation. From time to time he went forth to mingle with men; and he was ever an interested observer of what was passing in the world” (p. 102).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students to think of someone they can identify, without a doubt, solely by the way they walk. It could be a family member, a friend, or a neighbor. Ask the students to describe the style of their walk (respectfully of course) and what makes the walk so distinctive. You might even have them mimic the walk of children at ages 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Ask: How would you describe the style of Enoch’s walk with God? What makes his walk with God so distinctive?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

You don’t need to fall out of an airplane to designate a specific moment as the start of a new walk. What’s so compelling about Enoch’s walk is that it became an even more childlike faith when he was 65 years old. When you lean fully on the truth that you are God’s child, it is the beginning of a walk with God. Could a walk like Enoch’s start today? Could you begin by resting in the truth that you are a child of the King of the universe?

As you walk in that truth you’ll have opportunities to stand against sin and make plain the matchless grace of God. What if, like Enoch, you were to ask yourself, “What would make my Father in heaven smile today?” What if you asked that question in your work, your study, and your play? It might be that the walk that Enoch had with God is just as available to us today as it was back then. Instead of taking you to heaven, God may leave you around to spread the Word.

*Fundamental Belief No. 11.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets 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
When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” (Genesis 5:21-24, NIV)

“But after the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child’s love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that firstborn son, he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of His Son, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 84).

What do you think?
Make a list of a few character qualities or personality traits that seem to run in your family. They can be physical attributes, personality traits, or beliefs and values. How are these passed on?

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Agree or Disagree. The tendency to live fully for God is something you are taught more than something you inherit through your family genes.

Why did you respond the way you did? What kinds of things are genetically passed on from generation to generation and what kinds of things are learned as one grows up in a certain environment?

DID YOU KNOW?
Adam lived 930 years, and many of his descendants lived several centuries. Since Adam and Eve lived alongside many of the generations that eventually populated the earth, firsthand stories of the Garden of Eden, the serpent, and the promise of grace were readily available. It is hard to imagine, but Adam, while he was still alive, was a great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather. Now that’s a little difficult to understand!
INTO THE STORY

“This is the written account of Adam’s line.

“When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them ‘man.’

“When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

“When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh. And after he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

“When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. And after he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

“When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. And after he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

“When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. And after he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

“When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. And after he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

“When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.”

(Genesis 5:1-24, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• Read through the entire passage about the lineage of Enoch. Underline initial insights you have as you read this passage.

• Which names are you most familiar with? Which names are new?

• On a piece of paper, make a time line that shows how long each person lived and how long each generation overlapped the others. How many descendants listed in this passage were born while Adam was still living?

• What do you think were the lessons that were passed on from generation to generation? If you could pass on godly advice to the next generation, what would you say (in 20 words or less)?

• When did Enoch actually begin walking with God? Why do you think the birth of Methuselah would have been that significant?

• What do you think is meant by the statement that Enoch “walked with God”? What would that look like in the life of someone today?

• Why do you think God “took” Enoch when He had not “taken” others who were faithfully devoted to Him?

PUNCH LINES

• “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8, NIV).

• “By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be
found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:5, 6, NIV).

• “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV).

• “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6, NIV).

• “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him’” (Jude 14, 15, NIV).

OTHER EYES
• “Character is what you are in the dark.”—D. L. Moody, 19th-century U.S. evangelist.

• “Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century English Christian writer and scholar.

• “What a vast difference there is between knowing God and loving Him.”—Blaise Pascal, 17th-century French mathematician and philosopher.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath

Complete the exercise in the What Do You Think? section. How do you think the character qualities you described are passed on from one generation to the next? Is it simply genetics? Is it only something you learn as you go through life? What is one quality that you received from your parents or family members that you want to hold on to and perhaps pass on to your children one day?

Consider Paul’s challenge in Romans 12:2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (NIV). What are some patterns you see in your life that you want to change?

Start your change today with prayer, and follow Paul’s counsel to let the transformation begin with your mind.

Sunday

Read the selection from Genesis 5 in the Into the Story section. Try not to get bogged down because you are reading a genealogy. Genealogies can be loaded with insight, but you have to look carefully. Follow the questions in Out of the Story and give this historical survey a chance to speak. The Bible says that “when God created man, he made him in the likeness of God” (Genesis 5:1, NIV). What does this statement mean to you? How much like God are we and in what ways? As you read the details of this passage, what do you think is the message God is trying to give you today?

Monday

Read the Key Text for this week and think about the events in your life that have been turning points for you. According to this verse, the birth of Enoch’s son was a huge turning point when Enoch started to walk with God in a whole new way. Are you at a turning point in your life? Write a prayer to God. Talk to Him about making this day the first day of a new direction in your life.

Tuesday

Read the quote in the Flashlight section about Enoch’s defining moment at the birth of Methuselah. What do you think people learn about a relationship with God when they become parents? What do you learn about a relationship with God from the viewpoint of a child? Clearly, becoming a parent has a way of transforming someone. Ask someone who has a real walk with God what keeps them closest to God in their journey. Invite them to share with you the Bible character that most inspires their walk with God.
**Wednesday**

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week and identify the verse that most urgently speaks to you. Why do you think it does? *Highlight or underline* in the other verses the key phrases that speak to you and identify someone with whom you might be able to share your insights. Pray that God will give you the opportunity and the courage to say the words that might be a blessing to someone else in the coming week.

**Thursday**

Read chapter 6 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and note the rich insight that Ellen White offers on the life of Enoch and the world in which he lived. In many ways, Enoch’s world is much like our world today in thought and in practice. Choose the lesson that emerges in this chapter that you think is the most important for you right now, and write that lesson in a sentence or two. Share with someone why you think it is so important.

**Friday**

Reflect on the moments of your life when you have felt very close to God as well as the moments when God seemed very distant. What elements of your life contribute to the closeness you feel to God?

What things in your life create distance between you and God?

The Bible says, “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6, NIV). Where will you walk today? Think about the places and the people and the things you will have to walk to today. How would Jesus walk in those places if He were here? When you walk today, invite Jesus to show you His style of walking, and practice the walk of Christ.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Noah and the Flood is set in what is known as the Antediluvian Period. The Bible portrays the frustration God felt for a world of people who settled deeply into rebellion against their Creator. The Bible says: “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain” (Genesis 6:5, 6, NIV). The people of the world became so filled with selfishness that they devoted their entire lives to immoral living. About the antediluvians, Ellen White says: “Not desiring to retain God in their knowledge, they soon came to deny His existence” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 91). That is the sad truth about the effects of sin.

The good news that emerges from the story of Noah is about the faithful diligence of Noah’s walk with God. Both Enoch and Noah were said to have “walked with God” during an era of great immorality in a self-absorbed world. Noah modeled the kind of relationship with God that is needed today, as the second coming of Christ approaches. Several powerful lessons emerge from Noah’s story: (1) Although judgment is imminent, God initiates a plan of salvation for all—but there is only one plan. The ark was a symbol of God’s provision of grace in a time of need. (2) The ark was a symbol of faithfulness when the masses scorned and ridiculed Noah and his family. It is hinted in Scripture that the Sabbath will be a test of faithfulness in the final moments of history for those who are alive (Revelation 14). This lesson is a reminder that now is the time to walk with God and find grace in the eyes of the Lord.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Discover the many truths that can be found in the story of the Flood. (Know)
• Feel compelled to respond to God’s grace and provision. (Feel)
• Be given an opportunity to give God their loyalty and start a new walk with Him this week. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Secularism
• Millennium and the end of sin*
• The judgment

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

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.
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A curious phenomenon was observed at a Little League baseball practice. During batting practice the 9- and 10-year-old boys were swinging at the baseball as hard as they could, but their attempts to reach the fence were fruitless. The young team was practicing on a full-sized field where the fence that marked a home run seemed like a mile away. The boys were discouraged because the fence seemed so far away. The coach became perplexed because the boys seemed to be giving up, even though he reminded them that the actual fence on the field where they would play their games was much closer and well within their range.

The next time the team practiced hitting, the coach brought out a makeshift plastic fence and placed it right where the fence would be in their upcoming games. It transformed their hitting. They tried harder because they saw how possible it was for them to hit all the way to the new fence.

The same phenomenon is true of us. When we see our “fence”—the lives of Bible heroes such as Enoch, Noah, and Abraham—way out of reach, we tend to get discouraged about our walk with God. We don’t feel we can “hit” (walk) in their league. But God asks us to walk with Him right in our own league, as we grow in Him.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In the end of time God’s people will need to have the faith of Noah, but such faith seems so far out of reach sometimes. Heroes such as Noah and Enoch and Abraham were so faithful that we can’t see ourselves, with all our weaknesses, having such faith. But as you read the story of Noah and the Flood, remember that Noah’s kind of faith is within our reach today. Faith itself is a gift from God and grows as we walk with Him in trust.

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.

- As you read through the story, underline key facts that you see are important.
- Who are the main characters included in the story? (Circle them.)
- Highlight the text that reveals information about the setting and the attitudes of people in this story.
- What is significant about the specific days of the month mentioned in this story? Why do you think the details of the days and the months and the years are given?
- After reading through the passage of Noah and the Flood, what would you say are some aspects of the story that you had not noticed until now?
- What do you see as the major themes that grow out of this story? How do you see themes such as grace, judgment, faith, and hope revealed in this story? What different pictures of God’s character do you see in the story?
- As you read this passage, is there: a promise to claim, a lesson to learn, an example to follow, a warning to heed, a thanksgiving to express, a prayer to offer, an action to take?
- If there is one message in this story that relates to your life today, what is it?
- How can the message of this story change the way you live this week for God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Hebrews 11; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Luke 17:6; 1 Corinthians 2:3-5.

Sharing Context and Background

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

The story of the Flood is rich with symbols and lessons for young people today. More than anything else, the Flood declares in a story some of the themes that will emerge in the final judgment—when Christ returns.

1. It is interesting to note that God knew beforehand how big to build the ark. Judgment was coming, and God already knew who would choose to come on the ark for safety—before the rain even fell. After all, it doesn’t require much faith to feel the raindrops and then knock on the door of the ark. The trick is trusting enough to get in the ark while the sun is still shining. God calls His people today to the same kind of faithfulness. What other biblical stories can you think of that required someone to “walk
by faith and not by sight”?
2. Looking at the time line given in Scripture, it appears that Methuselah (Enoch’s son) died the same year that the Flood came. Methuselah witnessed centuries of decline, knowing that God had already taken his father to heaven. If Methuselah represents a group of people at the end of time, whom would you say he represents? What are some similarities you see between Enoch and John the Baptist?
3. Notice that Genesis 6:3 says, “Then the Lord said, ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years’” (NIV). God gave Noah a specific time when He would bring His judgment, but He hasn’t given one to us today. Why do you suppose that is? Do you think having knowledge of a time line would help or hinder the gospel going to the ends of the earth?
4. Notice that Genesis 6:4-6 describes how far the people had gone in their sin. “Every inclination” was “only evil” and this was “all the time” (NIV). Have you ever wondered what it would take for conditions to be so bad that God was “grieved” to the point of wanting to destroy the whole planet and everything in it?
5. Notice that the destruction of the Flood left Satan with an image of his own future. When the earth was destroyed by water, Satan was left with only eight faithful souls to harass on earth, and they had given their allegiance to God. This might have been a glimpse of the millennium for Satan.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Have the students divide into groups of two to

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 Patriarchs and Prophets. 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.
four, and ask them to write out a modern-day version of the Flood. They need to include the key elements of the ancient story in the modern version they create. They can act it out or just read or retell the story as it would appear in the news today. After they have reported their stories to the class, compare them with what they think the second coming of Christ might be like if it were to happen today.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:
The story of Noah has been popularized over time with cartoonlike representations of animals and a big boat, but the message of judgment and destruction is often not prominent. Even more, the fact that God did everything He could to save everyone is a testimony to His character of love. It seems true that He wants us to be saved more than we do at times. As you see the many sides of God’s character in the story of the Flood, remember Noah’s walk. The Noah way is a walk of faith and not of sight. The only evidence Noah had of a flood was that God said it would happen. There were no pictures, videos, or images of any kind to help Noah’s mind capture the terrible day of judgment that would come. The same is true for us today. When people are saying that “it will never happen,” we need to sense how critical it is to be faithful to God and what He is calling us to do—even though there are no clouds in sight. Do you want to tell God, “I’m ready to jump on board today”?

*Fundamental Belief No. 27.
KEY TEXT
“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. . . . But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” (Genesis 6:5, 8, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT
“But Noah stood like a rock amid the tempest. Surrounded by popular contempt and ridicule, he distinguished himself by his holy integrity and unwavering faithfulness. A power attended his words, for it was the voice of God to man through His servant. Connection with God made him strong in the strength of infinite power, while for one hundred and twenty years his solemn voice fell upon the ears of that generation in regard to events, which, so far as human wisdom could judge, were impossible” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 96).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Either/Or. Choose one of the two statements given and explain your response.

I believe Jesus will come in my lifetime. OR I don’t think Jesus will come in my lifetime.

Why did you answer the way you did? What are some common explanations you have heard from people who hold either of these opinions?

DID YOU KNOW?
Have you ever heard the rumor that the Flood and Noah’s ark is a fanciful fairy tale that made its way into the Holy Scriptures? Whoever started that rumor has some explaining to do. The existence of a catastrophic flood is not solely a Christian story but a narrative that is embedded in many ancient cultures. The Babylonians, the Mayans, the Egyptians, and even some cultures of Asia report stories from their history that bear a close resemblance to the Flood story of the Bible. Even the Australian Aborigines tell a story of a great flood, a family, and a boat as part of their cultural tradition.

INTO THE STORY
“This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had
What do you see as the major themes that grow out of this story?

As you read this passage, is there:
- A promise to claim?
- A lesson to learn?
- An example to follow?
- A warning to heed?
- A thanksgiving to express?
- A prayer to offer?
- An action to take?

If there is one message in this story that relates to your life today, what is it?

How can the message of this story change the way you live this week for God?

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**OUT OF THE STORY**

- As you read through the story, underline key facts that you see are important.

- Circle the main characters included in the story.

- Highlight the text that reveals information about the setting and the attitudes of people in this story.

- What is significant about the specific days of the month mentioned in this story?

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**PUNCH LINES**

- “By the word of God . . . the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:5-7, KJV).

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**CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS**

- "And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark.”

- “By the first day of the first month of Noah’s six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. Then God said to Noah, ‘Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it.’”

**(Genesis 6:9-14; 7:5-13; 8:13-17, NIV)**
Sunday

Read the story portion of Noah and the Flood found in Genesis 6 through 9:17 and respond to the study questions given in your lesson. Scripture says that Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord (Gen. 6:8), and that he was righteous and blameless. What made him righteous and blameless? (see Gen. 15:6). How can we find favor in the sight of God?

Monday

The Key Text for this week portrays aspects of God’s character that are both troubling and heartwarming. Read Genesis 6:5-8. It is sad that humanity became so disconnected from God that He would be “grieved” that He had made them. It’s hard to imagine God being so sorry for the mess of sin that He chose to start all over again. But what is so beautiful is that God cared so much for the human race that He did start over instead of giving up on humanity altogether. That “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” is a rainbow of hope that God will start over rather than giving up on us.

Have you considered thanking God for not giving up on you? Write a prayer of thanks to God for sticking with you.

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight section. What are some events or experiences that seem unimaginable to you today? Consider how the faith Noah demonstrated in his day is still needed in your world. Do you know anyone of whom this quote reminds you? How do you see a little of Noah in them? What challenge might God be calling you to that seems impossible?

Wednesday

Perhaps there are moments in your week when an opportunity to share God’s Word with a friend or a stranger will arise. Read the Punch Lines and identify one verse that you think might be especially relevant to people in your sphere of influence. Explain why you would choose the particular verse you did and who you would share it with if the opportunity presented itself.
itself. Pray for God to give you a chance this week to convey a word of hope from this week’s study to someone else.

Thursday

It may be that one of the reasons the antediluvians (people before the Flood) did not respond to the promptings of Noah’s preaching was that they thought they had time. Do you have a tendency to postpone aspects of your relationship with God because you don’t feel a sense of urgency? How does the story of Noah awaken any sense of urgency in you?

Friday

The Bible says, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). Reflect on the story of Noah and the faith in what he could not see that he had to exercise. What other characters in Scripture had to exhibit similar “blind faith”? Make a list of your top 10 heroes of faith in the Bible and decide why their story is important to you. Also, think of the challenges you face and how the example of these characters might encourage you.

I. SYNOPSIS

Few stories in the Bible capture the imagination as does the Tower of Babel narrative. It arrests our attention for several reasons. The sheer audacity that a group of people would set upon building a structure that would literally reach into the heavens is not spectacular. What is audacious is the reason for their project.

The Babel builders decided to pursue their project in clear violation of God’s pronouncements. God had promised that He would never destroy the world by flood again, but they chose to erect an insurance policy in case He later changed His mind. They also built the tower to circumvent God’s second command to disperse throughout the world.

The signature lesson we can take away from the Babel episode is one of obedience to God. When God tells us to do something, no matter how much it goes against our own way, we are to obey. This lesson explores the concept of obedience to God and seeks to get students to consider tearing down any Babels that they have erected in their own lives. As you teach, be on the lookout for other themes in this story, such as the power of unity.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn about the importance of God’s commands to His people. (Know)
- Understand that obedience to God’s directives is the only route to peace of mind in the Christian life. (Feel)
- Be given an opportunity to prioritize God’s voice and His commands in their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Peer pressure
- Obedience
- Ambition
- Humility

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

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.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Who doesn’t admire the obedience a dog shows to its master? Archibald Rutledge, first poet laureate of South Carolina, wrote that one day he met a man whose dog had just been killed in a forest fire. Heartbroken, the man explained to Rutledge how it had happened.

Because he worked outdoors, he often took his dog with him. That morning, he left the animal in a clearing and gave him a command to stay and watch his lunch bucket while he went into the for-
with the plan. This may have been one reason that God simply confounded the language of the builders to stop the project.

**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.

- Who are the main actors in this story?
- What is the setting of this biblical narrative?
- What does this story say about crowds and “group think”?
- What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)
- What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)
- What emotions, actions, and adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)
- What are two main lessons that you got from the reading of this story?
- What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (Circle them.)
- Is there another biblical narrative that demonstrates the level of arrogance displayed by the Babel builders?

**II. TEACHING THE LESSON**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The Babel builders were an ambitious lot. They dreamed of the greatness that their famous tower would bring them. They were also selfish. They wanted to be delivered from the destruction of a second flood, but the rest of the world was not their concern.

There was also an inordinate amount of peer pressure intoxicating everyone. From the outside looking in, it would appear that there were no dissenters among the group, but this is not so. Ellen White lets us know that even among this disobedient people there were faithful followers of God who refused to go along with the plan.

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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 Patriarchs and Prophets. 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 Tower of Babel story seems to have taken place in Babylon, a city in what was then Mesopotamia, and what is today Iraq. The ancient peoples of this region were known to build massive structures and tall temple platforms called ziggurats. It appears that building and construction was simply in their blood.

It is estimated today that there are 4,000 to 5,000 different languages in the world. In Genesis 11:1 the Bible notes: “The whole world had one language and a common speech” (NIV). Many biblical scholars believe that our current plethora of languages is a result of God confounding the language of the builders at Babel. Of course, many others believe that this explanation is too simplistic.

In the statement below, Ellen G. White sheds light on why these builders assembled in the plain of Shinar:

“For a time the descendants of Noah continued to dwell among the mountains where the ark had rested. As their numbers increased, apostasy soon led to division. Those who desired to forget their Creator and to cast off the restraint of His law felt a constant annoyance from the teaching and example of their God-fearing associates, and after a time they decided to separate from the worshipers of God. Accordingly they journeyed to the plain of Shinar, on the banks of the river Euphrates. They were attracted by the beauty of the situation and the fertility of the soil, and upon this plain they determined to make their home” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 118).

Many Bible readers lament the seeming lack of grace in Old Testament narratives. In the Tower of Babel story we see a God who gives a command that is disobeyed. In fact, the folks disobeying God build a huge tower openly flouting His words. Yet God does not destroy them, though He had every right to. God simply confounds their language, thereby stopping the building process. Then He disperses them throughout the world to repopulate and replenish it. What does this tell us about God’s grace?

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask each student to say a silent personal prayer to God by finishing the following statement: “Dear God, I need Your power to help me overcome ____________.” Ask the students to continue to talk to God about the challenge with which they may be struggling.

Close with a prayer thanking God for answering each student’s prayer.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

If the Babel builders hadn’t been interrupted, they would have built a tower unlike anything the world had ever seen. However, God knew that their tower was meant to replace Him as the source of their safety and protection.

Not only that, the descendants of Canaan wanted...
greatness that belonged only to God. We can rest assured that when self-importance is cherished above a clear directive from God, God will intervene to make His will known.

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 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 10.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* 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*
STUDENT LESSON

KEY TEXT

“Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’” (Genesis 11:4, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“There were some among them, however, who feared the Lord, but who had been deceived by the pretensions of the ungodly and drawn into their schemes. For the sake of these faithful ones the Lord delayed His judgments and gave the people time to reveal their true character” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 123).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you ever try to be God? Complete the following statement with one or more statements from the list below: I play God when I . . .

a. tell on a friend who does something wrong.

b. skip personal worship time.

c. make important decisions after talking with friends.

d. ask God to guide my future.

e. eat healthful foods.

f. don’t listen to my parents.

DID YOU KNOW?

The people of Babel didn’t just come up with the idea to build a tower on their own. No, they had an instigator. His name was Nimrod, ruler of the nation, and a man whom the Bible refers to as a “mighty hunter” (Genesis 10:8-10, NIV). The great historian Josephus wrote: “Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God.”

INTO THE STORY

“Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

“They said to each other, ‘Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’

“But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’

“So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why
it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:1-9, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

- Who are the main actors in this story?
- What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)
- What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)
- What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)
- The builders of Babel had harnessed two of the greatest powers known to humans: effective communication and unity. Can you give any modern-day examples of groups that communicate effectively and are unified in doing something wrong?
- To whom or what was the tower a monument? What types of monuments to themselves might people produce or create today?
- How do we know the difference between using the gifts God gives us as monuments to ourselves or as monuments to God? (See 1 Corinthians 13:1-7)
- What are two main lessons that you got from reading this story?

PUNCH LINES

- “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain” (Psalm 127:1, NIV).
- “Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him” (Psalm 34:8, NIV).
- “Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway” (Proverbs 8:34, NIV).
- “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1, NIV).
- “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV).
- “Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like” (James 1:23, 24, NIV).
- “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins” (James 4:17, NIV).

OTHER EYES

- “I gave in, and admitted that God was God.” —C. S. Lewis, 20th-century English Christian writer and scholar.
- “When a man takes one step toward God, God takes more steps toward that man than there are sands in the worlds of time” – The Work of the Chariot.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath

The What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson challenged you to identify times in your life when you may play God by the choices you make. In what way were the builders of the Tower of Babel playing God? Explain.

They were not the first beings to try to play God. Read Isaiah 14:12-15. Then identify three actions and behaviors exhibited by Satan in his effort to kill God and take His throne. (Hint: Notice the number of I’s in Satan’s statements.)
Sunday

Read the Into the Story passage for this week. Toward the end of the passage God is seen taking a very central role in the project undertaken by the builders. What was it that caught God’s attention? Was God worried that the Babel builders were going to succeed in their act of defiance? What specifically moved Him to confuse their ability to communicate?

Monday

Read the Key Text for this week’s lesson again. Do you notice anything peculiar about how the people arrived at the idea to build a great city with a megatower? Whom did they confer with about their plans? Do you ever launch out to do something “great” and forget to ask for God’s input?

The Bible says that they wanted to build a great city and erect a huge tower “so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4, NIV). Great plans made without God are great plans doomed to failure.

List two goals you hope to achieve in the future. Pause now and ask God to tell you if these are the right goals for you to pursue. Trust God to answer your request. Watch for His responses each day. Through His Word, other Christians, and circumstances.

Tuesday

In the Flashlight section Ellen White is quoted from the book Patriarchs and Prophets in which she states that there were faithful believers among the rebellious and disobedient people who were building the tower. Some who assembled to erect the tower were sincerely mistaken in what they were doing.

Read Matthew 27:11-23. Who was being swept away in a tide of wrongdoing? What does Jesus’ mock trial tell you about the dangers of following the crowd?

If you could witness to a friend who is about to join a gang or follow the wrong crowd, what would you say to them?

Wednesday

Read the scriptures in the Punch Lines section. Psalm 34:8, NIV encourages us to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” How can you “taste” God? Why does the psalmist David ask us to taste God first before seeing how good He is? Don’t you like to see your food first before tasting it? If someone asks you to close your eyes before they feed you a piece of some food, they are asking you to trust them. To experience God we must trust Him and exercise faith in Him.

Several texts in the Punch Lines section deal with obedience to God’s Word. Choose one of these scriptures that specifically captured your attention. Explain what this scripture means to you.

Thursday

After reading about the Tower of Babel, list two ways in which the same attitude is seen in society today. For instance, people who store up huge amounts of money for themselves while other people who are in need perish.

Now list two ways that you can care for those in need in your community, church, or school.

Do one act of caring for someone today. Say a prayer for that person.

Friday

By right, God could have destroyed the builders of Babel for disobeying His direct command to scatter throughout the earth and populate it. Instead, God simply confused their language and scattered them Himself, thereby allowing them another chance to obey Him.

When was the last time that God gave you a second chance? Was it a test for which you failed to study? Did you somehow escape punishment for something wrong you did or something right you failed to do? Why not thank God right now for His grace toward you?
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

His name and life is a metaphor for faith. He is the father of many nations, and a man whose life sits at the center of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the world’s three foremost religions.

Abraham is revered for many reasons. He accepts God’s call to go into a land he knew not, and one that God would show him along the way. On his journey he runs into difficulties that expose his imperfections. He lies more than once about the fact that his sister is also his wife, for instance. But in each challenge, God delivers him, and his faith is buoyed.

He encounters the great challenge of family members who sometimes make bad decisions, as Lot did when he pitched his tent toward Sodom. Abraham begs God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, but alas, God does not. However, Abraham’s concern and prayers for his nephew’s family help to save some of their lives.

As if this challenge were not enough, God tells Abraham to kill his son—the son of promise, the one through whom would come the many nations, and descendants as numberless as the sand of the sea. Abraham’s response in this situation almost strains credulity. With pained heart, he packs his belongings, packs up his son, and heads for the mountains.

Abraham’s life is a study in faith and obedience, even when the facts don’t seem to add up. God calls us not to look at the facts; He calls us to look at Him. However, if we persevere in trusting Him and doing His will, we will find ourselves as Abraham did—blessed beyond our wildest dreams. God kept His word to Abraham, for through his lineage came Jesus. Who can argue with that?

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Examine the life of Abraham to understand how God calls us and the challenges that sometimes result from His call. (Know)
• Become aware of the calling God has for their lives. (Feel)
• Be given an opportunity to accept God’s call in their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Faith
• Obedience
• Character

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

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.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
Few people will ever be asked by God to leave their home, family, and loved ones for an ill-defined place in the wild blue yonder. Yet this is what God called Abraham to do.

Many people have answered what they perceive to be an inner call to pursue a dream or destiny. At age 15, the following famous people made very pivotal moves that led them to the notoriety they enjoy today. While they are not all advisable examples, share them with your students.

Then ask the students what drove these people to do what they did. After sampling answers, ask the students how the move made by these famous people is similar to or different from Abraham’s big move.

At age 15:
- Albert Einstein, with poor grades in geography, history, and languages, dropped out of school.
- Swedish tennis star Bjorn Borg dropped out of school to concentrate on tennis. (Note: For every Bjorn Borg who drops out of school, there are thousands who drop out to chase their dreams, only to see their dreams dashed, not to mention their education.)
- American reformer Susan B. Anthony began teaching school.
- Isaac Asimov entered Columbia University.
- Henry Ford, disliking life on the farm, moved to Detroit and trained as a machinist.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

With the call of Abraham, God was fulfilling a promise made in Eden to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). After sin had decimated the planet, leading to its destruction by flood, God picked Abram, whose name would later be changed to Abraham, as the person through whom the Deliverer would come.

God made of Abraham a great nation, whose ethnic purity remains to this day. Jesus, our Savior and Lord, is a direct descendant of Abraham. God kept His promise to Adam and Eve, both of whom died in peace knowing that their fall would not be the death knell of earth.

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.

- Who are the main actors in this story?
- What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)
- What aspects of the story are new to you?
- God chose a man whose character seems less than sterling. What does this say to you about God?
- What new thing about God have you learned from Abraham’s story? Explain.
- What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)
- What lesson does Lot’s life teach us?
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
- What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (Circle them.)

In the biblical passages below, you will notice major movements by God in the life of Abraham. Notice the frequency of God’s voice.

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

“So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”

“After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’”

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

“God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be
Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’”

“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.”

(Genesis 12:1-5; 15:1, 2; 17:1, 2; 17:15, 16; 18:1, 2, NIV)

Sharing Context and Background

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

It is worth noting that God had great reasons for raising a peculiar people who would serve as an example of godliness for the rest of the world. Here are some other facts that give context to Abraham’s life and service.

1. When God called Abraham, he was living in Ur of the Chaldees, a very modern Babylonian city when compared to other cities of the day. Founded 600 to 900 years or so before the birth of Abraham, Ur of the Chaldees was a city with a legal code, a system of schools, and libraries. Abraham was not leaving the “boonies” for a life on the road. He was leaving a big established city, which no doubt made the parting more painful.

2. Babylon is synonymous with disobedience, confusion, debauchery, and other dastardly things. The city was also a place where idol worship flourished. Terah, Abraham’s father, is described in Joshua 24:2 as an idol worshipper. The residents of Ur worshipped gods representing the fire, sun, moon, and stars. But

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 Patriarchs and Prophets. 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.
none were more revered than the one appropriately named Sin, who was the chief deity worshipped.

3. Abraham heard the voice of God. Notice, Abraham does not seem to mistake God’s voice for that of one of the other gods worshipped in Ur. He knows who God is. It says something about Abraham that even in the midst of an evil city, growing up in a home where his father worshipped idols, Abraham still knew God. When God called him, he did not question God’s reasoning. He didn’t lament the journey, though I’m sure he thought about it. He obeyed.

4. Ellen White shares the following about the power of Abraham’s faith:

“Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was ‘the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’ ([Hebrews 11] verse 1). Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. ‘By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise’ (Hebrews 11:9, RV)” (**Patriarchs and Prophets**, p. 126).

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

Ask students to think of the longest journey they have ever taken. Some examples might be a long drive, plane flight, or train ride, perhaps, to see family members or on vacation. Ask them what difficulties they encountered during the trip. Ask them if they prayed to God for help during their trials.

Close by inviting each student to pray silently for one minute asking God’s guidance in their daily journey of living for Him.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Abraham was God’s choice as He sought to raise up a people who would obey Him and bless the world. While God chose Abraham, He never said that Abraham was perfect. In fact, he was very human.

However, Abraham’s weaknesses could be changed by God because he believed in God—he exercised great faith, and he was obedient. These two qualities set him apart from most biblical patriarchs and matriarchs. Abraham believed that God would not forsake him, and this God counted to him as righteousness. We too have the same opportunity to trust God and to see our lives transformed and blessed. However, we must be obedient, and we must exercise faith.

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 **Patriarchs and Prophets**, chapters 11 and 12.

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KEY TEXT

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:2, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. . . . God had spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 126).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Throughout the Bible God calls on seemingly ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Fill in the blanks below.

__________ was called to deliver God’s people from the Philistines.

__________ was very young and very afraid when called by God.

__________ spent 40 years getting ready for his task.

__________ has a name that sounds like that of his mentor, who was taken to heaven.

__________ volunteered to pay the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

DID YOU KNOW?

The city of Ur—Abraham’s home until God told him to leave—was a developed city, complete with libraries, schools, and a system of law. It was also a place where astrology was the main religion. Even Abraham’s father, Terah, worshipped strange gods and idols (see Joshua 24:2). No wonder God told Abraham to leave.

INTO THE STORY

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’

“So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his
nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”

“Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.”

“After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.’ But Abram said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?’”

“He took him outside and said ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’”

“God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.’

“Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, ‘Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?’”

“The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.”

(Genesis 12:1-5; 13:10-12; 15:1, 2, 5; 17:1, 2, 15-17; 18:1, 2, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY
• Who are the main actors in this story?

PUNCH LINES
• “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8, NIV).
• “See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life” (1 John 2:24, 25, NIV).
• “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5, NIV).
• “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1, NIV).
• “A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken” (Psalm 34:19, 20, NIV).
• “I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me” (Proverbs 8:17, NIV).
• “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25, NIV).

OTHER EYES
• “It is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich.”—Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century U.S. clergyman.
• “A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”—Lao Tsu, 6th-century B.C. Chinese philosopher.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath
Were you able to find all the answers in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson? Read the following scriptures below, each of which tells us something interesting about God’s call to each of these people, and to us. Write a brief explanation of how God called each of these people to serve Him.

Judges 13:1-5._______________________________

Jeremiah 1:4-8.______________________________

Exodus 3:7-12._______________________________

What do you think God is calling you to do? Ask Him to show you, and have faith that He will.

Sunday
Read the Bible passages around which this lesson is built (Into the Story section). You will notice that these scriptures are a series of short passages about the life and times of Abraham. Based on what you just read, list the three most important moments in Abraham’s life. Explain how these three moments changed Abraham’s life. (Hint: One is provided for you.)

1. God tells Abraham to leave his home.
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

Monday
Read carefully Genesis 12:2. Imagine God coming to you and saying the following: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” (NIV).
Most people do not believe it, but God wants to bless us beyond our wildest dreams. Look up the passages below to find out what God promised to do for the people mentioned there:

Isaiah 56:4, 5. ______________________________

Matthew 11:28. ______________________________

John 10:28. ________________________________

What can God do for you?

Tuesday
Notice the last sentence in the Flashlight section of the lesson.

Does this mean that Abraham never got upset with God for making such a challenging request of him? When God asks tough things of us, how should we respond?

What place in your life is God asking you to leave? Abraham could not receive the blessing God had for him until he was willing to leave all behind to follow God. What things are you willing to give up for God?

Wednesday
What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” (Luke 9:25, NIV). That’s one of the Punch Lines this week. Explain in your own words what this text means to you.
Do you know of someone who went after the alluring things of the world—money, riches, fame, illicit relationships, etc.—only to lose sight of who they really were? How can the Punch Line found in 1 John 2:24, 25 help to prevent this from happening to any of us?

**Thursday**

One of the truly sad episodes in the life of Abram and Sarai was the Ishmael scandal. Read Genesis 16:1-8. What did they do to “help” God’s promise come true? How did their scheme turn out? In what ways might you be trying to “help” God out—trying to make something happen for you that God alone has power to control?

Try this for one day: ask God’s guidance about what to wear, what to eat, where to go, whom to talk to, what to say to those you meet, etc. Look for opportunities to seek God’s guidance before you act.

**Friday**

Abraham’s life of faithfulness got him into the great Hall of Faith found in Hebrews 11. Most of us will never be asked by God to leave our home for a strange land we don’t know. Most of us will never be asked to sacrifice a child. However, to achieve God’s purpose for our lives, He will require a sacrifice of something we hold dear. Are you prepared to make that sacrifice?

In your own words, write a prayer to God asking Him to show you His plan for your life and to give you willingness and strength to sacrifice for Him.

Remember, God’s timing may not match yours perfectly. He may choose to reveal His plan for your life in pieces, bit by bit. But if you trust Him and do not give up, He will bless you beyond your wildest dreams.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Who doesn’t love a baby? That’s right, no one—at least no one in their right mind. Babies are special, a seeming nod from God affirming the human life cycle, affirming the process of perpetuation that He instituted in Eden.

Sarah, wife of the great patriarch Abraham, longed to experience the joy of a baby’s cry. She had been barren for years, and had long given up any hope of ever having a child. In spite of God’s promise to Abraham that He would make his descendants as numberless as the sands of the sea, God’s delay in fulfilling this promise meant heartache for Sarah. It was this heartache and disbelief in God that led her to encourage Abraham to bear a child with her servant, Hagar—a very, very disastrous decision.

God did finally fulfill His promise to Abraham and Sarah. Sarah got pregnant at a ripe old age and bore Isaac, a “boy wonder” if there ever was one. The events of this child’s birth were so miraculous that God’s later command to sacrifice him must have been a test of epic proportions for Abraham’s faith. However, at God’s command, Abraham does not flinch, pout, or hesitate; he immediately moves to obey God.

While it is certain that Abraham must have had doubts about God’s request, he chose to believe that God would provide a way of escape. In life we also face similar dilemmas, and we too must choose to trust God.

Another aspect of this great biblical narrative that makes it stand out is Isaac’s trust and obedience to his father. In this way Isaac was a type of Christ—obedient to the death, even the death of the cross, or in Isaac’s case, the altar. His obedience says much about the way his parents reared him, and his love for God. It is a great example for youth today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• See in the miraculous birth of Isaac that God keeps His promises. (Know)
• Experience the challenge of trusting God when He asks difficult things of us. (Feel)
• Be given an opportunity to trust God to provide for them when called on to obey His commands. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Sacrifice
• Parents (relating to)
• The will of God
• Family dynamics

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

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.
You could ask: What do you think motivated them to make these sacrifices? How did these sacrifices affect their lives? What does that say to you?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Motivational speaker and author Eric Fellman speaks of meeting a Chinese couple in Hong Kong while traveling to China.

A friend took me down a narrow alley to a second-floor flat to meet a man recently released from prison in China. I knew I would be pressed to carry Bibles and literature on my trip. But I was hesitant and tried to mask my fear with rationalizations about legalities and other concerns. A Chinese man in his 60s opened the door. His smile was radiant, but his back was bent almost double. He led us to a sparsely furnished room. A Chinese woman of about the same age came in to serve tea. As she lingered, I couldn’t help noticing how they touched and lovingly looked at each other. My staring apparently didn’t go unnoticed, for soon they were both giggling.

“What is it?” I asked my friend. “Oh nothing,” he said with a smile. “They just wanted you to know it was OK—they’re newlyweds.” I learned they had been engaged in 1949, when he was a student at Nanking Seminary. On the day of their wedding rehearsal Chinese Communists seized the seminary. They took the students to a hard-labor prison. For the next 30 years the bride-to-be was allowed only one visit per year. Each time, following their brief minutes together, the man would be called to the warden’s office. “You may go home with your bride,” he said, “if you will renounce Christianity.”

Year after year this man replied with just one word: “No.” I was stunned. How had he been able to stand the strain for so long, being denied his family, his marriage, and even his health? When I asked, he seemed astonished at my question. He replied, “With all that Jesus has done for me, how could I betray Him?” The next day I requested that my suitcase be crammed with Bibles and training literature for Chinese Christians. I determined not to lie about the materials, yet lost not one minute of sleep worrying about the consequences. And as God had planned, my suitcases were never inspected (Eric Fellman, Moody Monthly, January 1986, p. 33).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Our lives are often defined by crucial moments. In the life of Abraham and Sarah, several moments define their relationship with God. Their decision to help God fulfill His promise to make of Abraham a great nation—having Abraham bear a child with Hagar—was a moment of disbelief in God for which the world is still paying. The conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians started in that moment.

In spite of this failure, God extends grace to Abraham and Sarah, and Hagar and Ishmael. By right, God could have made Ishmael the son of promise, the one through whom Abraham’s numberless seed would spring up and through whom the Messiah would come to save the world. But God didn’t do this. He kept His promise to Abraham and Sarah. He gave them Isaac, but because of their earlier disobedience they would have to endure another crucial moment: God’s call to sacrifice their only son.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• How was Abraham so sure that God was the one summoning him to kill his son?

• What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)

• What aspects of the story are new to you?

• Why do you think God failed to stop the liaison between Abraham and Hagar? What does this say to you about God? (Place an arrow beside the verses.)

• What new thing about God have you learned from Abraham’s story? Explain.

• What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

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

• What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of the story? (Circle them.)

Sharing Context and Background

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

God’s love for us is unconditional. He never fails to reach out to us, even when we make a mess of our lives. God rehabilitated Abraham, rebuilding a life that now
serves as a terrific example for us all. Here are other interesting facts that give context to this narrative.

1. The name Isaac means “he will laugh.” Sarah chose the name Isaac because the angel promised that she should become a mother. Being beyond the age of having children, she privately laughed at the prediction. When the child was born, she said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me” (Genesis 21:6, NIV).

2. During the time in which Abraham and Sarah lived, male heads of families wielded enormous power over their household. They often had multiple wives, and could solicit the sexual services of their servants at any moment.

   With this background in mind, it is not difficult to understand the treatment Hagar received at the hand of her masters. Granted, Hagar’s actions following the birth of Ishmael challenged the validity of Abraham and Sarah’s union, but this was a problem that they created. Hagar’s banishment was a source of deep pain to Abraham, and he begged God to allow Ishmael to be his heir, but God was resolute. However, God did promise to make of Ishmael a great nation. God was seeking a win-win in this difficult love triangle.

3. Mount Moriah, the site of Abraham’s aborted sacrifice of Isaac, has been considered a holy site throughout the years, and not just because it was the place where God tested Abraham’s and Isaac’s faith. It is also a revered site because

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

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

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

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Love in Action**

When Jesus taught on earth, there was an unmistakable theme to His teaching: He taught love. What does this mean in practice?

In the life of Jesus we see Him healing broken people, forgiving sin, raising the dead, encouraging the downtrodden, and yes, castigating the hypocrites. In His earthly ministry Jesus focused on restoring people, giving hope to a people whose church leaders were guilty of religious malpractice.

In the narrative of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac, emphasize the places where God brings restoration and healing to the characters. God is interested in doing something special in the life of Abraham and Sarah, in spite of their clumsy attempts to help Him. Hagar gets swept up in the mix and fails God, but God blesses her and Ishmael. Isaac’s life is saved when God provides a ram for the sacrifice. God looks for opportunities in our lives to show His wondrous love.
Moriah was the place where Jacob had his dream of angels ascending and descending on a ladder between earth and heaven (Genesis 28:10-18).

It was also on this mountain that David built an altar and offered sacrifices to God some 1,000 years after Abraham (1 Chronicles 21:26).

4. Ellen White shares the following about the testing of Abraham’s faith:

“God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar. That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering upon a mountain that should be shown him” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 147).

III. CLOSING

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

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 Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 13.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets 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
"'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.'" (Genesis 22:12, NIV)

“At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 152).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Each of the following people made several huge sacrifices to achieve world change, and obey their conscience. List one sacrifice each had to make.

a. Mohandas Gandhi _____________________
b. Abraham Lincoln _____________________
c. Esther ______________________________
d. Rosa Parks __________________________
e. Josiah ________________________________
f. Mother Teresa __________________________
g. Ellen White ___________________________

DID YOU KNOW?
The name Isaac means “he will laugh.” It is the name given to him by his father, Abraham. Laughter was a theme in the birth of Isaac. You may remember that when God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son, he fell facedown with laughter (see Genesis 17:16, 17). When Sarah found out about the promise, she too burst out laughing. Isn’t it great to see into the Bible characters’ personalities? However, God didn’t find their laughter at His words funny.

INTO THE STORY
“Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight...
days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’

‘Here I am,’ he replied.

‘Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.’

Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.’

“Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, ‘Father?’

“Yes, my son?’ Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,’ Isaac said, ‘but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’

“Abraham answered, ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’

“Here I am,’ he replied.

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’”

(Genesis 21:1-5; 22:1-12, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• Who are the main actors in this story?

• What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)

• What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

• What words in this story help us understand how Ishmael and Hagar might have felt? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

• What one thing is God saying to you through this story?

• What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (Circle them.)

• What situation in your life do you feel compares to Abraham’s challenge—being 100 years old and having a new baby to rear?

PUNCH LINES

• “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12, NIV).

• “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9, NIV).

• “Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will!’” (Matthew 26:39, NIV).

• “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV).

• “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wis-
dom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10, NIV).

- “Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done’” (Matthew 21:21, NIV).

OTHER EYES

- “Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds.”—George Eliot, 19th-century English novelist.
- “Feed your faith and your fears will starve to death.”—Anonymous.
- “The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.”—Chinese proverb.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson you are asked to list some of the sacrifices made by great men and women of history. The Merriam Webster’s online dictionary has three definitions for the word “sacrifice.” The third definition is striking: “Destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else.” When one makes a sacrifice, it is done because one values something else more than the thing they had to sacrifice.

In your own words, explain what Abraham valued more than the life of his young son, Isaac?

Sunday

Read the story of Abraham and Isaac again in the Bible passage for this week. Pay special attention to Genesis 22:3. What person has taught you the most about what it means to sacrifice? What have you learned from them?

The phrase “early the next morning” in this verse should make you pause. It hints at a very important part of what it means to be obedient to God. When God asks us to do something—even when it is difficult—we must never hesitate to comply. To do so is to disobey.

Give three reasons Abraham could have used to avoid obeying God:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Monday

If you read the Key Text for this week’s lesson you had to say, “Wow, that was a close one!” In the nick of time, God spoke from heaven and stopped Abraham, providing a ram for the sacrifice.

Does God always come right on time? To answer this question, read the story found in John 11:17-37. Am I willing to trust God even when He seemingly fails to show up in time to meet my need?

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight quotation.

Which of the following would best describe what you might have said to your father:

a. “Are you crazy?”
b. “There’s no way I’m letting you kill me!”
c. “Give me a few minutes, Dad. I’ll go find you a ram.”
d. “If this is what God wants, then I’ll do it.”

God will test us from time to time. Read John 6:5, 6. What test did God give His disciples? How did they do? Did God give up on them?

Wednesday

Read Matthew 26:39 from the Punch Lines section of the lesson.

Jesus was so pained by the sacrifice that lay before Him that the blood came through His pores, quite a rare medical condition. Jesus persevered out of His love for us. Read the other Punch Lines for this week and answer the following:

What is promised to those who persevere in trials?

If you used your faith, you would be able to move.

We are to trust God with how much of our hearts?
Thursday

Obedience to God requires faith, and faith is demonstrated through obedience. God has made several requests of His people. One of them is found in Mark 8:34. Followers of God must be willing to do something. What is that?

Try this today: Identify one bad habit that you’d like to change—wasting time watching too much TV, swearing, getting too angry, talking back to your parents, procrastination, etc. Write that bad habit down on a piece of paper along with what you want God to do with it. Then pray, asking God for strength to sacrifice this habit for His glory. Find a safe place to burn this prayer request. Start overcoming your bad habit today by doing one thing to change it. (For instance, if anger is your challenge, begin the change by asking a cool-headed adult how they stay calm.)

Friday

What does Abraham’s relationship with Isaac teach you about the kind of relationship God wants to have with you?

What are you willing to do to develop a closer walk with God?

If you want a closer relationship with God, ask Him for it right now.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Genesis 19 carries in its verses perhaps the strongest cautionary tale in all of Scripture of God’s disgust with open, blatant iniquity.

This biblical episode is not so much about Sodom and Gomorrah, the two famous cities destroyed by God, as it is about a family led by a man named Lot. Lot was Abraham’s nephew, and as such he had in Abraham a solid example of godliness. When Abraham offered him his pick of the promised land to which God had brought them, he chose the lush green plains within sight and earshot of Sodom. It was a fateful decision.

In this decision Lot had laid the groundwork for the destruction of his family. He had unwittingly brought dangerous influences close to his home. Among the serious lessons that cannot be ignored in this story is the importance of staying very far from evil influences lest one become corrupted.

The major lesson of Genesis 19, of course, is God’s judgment against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their immorality was legendary, as evidenced by the homosexuality practiced by the men of the city, all of whom came to Lot’s front door demanding sexual relations with Lot’s angelic guests.

We also see in this story God’s amazing grace, His willingness to save Lot and his family, if they would only obey. God always warns His children before He chastens them. It’s up to us to heed God’s warnings before it is eternally too late.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Learn that judgment is also a part of God’s love for His creatures. (Know)
• Sense the blessing and freedom that comes from true confession and repentance. (Feel)
• Have an opportunity to ask God for strength and guidance to live a life of purity and obedience. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Wisdom/Counsel
• Purity
• Homosexuality
• World issues

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

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.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A man who lived on Long Island was able one day to satisfy a lifelong ambition by purchasing a very fine
barometer. When the instrument arrived at his home, he was extremely disappointed to find that the indicating needle appeared to be stuck, pointing to the sector marked “Hurricane.”

After shaking the barometer very vigorously several times, its new owner sat down and wrote a scorching letter to the store from which he had purchased the instrument. The following morning, on the way to his office in New York, he mailed the letter. That evening he returned to Long Island to find not only the barometer missing, but his house also. The barometer’s needle had been right—there was a hurricane!

The response from the evil inhabitants of these two cities was similar to the response of the man who thought his barometer was broken. Sometimes truth is unsettling to us, but truth is not changed by our comfort or discomfort.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:
Throughout Scripture we see God’s warnings sometimes attended to, but more often than not, ignored. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah ignored them at their peril.

One of the truly striking aspects of this story is the response of Lot’s sons-in-law when he warned them of the coming destruction. They laughed at their father-in-law. This response says much about the state of Lot’s family at the time that the angels showed up. Lot seems to have totally lost control of his family.

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.

• Who are some of the minor characters in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah? What can we learn from them?
• What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)
• What aspects of the story are new to you?
• Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. How do we sometimes do the same thing? How should God respond to us?
• What lessons can we learn from Lot’s family?
• What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

Sharing Context and Background

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

The history of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain adds much richness to this narrative.

1. On the south end of the Dead Sea is an area known today as Mount Sodom; it is the area generally thought to be the ancient site of Sodom. What most of us do not know is that Sodom and Gomorrah were not the only cities destroyed that fateful day when fire and brimstone rained down from heaven. So far, archaeologists have uncovered at least five cities that were turned to sulfur ash that day.

2. Some Christians wonder about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other evil cities on the plains of Mamre. God destroyed men, women, and children. Most of us think of children as innocents, not capable of giving consent to sin, but apparently this is not how God sees things.

When Abraham urges God to save the city for the sake of the faithful therein, God lets him know that there were not 10 faithful people living there. What are we to conclude from this? Perhaps the question of children perishing because of the sins of their parents is something we’ll have to ask God about when we see Him.

3. Another problematic part of this narrative is Lot’s willingness to offer his daughters to the angry mob of men at his door. This depraved mob would have raped the girls and probably killed them. Their sexual depravity led them to reject Lot’s offer in favor of the strangers inside.

What are we to conclude about Lot from this offering of his daughters? What kind of father would put his daughters at risk in this way? This moment tells us much about the stress that Lot was under, and the strong influence of the culture in which he lived.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 1, page 333, offers these com-
ments: “His belief in the solemn duty of hospitality, so highly regarded among Eastern nations, explains, though it does not justify, his decision. He who had taken a stranger under his protection and care was bound to defend him even at the expense of his own life. In some Near Eastern countries the duty of hospitality is still regarded in this light. Only to an Oriental mind, perhaps, would the obligation of a host toward his guests seem to justify, or at least excuse, Lot’s conduct on this occasion. The purity of his two daughters in a city like Sodom is evidence of the great care with which Lot had brought them up, and proves that the offer was not lightly made.”

4. Ellen White shares the following about the opportunities to know Him given by God to the citizens of Sodom.

“At the time of Lot’s removal to Sodom, corruption had not become universal, and God in His mercy permitted rays of light to shine amid the moral darkness. When Abraham rescued the captives from the Elamites, the attention of the people was called to the true faith. Abraham was not a stranger to the people of Sodom, and his worship of the unseen God had been a matter of ridicule among them; but his victory over greatly superior forces, and his magnanimous disposition of the prisoners and spoil, excited wonder and admiration. While his skill and valor were extolled, none

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Discussing the Issues

Young people respect when adults are willing to discuss hard questions with them, admitting that they don’t know all the answers.

In the teaching of this lesson, encourage students to explore the difficult parts such as: The destruction of all inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot’s offering of his daughters to an angry mob, the hesitation of Lot’s family to leave their home even in the face of impending death, God’s attempts to save us even when there seems little chance of our accepting the salvation.

These issues should not be allowed to become the focus of the lesson study, but they should be considered in the discussion. Also, look for opportunities to make comparisons between the behaviors of Sodom’s inhabitants and those of people today. For instance, encourage students to compare today’s current acceptance of homosexuality with God’s view of this sin and its practice in Sodom.
III. CLOSING

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

Most cities have people who practice the sins that doomed Sodom and Gomorrah. While many people simply decry these evils, there are things that Christians can do to help spread a positive God-centered influence.

In closing, take a few minutes to brainstorm a list of possible projects your class can undertake to make your community a better place. Perhaps your class can select an outreach project that focuses on an underserved population such as the elderly, disabled, or young children.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
It was not God’s plan to judge Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plains of Mamre so severely. The decisions made by these evil peoples sealed their destruction.

This story is included in the biblical narrative as a cautionary tale on the dangers of living near to or associating with those who are doing wrong. However, God is not willing that any of us should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is this love that led God to Lot’s door. It’s this love that led the angels to practically drag Lot’s family from their home kicking and screaming. God refuses to let us go until He has given us every opportunity to be saved.

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 Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 14.
*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets 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
KEY TEXT

“So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, ‘Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!’ But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.” (Genesis 19:14, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“The Redeemer of the world declares that there are greater sins than that for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Those who hear the gospel invitation calling sinners to repentance, and heed it not, are more guilty before God than were the dwellers in the vale of Siddim. And still greater sin is theirs who profess to know God and to keep His commandments, yet who deny Christ in their character and their daily life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 165).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If a catastrophe was going to happen in your town, rank the following warnings from which you would want given first priority to which you would want given last priority (1-highest; 5-lowest).

___ I want my mother and father to be warned.
___ I want my friends to be warned.
___ I want my pets to be warned.
___ I want someone to warn me.
___ I want my city to be warned.

DID YOU KNOW?

The names Sodom and Gomorrah were not the original names of the cities God destroyed in Genesis 19. Unfortunately, the real names of Sodom and Gomorrah were not preserved. Sodom was derived from the Hebrew word S’dom, which means “burnt.” Gomorrah was derived from the Hebrew word Amorah, which means “a ruined heap.” These appear to be place names that were assigned after the disaster and were not their original names.

INTO THE STORY

“The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ‘My lords,’ he said, ‘please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.’

“No,” they answered, ‘we will spend the night in the square.’

“But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house They called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.’
“Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, ‘No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.’

‘Get out of our way,’ they replied. And they said, ‘This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We’ll treat you worse than them.’ They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

“But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.

“The two men said to Lot, ‘Do you have anyone else here . . . who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.’

“So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, . . . ‘Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!’ But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.”

(Genesis 19:1-14, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• Who are the main actors in this story?

• What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (Underline them.)

• What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an arrow beside them.)

• Lot hesitates before obeying the angels’ command to leave Sodom. Is this true obedience? Explain.

• What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a rectangle around them.)

• Why do you think it is that Lot’s sons-in-law didn’t believe him?

• If it is never wise to live close to people who are committing sin, what should Lot have done?

PUNCH LINES

• “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2, NIV).

• “The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34, NIV).

• “How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you” (Psalm 31:19, NIV).

• “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2, NIV).

• “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1, NIV).

• “As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15, NIV).

OTHER EYES

• “One act of obedience is better than one thousand sermons.”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 20th-century German Lutheran pastor and theologian.

• “The first step in a person’s salvation is knowing their sin.”—Seneca, 1st-century A.D. Roman philosopher.
MAKING IT REAL

**Sabbath**

In the *What Do You Think?* section this week you had the difficult task of choosing whom you would warn if a disaster was about to happen and you had to choose the order in which the warnings would be given.

God takes His warnings very seriously, as we’ll find out this week. Read the following scriptures: 2 Chronicles 19:10; Ezekiel 3:18; Ezekiel 33:9.

In each of these scriptures God gives specific consequences for failing to carry out His warnings. List those consequences below:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

**Sunday**

Read the *Into the Story* passage. Few stories in the Bible are quite as scary as this one. There are several turning points in this Bible episode. List some of them below:

1. Two mysterious strangers show up in town.
2. Lot invites them to stay at his house and insists that they do.
3. 
4. 
5. 

When the two strangers indicate that God’s destruction is soon to fall on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot senses the urgency of the moment. Does anyone else in his household “get” it? List two possible reasons why Lot’s wife, children, and other relatives did not feel this sense of urgency to leave Sodom.

1. 
2. 

Are you ready to leave all behind to be saved by God?

**Monday**

Read this week’s *Key Text* again. This scripture expresses the sad reality of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time that God destroyed them. How did Lot’s sons-in-law respond to his warnings about Sodom’s destruction? Which of the following best describes their attitude at the time.

1. “I don’t care.”
2. “Nothing is going to happen here.”
3. “Come back tomorrow.”
4. “You sound so funny with all your God talk, Old Man.”

Read Acts 26:25-29. The apostle Paul would shortly be sentenced to death, but before he was, he preached an awesome sermon. What was King Agrippa’s response to Paul’s appeals?

How do you respond to God’s appeals to you?

**Tuesday**

What were some of the sins committed by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? Several sexual sins come to mind, but they were also guilty of idolatry, witchcraft, and other evil behaviors.

Ellen White notes that there is a sin greater than these. Read the *Flashlight* quote.

Why is this sin considered greater than even those of Sodom and Gomorrah?

**Wednesday**

One of the few bright spots in the story of Lot, Sodom, and Gomorrah is the theme of hospitality. Do you think Lot knew who his two mysterious guests were when he first invited them to his home? Is it wise today to invite total strangers to your home?

In many cultures, the form of hospitality showed by Lot is expected of all the people. Read the *Punch Lines* for this week and answer the following: How are we supposed to treat strangers we meet? Who might these strangers be?

Can you remember anyone you met or helped who seemed to be an angel sent from God to you? What did Jesus say about helping others in Matthew 25:40?

**Thursday**

One of the powerful themes in the story of Sodom is sexual immorality. The men of the city came to Lot’s house to have sex with his guests.

Does God love people who commit sexual sins? Read the story found in 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26, 27. God loves sinners, but He cannot accept our sins.

What two things can you do this week to stay sexually pure?

1. 
2. 

**Friday**

Is there anything in your life separating you from God? In Lot’s family, the sights and sounds of Sodom
were too much to give up for God. The angels had to literally drag Lot, his wife, and his daughters from Sodom. What is preventing you from seeing God?
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

In the sunset years of his life Abraham wondered how God would fulfill His promise to make of him a great nation. After all, Isaac was still single. Sarah was dead. And he was 140 years old. Calling upon his trusted servant, Eliezer, Abraham says to him, “I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac” (Genesis 24:3, 4, NIV).

The future of God’s people hangs in the balance. So Eliezer assembles a caravan of 10 camels laden with gifts. He journeys to a city called Nahor, where he encounters an exquisite woman (see verses 16-18). Rebekah is very winsome. She is beautiful and hospitable. She offers Eliezer a drink. But notice, she is winsome, and then some. “After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking’” (verse 19, NIV).

Rebekah did everything that was expected of her, and then some. It’s the and then some that made all the difference. It changed her life, not to mention world history. She became the matriarch of God’s people. She enjoyed a great adventure with God. And no generation since has forgotten her name. Why? Because she did what was expected, and then some.

This lesson has much to teach us about going the extra mile. It is also a helpful story when one is thinking about desirable virtues in a future spouse. And finally, it offers an encouraging reminder that God cares about the social component of our lives.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Discover the matchmaking power of God as demonstrated by the union of Isaac and Rebekah. (Know)
• Sense the difference that excelling beyond expectations can make in relationships. (Feel)
• Have an opportunity to commit to always doing what is expected, and then some. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Love is . . .
• Marriage
• Dating
• Service

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

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.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:
Stories abound of the and-then-some mind-set that prevails at the clothing store Nordstrom. For example, an executive for a national retailer needed a suit for a business trip. Since his wife constantly bumbled about Nordstrom, he ventured a trip to the upscale retailer.

He invested in a couple suits—one on sale, which meant he couldn’t get same-day alterations. The tailored suit, however, was promised for the following day. On his way to the airport in Seattle, he stopped to pick up the suit. To the executive’s dismay, it was still on the tailor’s to-do list.

That evening, when checking into his Dallas hotel he received a package upon arrival. Yep, it was from Nordstrom. Three expensive silk ties (that he never ordered) draped his tailored suits—all compliments of one of America’s greatest and-then-some stores. Tucked in the suit pocket was a hanky of apology from the salesperson who had called the executive’s home to learn his travel itinerary from one of his daughters.

Stories such as this one abound in the Nordstrom world. There is another well-worn story of Nordstrom accepting a return of old tires—even though their store has never sold tires! The bottom line is that Nordstrom has scored a gold mine by empowering employees to not just do their job, but to do what is required...and then some. It is a corporate culture that challenges all employees to exceed expectations.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When God plays matchmaker, He gets it right! For a matriarch of His chosen nation, God selects a woman that models exemplary character. She not only serves Eliezer a drink—which would have been expected of her—but she offers to water his caravan of camels as well. In going the extra mile she was blessed by God. Now imagine what might happen if you lived with the same passion for exceeding expectations. What would that mean for your relationships? How would it affect you spiritually? academically? professionally?

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.

• Why do you think that Abraham insisted that Isaac’s wife come from “my country and my own relatives,” and not from the Canaanites?
• How do you think Isaac felt as his father arranged this marriage?
• Is there any advice in this story that is helpful when one is choosing their future spouse? What is it?
• We catch a glimpse of Rebekah’s character when she offers to get water for Eliezer’s camels. What would this kind of character look like today? What hints of this and-then-some spirit have you seen in your friends?
• What does this story tell you about Abraham? Isaac? Eliezer? Rebekah?
• How does this story inform our understanding of modern romance?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Kings 3:7-15; Acts 21:1-6; Matthew 5:27-30, 39-41; 1 Corinthians 13; 2 Timothy 2:22.

Sharing Context and Background

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

For this story it should be easy to get the students brainstorming about what it would be like if their parents were tasked with arranging the marriage for their kids as Abraham did for Isaac. Ask students to think about character qualities that would be important to their parents for a future son-in-law or daughter-in-law. From this opener, guide the discussion into the following areas:

1. Notice what was important to Abraham in selecting a wife for Isaac. She was not to come from the Canaanites. Moreover, Eliezer wanted someone who did not just cover the basics of hospitality; he had as a sign from God that the woman was to go beyond basic manners and offer to care for the camels as well.
2. Discuss Eliezer’s approach to knowing God’s will. Clearly he understood the high stakes involved in this decision. He was careful not to go against God’s will. Thus he prayed fervently (Genesis 24:12-21) and outlined a plan as to how he would know the right woman. God’s direct answer came immediately. Is such an approach still valid today? Can we know God’s
will by dictating to Him the circumstances that He should use to reveal His will?

3. Laban quickly accepted the ring and bracelets in exchange for his sister, Rebekah. The custom of giving gifts to family members of the bride can be traced back to the time of Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.). It probably grew out of an era when men would purchase a bride. What does the snapshot of Laban in Genesis 24:29-33 tell you about the kind of man he was? Contrast what he reveals about his character to that of Rebekah’s.

4. Consider another snapshot of Rebekah’s character in Genesis 24:49-61. In the ancient culture it was customary for the family to keep the bride-to-be before the wedding. In some cases the woman would remain home for a month, but in this story the family requested a period of 10 days (verse 55). Rebekah, however, weighs in and states her preference—to begin the journey immediately. Like Abraham had done many years before, she was willing to step out in faith.

5. Two words are worth noting in the final scene of this story. In the final verse of chapter 24 it says: “He loved her; and Isaac was comforted” (NIV). What a heartwarming picture of God’s goodness in bringing this woman so far from home into a marriage in which she could experience love. Moreover, she brought comfort into the union. Discuss this ancient marriage that God orchestrated in the light of what holds modern marriages together.

III. CLOSING

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

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 Patriarchs and Prophets. 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.
Read and discuss this final paragraph from chapter 15 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 176:

“True love is a high and holy principle, altogether different in character from that love which is awakened by impulse and which suddenly dies when severely tested. It is by faithfulness to duty in the parental home that the youth are to prepare themselves for homes of their own. Let them here practice self-denial and manifest kindness, courtesy, and Christian sympathy. Thus love will be kept warm in the heart, and he who goes out from such a household to stand at the head of a family of his own will know how to promote the happiness of her whom he has chosen as a companion for life. Marriage, instead of being the end of love, will be only its beginning.”

Ask students to generate a list of specific things they can do during the week to practice “faithfulness to duty in the parental home.”

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The story of Rebekah becoming Isaac’s wife is a powerful picture of God’s guidance in our social affairs. Moreover, it is a textbook case study on character. By going above and beyond expectations, Rebekah secured her place in history. She did the minimum, and then some.

So what is your and-then-some quotient? The apostle Paul said: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23, 24, NIV).

Challenge students to attack every aspect of life with all of their heart, “as working for the Lord.” As we studied in the case of Rebekah, it is a worthwhile goal to pursue with regard to one’s social life. But it is also an ideal target to strive for at school, in the home, and at church.

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 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 15.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* 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
KEY TEXT

“After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.’” (Genesis 24:19, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“It was a time of anxious thought with [Eliezer]. Important results, not only to his master’s household, but to future generations, might follow from the choice he made; and how was he to choose wisely among entire strangers? Remembering the words of Abraham, that God would send His angel with him, he prayed earnestly for positive guidance. In the family of his master he was accustomed to the constant exercise of kindness and hospitality, and he now asked that an act of courtesy might indicate the maiden whom God had chosen” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 172).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Rank the following attributes from 1 (most important) to 10 (least important) in the order you hope to find them in your future spouse.

___ Kindness
___ Honesty
___ Attractiveness
___ Contentment
___ Optimism
___ Selflessness
___ Courage
___ Self-confidence
___ Humility
___ Creativity

Why is your first choice so important to you? Who do you know who best embodies that trait? What person in the Bible exhibited this attribute? Would you ever marry a person who did not have this quality? Why or why not?

DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately half of marriages today are still arranged by the parents. Such was the custom in Abraham’s day. Abraham was 140 years old (Sarah had died three years earlier) when he arranged for the marriage of his son Isaac. Abraham entrusted the matchmaking to his chief servant, Eliezer. So solemn was this assignment, Eliezer placed his hand under Abraham’s thigh to swear that Isaac’s wife would not be found among the Canaanites. The thigh was considered the seat of generative power, so to put the hand under a person’s thigh was to promise obedience to the one requiring the oath.

INTO THE STORY

“Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in
charge of all that he had, ‘Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.’"

‘Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and left.’

‘Then he prayed, ‘O Lord . . . May it be that when I say to a girl, “Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,” and she says, “Drink and I’ll water your camels too”—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.’

‘Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. . . . The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

‘The servant hurried to meet her and said, ‘Please give me a little water from your jar.’

‘Drink, my lord,’ she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

‘After she had given him a drink, she said, ‘I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.’’"

‘Then the man bowed down and worshiped the Lord, saying, ‘Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master.’

‘Then Rebekah and her maids got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.’

‘Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.’

(Genesis 24:1-4, 10, 12-19, 26, 27, 61, 67, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• Read the story to note details that are new to you.

• Circle the different people in the story.

• Put a rectangle around the phrases that capture the main parts of the story.

• Underline the verse that you think contains the most important part of the story. Why?

• How does this story inform our understanding of modern romance?

• What character qualities do you see in:
  Abraham?
  Eliezer?
  Rebekah?
  Isaac?

• What are the advantages/disadvantages of an arranged marriage?

• If this story were to be made into a motion picture, what title would you give it?

PUNCH LINES

• “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23, 24, NIV).

• “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (Matthew 5:39-41, NIV).

• “If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward
the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married” (1 Corinthians 7:36, NIV).

- “Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex” (Hebrews 13:4, Message).

- “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22, NIV).

- “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:31-33, NIV).

**OTHER EYES**

- “Marriage is adventure, not an achievement.”—David A. Seamands, current U.S. professor of pastoral ministries.

- “The love we have in our youth is superficial compared to the love that an old man has for his old wife.”—20th-century U.S. philosopher Will Durant on his ninetieth birthday.

**MAKING IT REAL**

**Sabbath**

The What Do You Think? activity at the beginning of this lesson urged you to make choices about what attributes are most important to you in a future spouse. Why did you choose the top three you chose? What do you imagine will be the hardest quality to find in a spouse? Why?

When you think about how your life unites with someone else’s, how much do you think it matters that the key qualities in your list are present?

**Sunday**

As you read Into the Story, what three insights did you gain from observing some of the details brought out by the Out of the Story questions?

1. 
2. 
3. 

**Monday**

In this week’s lesson Rebekah models the beautiful trait of offering a gesture of kindness and “then some.” Read the Key Text again and notice how she goes beyond the expected response, as Eliezer had prayed someone would do. Do you believe Eliezer’s prayer for someone who exhibited this quality was strange? When you look at the way Bible characters prayed specifically for certain events to occur, how do you feel about praying in a similar way? As you pray today, talk to God about a specific hope you have about your future spouse. Write out your prayer and keep it in a safe place so you can find it when you are making decisions about marriage.

**Tuesday**

In this week’s Flashlight section Ellen White observes Eliezer’s earnest desire to be guided by God in choosing a wife for Isaac. The decision was too pivotal for thoughtless choosing. Read the quote from Patriarchs and Prophets and notice that the qualities that governed the choice were “kindness” and “hospitality.” Why do you think these attributes were so important to Abraham’s family? What decisions do you face that might affect the direction of your future? Who do you know today who enjoys a joyful marriage because they made good relationship decisions when they were young? Ask them about the qualities they sought in a marriage partner.

**Wednesday**

Read the verses listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson and make brief title headings for each verse. Which verse speaks especially to your life today? As you reflect on how this passage pertains to you, think of a friend you have that might benefit from the same passage, and pray for an opportunity to encourage them this week.
Thursday
If you read chapter 15 in Patriarchs and Prophets, you will discover wonderful insights into this week’s lesson. Make note of the new insights you gain from reading this chapter and how they illuminate the story for you. Also, listen for advice! What timeless principles do you see in the reading that would help you in any age, whether it be in Abraham’s time or today?

Insights:

Timeless principles:

Search the Bible for other Bible characters or stories and passages that give insight into the topic of marriage. List the texts in your Bible and read them before you go on a date.

Friday
The experience of marriage and building a God-honoring relationship over the years is one of life’s most noble adventures. As stated in the Punch Lines: “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22, NIV). This is true also for a young woman who would find a good man to marry. God truly intended for our joy to be complete, and part of that joy is experienced in our relationships with others. What aspects of this week’s lesson was particularly helpful to you today?

Write a thank-you note to a couple that you know who have had a positive influence on your concept of marriage.


PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This story is the first documented case of identity theft. At the time of this story Isaac was about 137 years old. He was blind. Thinking that his life was almost over, he called for his eldest son, Esau, in order to transfer a blessing to him. In the ancient culture the firstborn son received a double portion of blessing because it was his responsibility to take care of the family after the death of the father. Desiring this blessing, Jacob schemed with his mother, Rebekah, and stole his brother's identity.

A number of themes emerge from this story that are particularly relevant to young people today. First, there is the theme of identity. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), it was on this point of identity that Satan tried to trip Jesus: “If you are the Son of God” (verses 3, 6, NIV). But Jesus made it clear that He knew who He was and there was no reason to prove it. Still today, Satan is a master of spiritual identity theft. It is important that young people know who they are in Christ.

A second theme of this story deals with the issue of delayed gratification. Had Jacob trusted God to fulfill the promise of the birthright, he would have saved himself immeasurable heartache. Sadly, he couldn’t wait, and thus he lived up to his name, “the deceiver.”

A final theme that is embedded in this text deals with the issue of integrity. Between Jacob and Rebekah, there is plenty to discuss about honesty and the role this virtue should play in a Christian’s life.

One way you might wish to approach these themes is through the lens of family dynamics. If students believe their family to be dysfunctional, in many respects they aren’t much different from families of old.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn the value of delayed gratification. (Know)
- Experience the conviction to live a life of integrity. (Feel)
- Be encouraged to determine to model a Christlike character in daily decisions. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Behavior (Christian)
- Identity (personal)
- Integrity

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

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.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:
You may have seen the commercials on TV that
portray the grisly nature of identity theft. An elderly woman sits in a chair talking in the voice of some man. She talks about her truck with the Daytona tires, the mud flaps with the silver naked lady, and the fuzzy dice hanging from the rearview mirror. Another commercial has a man sitting on a lawn mower, and in a female voice he talks of fingernails with the diamonds built in and then brags of how he is the best-dressed person in the whole development.

Identity theft is a criminal offense. It occurs when a person knowingly uses, without authority, a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit or to aid or abet any unlawful activity that constitutes a violation of federal law or that constitutes a felony under any applicable state or local law. It is the fastest-growing crime in America. This past year more than 9.9 million Americans were victims of identity theft costing them more than $5 billion. Every 79 seconds in America someone becomes a victim of identity theft. Technology has opened the opportunities for this crime to the extent that some experts predict that in a few years there will be a massive identity theft crisis in our nation.

The tragedy with identity theft is that you can spend your whole life building your credit, forming a positive identity, and in one moment somebody can swipe your identity, and your future is destroyed.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following story in your own words:

The lesson today offers the first documented case of identity theft. Jacob stole Esau’s identity, and the consequences were severe. He anguish for more than 20 years about his sin. And he destroyed a family already teeming with dysfunction.

The devil would love to destroy your identity in the same way. Instead of your trusting God completely, the devil hopes to sabotage your soul by causing you to compromise. The devil invites you to take a shortcut, rather than waiting on God. He wants you to cheat, rather than being honest. He’ll delight in any sin, no matter how small, for every little sin erodes your identity as a child of God.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• Read the entire story and reflect on the spiritual lessons that jump out at you.
• Circle the phrases in the story that are new to you.
• What does this story teach us about integrity?
• What does the story teach us about delayed gratification?
• Besides the importance of integrity and delayed gratification, what other lessons emerge from this story?
• What are the primary emotions of the story?
  Underline the phrases in the text that capture these emotions.
• What is the key verse in the story? Why?

Sharing Context and Background

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

As you lead the students through the story of Jacob and Esau, you may find it helpful to share some of the following perspectives.

1. The birthright was a symbol of taking responsibility for the well-being of the family. But with responsibility came privileges. For example, the recipient of the birthright (typically the firstborn) enjoyed the status of leader of the family and received a double portion of the inheritance (see Deuteronomy 21:15-17). This birthright was obviously more important to Jacob than it was to his brother. It’s interesting to note that Esau is not the only man to have brokered such a trade. In the late 1920s archaeologists discovered a clay tablet in the Iraqi city of Nuzi that tells of a similar exchange. In this other case, however, the man at least got “three sheep” rather than a bowl of stew!

2. While the passing on of a birthright is foreign to our way of thinking, Ellen White broadens the idea of selling the birthright to include other arenas of life. “Multitudes are selling their birthright for sensual indulgence. Health is sacrificed, the mental faculties are enfeebled, and heaven is forfeited; and all for a mere temporary pleasure—an indulgence at once both weakening and debasing in its character. As Esau awoke to see the folly of his rash exchange when it was too late to recover his loss, so it will be in the day of God with those who have bartered their
heirship to heaven for selfish gratifications” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 182).

3. Jacob and Rebekah went to great lengths to deceive Isaac. This old man had all of his senses fooled. His eyesight was not trustworthy. He felt the hairy arms and guessed wrong. He smelled the earthy aroma of Jacob’s clothes and miscalculated. He listened to the voice and was deceived. He tasted the stew and thought he knew what he was eating, but his taste buds failed as well. Deceit is of the devil.

4. Think about the consequences of sin. Who paid most dearly for this family debacle? Their family life was destroyed, and consequently, each family member suffered many lonely hours of separation, disillusionment, and shame. Rebekah would never see her favorite son again. Jacob was now facing a life without a father, mother, or brother. Esau would obsess over bitter feelings of revenge. And Isaac would die knowing that he had been duped and that the family had been splintered.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

In groups of four, describe each other’s “identity.” Limit your descriptors to positive character qualities. Next, brainstorm specific ways the devil might seek to undermine each person’s identity by tempting them in these areas. Finally, discuss ways that you can resist the devil’s temptations.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Experiential Learning

We learn at a deeper level when we experience something. For example, one of the best ways to teach delayed gratification is to invite the students to experience it. One way to do this is to offer three M & M candies (or a dollar bill or any kind of treat) to any student who wants to enjoy the reward immediately. For those who wish to wait until the following week in class promise a much bigger reward, such as a whole bag of M & Ms. Experiential learning, of course, is enhanced when there is a time for reflecting and debriefing. In this case you may ask students questions such as:

- What factors did you weigh while making your decision either to take the immediate reward or to wait?
- How did choosing to wait for a bigger reward make you feel?
- How did you feel when others got a bigger reward the next week and you had nothing?
- What can you learn from this exercise that might inform decisions you make in your diet? exercise? sexuality? etc.

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

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

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

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Some years ago psychologists conducted an experiment known as the “marshmallow test.” A 4-year-old sits by a table with one marshmallow on it and is informed that the experimenter must leave temporarily. If the kid can wait for the experimenter to return, he will be rewarded with two marshmallows. If he opts to eat one right now, he can—but he doesn’t get another one later.

What is most fascinating about the study is the correlation between being able to delay gratification at the age of 4 and the outcome in the lives of the child participants. A Stanford University research team studied the kids for many years. Consider the final report:

“Those who were able to wait as four-year-olds grew up to be more socially competent, better able to cope with stress, and less likely to give up under pressure than those who could not wait. The marshmallow-grabbers grew up to be more stubborn and indecisive, more easily upset by frustration, and more resentful about not getting enough. Most amazingly, the group of marshmallow-waiters had SAT scores that averaged 210 points higher than the group of marshmallow-grabbers!”

Ask the students: Do the results surprise you? Why or why not? How can your character be strengthened by delaying gratification? How does this affect your identity?

Footnotes:

1Fundamental Belief No. 22.
Scripture Story: Genesis 25:19-34; 27.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 16.

STUDENT LESSON

KEY TEXT

“Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, . . . and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The Lord said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.’” (Genesis 25:21, 23, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“When, after his sin in deceiving Esau, Jacob fled from his father’s home, he was weighed down with a sense of guilt. Lonely and outcast as he was, separated from all that had made life dear, the one thought that above all others pressed upon his soul was the fear that his sin had cut him off from God, that he was forsaken of Heaven. In sadness he lay down to rest. . . . As he slept, . . . the divine voice was heard in a message of comfort and hope. Thus was made known to Jacob that which met the need and longing of his soul—a Savior” (Steps to Christ, pp. 19, 20).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Use this code to make a generalization and classify a person from each of these occupations according to their honesty: AH (Absolutely, 100 percent honest in every way, never compromising); MH (Mostly honest, the majority of the time except for the occasional "white lie"); OH (Occasionally honest, but not always); RH (Rarely honest).

____ A rock star
____ A pastor
____ A teacher
____ A priest
____ A veterinarian
____ A used-car salesman
____ The president of the United States
____ A pharmacist
____ A lawyer
____ A farmer
____ A police officer
____ A magician

How would you classify yourself? Where would you put Jacob on the honesty scale? What about Esau? Isaac? Rebekah?

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the most meaningful Jewish celebrations is the Feast of Sukkoth. It commemorates the 40 years of the Jews wandering in the wilderness. Although it was only 200 miles from Egypt to Canaan, it took God’s people 40 years to make the trip!

The Feast of Sukkoth reminds us of the importance of time in spiritual life. Good things cannot be hurried. It was during the wilderness wanderings that the Israelites received the Ten Commandments, the pattern for the tabernacle, and the necessary character to enter the Promised Land. The Feast of Sukkoth reminds us that selling a long-term birthright for short-term gratification is foolish. God’s blessings come to those who understand the value of delayed gratification.
INTO THE STORY

“The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

“Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, ‘Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!’

“Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’

“Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’

“When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, ‘I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death... Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.’"

“Rebekah said to her son Jacob, ‘Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.’"

“He went to his father and said, ‘My father.’

‘Yes, my son,’ he answered. ‘Who is it?’

“Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me.’

“Then he said, ‘My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.’

“After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.”

“Isaac trembled violently and said, ‘Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!’

“When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, ‘Bless me—me too, my father!’

“But he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.’

(Genesis 25:27-32; 27:1-4, 6-10, 18, 19, 25, 30, 33-35, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• Circle the phrases in the story that are new to you.

• What are the primary emotions of the story? Underline the phrases in the text that capture these emotions.

• What does this story teach us about integrity?

• What does the story teach us about delayed gratification? (See also 2 Peter 1:5-7; Ps. 27:14; Heb. 6:15)

• Besides the importance of integrity and delayed gratification, what other lessons emerge from this story?

• What do you think is the key verse in the story? Why?

PUNCH LINES

• “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Hebrews 12:2-4, NIV).

• “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3, NIV).

• “Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your
“heart on the right path” (Proverbs 23:19, NIV).

• “So God led the people around by the desert road” (Exodus 13:18, NIV).

OTHER EYES
• “If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.”—Charlie Parker, 20th-century U.S. jazz saxophonist.
• “Since the invention of push buttons, we have grown accustomed to instant gratification. We get instant meals. . . . Instant entertainment. . . . We don’t even have to ‘roll’ the windows up in the car anymore. . . . We are forgetting the concepts of delayed gratification. God Himself has to have long patience. It is hard to persuade a person who gets almost everything he or she wants within a moment’s notice that the things of eternity and of the Kingdom of God only come through LONG PATIENCE.”—Ken Raggio, current U.S. pastor.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath
Complete the What Do You Think? activity at the beginning of the lesson and reflect on the experiences you have had personally or have witnessed from a distance that prompted you to generalize the way you did. Which occupation was the easiest to generalize about? Which was the most difficult to generalize about?

Solomon says, “The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (Proverbs 11:3, NIV). Where would you rank on the scale of personal integrity? Think about the different experiences you have had in your life in which you chose the path of integrity as opposed to the path of compromise. How did you feel about your choices? Why do you think a life of integrity is often so hard to live?

Sunday
Read the Into the Story section about the ethical drama between Jacob and Esau and answer the study questions provided in Out of the Story. As you read this story, what elements emerge that you had not thought of before? What do you think God is trying to say to you about your life today in this story?

Monday

Read the Key Text found in Genesis 25:21-23 and commit this passage to memory or write it down and place it someplace where you will see it on a daily basis. Have you ever wondered about the awesome truth that God knows what is ahead and is ultimately in control of the big events of history? The prophet Isaiah said, “For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?” (Isaiah 14:27, NIV). Talk to God today specifically about His will for your life and convey your willingness to trust in His will, no matter what compromises might confront you.

Tuesday

Read the quote in the Flashlight section and reflect on the weight of Jacob’s sin and how it burdened him with guilt. What did Jacob need to see? What did he finally see in this season of guilt and shame? In what way are you like Jacob wrestling with guilt? Do you see your need of a Savior, or do you simply get overwhelmed with remorse? Who do you know who responds to their mistakes in life with a deep gratitude for their Savior, Jesus Christ? How have they modeled true repentance to you in the way they respond to shortcomings?

Wednesday

Read carefully and thoughtfully through the Punch Lines provided in this week’s lesson and choose one verse that speaks pointedly to your life today. Why does this passage stand out to you now? Think of the people you have influence with (friends, younger siblings, or younger people at church) and consider how you could share this passage with them in a way that will deepen their commitment to God. List them by name and invite God to lead you to them this week.
Thursday
Take some time today to read chapter 16 in Patriarchs and Prophets noting the insights the prophetic eye reveals. What does Ellen White say about integrity and delayed gratification? What Bible passages does she highlight or lead you to study? What principle emerges from this chapter that will apply to any generation, any season in the journey of life? Write that principle out in your own words below.

Principle:

Friday
The author of the book of Hebrews had it right in saying, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Hebrews 12:2-4, NIV).

The point of this passage captures Jacob’s experience well. How does it capture your experience? When you look at Jacob’s journey (dishonesty and mistakes; struggles with guilt, shame, God, and repentance), where are you in your journey? What is the next step for you that moves you closer to God?

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of salvation is deeply embedded in the life of Jacob. Overwhelmed with guilt and running for his life, Jacob encounters God on his way to Haran. He dreams of a ladder stretching to heaven. “The ladder represents Jesus,” Ellen White tells us. “Christ connects man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 184). The story of Jacob showcases God’s unconditional acceptance and grace.

There are several other themes that emerge from this season of Jacob’s life. For example, the story underscores the grisly consequences of sin. For more than 20 years Jacob suffered in fear and shame as a result of his deception. Every day Jacob worried that Esau’s hit man would come knocking on his door, reminding us of how sin robs us of the daily joy and freedom we can experience in Christ. Another theme that could be explored in this lesson is the virtue of perseverance. When Jacob found himself on the receiving end of Laban’s trickery, he forged ahead and worked another seven years in order to marry Rachel. We also find the theme of reconciliation in this story. In time, Jacob was reconciled to God and to his estranged brother. And finally, the idea of God using our weaknesses to make us strong is a prevalent theme in Jacob’s life. The flaws and failures in Jacob’s life are easy to find; nevertheless, he soared above his mistakes and emerged a spiritual giant. In the end, Jacob prevailed because of his unyielding faith. God transformed Jacob’s weakness into strength.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Learn of the unconditional acceptance of God. (Know)
- Be asked to experience the joy of persevering through problems. (Feel)
- Be challenged to commit every aspect of life to God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Forgiveness from God
- Learning from failure/mistakes
- Faith

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of the student lesson.

As an alternative, ask the students to assume the role of TV personality Dr. Phil and offer advice on how to remedy the following family situations similar to Jacob’s experience:

A son lies to his parents and steals from them. The parents wonder what they should do with this son.

A young man has been ripped off by his brother. His brother is so angry that this young man fears for his life. How can he find reconciliation with the

Scripture Story: Genesis 28–33.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 17 and 18.
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Remember that story the next time you’re inclined to beat yourself up because of your flaws. Like Jacob in the Bible, you’re a perfect collage of strengths and weaknesses. Embrace them both. For God can work through you even when you feel inadequate; or better yet, especially when you feel inadequate. That’s what we see in the story of Jacob.

The apostle Paul once wrote this: “I quit focusing on [my] handicap. . . . Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become” (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10, Message).

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

Invite the students to line up and represent how Jacob felt during the different seasons of his life. As you read the list of Jacob’s experiences below, have students lie on the floor if they think Jacob felt very low and stand straight up if they believe Jacob felt especially strong at that time. Bending at the waist indicates a neutral feeling on Jacob’s part.

Experiences of Jacob:

• Receiving the birthright from Esau for a bowl of stew
• Tricking his father into giving him the birthright
• Running away in fear that Esau would murder him
• Meeting Rachel
• Getting duped (in a similar fashion to how he had tricked his dad) and having to work seven more years in order to marry Rachel
• Sleeping with the maidservant, Bilhah, thanks to the conniving ways of Rachel
• Leaving Laban
• Reconciling with Esau after 20 years

There are four primary stories included in this biblical passage. Divide students into small groups and have them decide on the central life lessons that emerge from the following stories.

1. Jacob’s dream of the ladder and angels ascending and descending to heaven
2. Jacob working for Laban in return for his wives, Leah and Rachel
3. Jacob wrestling with the angel
4. Jacob meeting Esau

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

There are many nuances in this story that offer rich spiritual insight. Here are a few suggestions for further study:

1. The Spiritual Highs and Lows of Jacob—Jacob’s spiritual journey was punctuated with extreme highs and lows. He seemed to have hit bottom when he cried out, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear . . . , then the Lord will be my God” (Genesis 28:20, 21, NIV). Here’s a man whose unbridled greed compelled him to use the most despicable means imaginable to secure the meatier share of the inheritance now humbly begging for the basic necessities of life. His story offers a valuable lesson in humility.

2. The Meaning Behind the Names—In the ancient world great significance was given to names. Each of the sons of Jacob and Leah got names that disclosed the mother’s thoughts at the time of the birth. All the names reflect the tension between the two sisters. The name “Reuben” means “behold a son.” Leah was extolling the compassion of God, who noticed her affliction and showed her mercy. “Simeon” meant “answer.” She trusted God and He answered. “Levi” meant “attachment.” Her desire with this son was that her husband would at last feel attached to her. “Judah” was an expression of praise to Jehovah. With this son, Leah’s joy was complete. Similarly, further study shows that all of Jacob’s sons had names that were significant.

3. The Contrast Between the Sisters—It is noteworthy that this “second-class wife,” Leah, became the mother of the seed in whom all nations would be blessed. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 1, offers this contrast between the sisters: “Leah must have been a pious woman, a devoted wife, and a faithful mother. According to the Sacred Record she mentioned the name of Jehovah in connection with the birth of three of her first four sons. Although from an idolatrous family, she must have accepted the religion of her husband and become a sincere believer in Jehovah. In contrast, Rachel’s conversion seems at first to have accomplished little more than a superficial change. While outwardly she too had accepted her husband’s religion, her heart remained attached to the old family idols, or she may have taken them in an attempt to secure the family inheritance (ch. 31:19)” (p. 389). Rachel

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 Patriarchs and Prophets. 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.
seems much more self-centered (see Genesis 30:1-3, 8, 15). Moreover, time seemed to soften Jacob’s attitude toward Leah (see Genesis 31:4, 14; 49:31).

4. The Wrestling Match as a Foreshadowing of the Last Days—Ellen White goes into some detail to connect Jacob’s wrestling match with the scenario to be played out at the end of time. It might be helpful for students to explore statements such as these: “Jacob’s experience during that night of wrestling and anguish represents the trial through which the people of God must pass just before Christ’s second coming” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 201). “Such will be the experience of God’s people in their final struggle with the powers of evil. God will test their faith, their perseverance, their confidence in His power to deliver them” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 202).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have students confess specific struggles and weaknesses to God by writing Him a letter. Then remind them of the story of Jacob that showcases God’s willingness to forgive every fallen sinner. Perhaps, like Jacob, they have messed up and find themselves in the gutter of life. Infuse each student with an extra portion of hope. Emphasize God’s amazing grace. Remember that God specializes in bringing saints out of wells of weakness. Conclude by burning the letters so students can revel in the complete forgiveness of God.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jacob’s story is punctuated with the gritty gravel of real life. He lies. He cheats. He manipulates. His family redefines “dysfunctional.” He needs Dr. Laura, Dr. Phil, and Dr. Seuss! Jacob messes up on a grand scale. Ah, but this inevitably prepares the platform for our God to showcase His grace.

In spite of Jacob’s failures, God’s character ultimately prevailed in his life. It was not an easy journey. It was strewn with lots of potholes along the way. But in the end, Jacob manifested the character of Christ. He grew to love the woman who deceitfully became his wife. He was reconciled to his estranged brother. And he developed into a fully devoted follower of God.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

A Story With Skin on It

A very effective form of teaching comes by way of a testimony. For example, to teach this lesson find someone in the church who has a compelling story of triumphing over a weakness. You can share the concept of God making us strong out of our weakness all you want, but students will remember the idea much longer if they connect a face and a story to it. Put skin on concepts by utilizing the testimony approach to teaching.
Scripture Story: Genesis 28–33.
Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 17 and 18.

STUDENT LESSON

KEY TEXT
“I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. . . . I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 28:13-15, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT
“Up to the time of man’s rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from heaven, so that man could not have communion with his Maker. Yet the world was not left in solitary hopelessness. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication. Had He not with His own merits bridged the gulf that sin had made, the ministering angels could have held no communion with fallen man. Christ connects man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 184).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Rank the following situations in order from the one that makes you feel the worst (number 1) to the one that makes you feel the least upset (number 10).
___ Arguing with a parent
___ Breaking up with a boyfriend/girlfriend
___ Disobeying God
___ Flunking a class
___ Being rejected for a sports team
___ Having a conflict with a teacher
___ Failing to spend time with God
___ Wasting a whole day just watching TV
___ Sleeping through church
___ Compromising your standards

Have you ever wrestled with God over one of these issues? What did you sense God trying to say to you? Have you grown as a person through any of these experiences? If so, how?

DID YOU KNOW?
The place where Jacob had his dream of the ladder with angels descending and ascending to heaven was named Bethel (see Genesis 28:19). It means “house of God.” Later, the name was also applied to the nearby city of Luz. Originally, the name applied only to the location where Jacob stood and not to Luz (see Joshua 16:2). In other references in Scripture, however, Bethel is used as the modern name of the ancient city of Luz (see Genesis 35:6; Joshua 18:13; Judges 1:23). Still today it retains the Arabic form of its name, Beitin.

INTO THE STORY
“Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. . . . He had a dream in which
he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: ‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. . . . I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’”

“Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. . . . Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, ‘I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.’

“Laban said, ‘It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.’ So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel. . . .

“But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. . . .

“When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?’

“Laban replied, ‘It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.’

“And Jacob did so.”

“So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, ‘Let me go, for it is daybreak.’

“But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ . . .

“So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.’”

(Genesis 28:10-15; 29:16-28; 32:24-30, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY
- Chart an emotional time line through these stories in Jacob’s life. Graph the times when he was emotionally soaring as well as the times when he was in the dumps.
- Find a map of the ancient world and trace Jacob’s journey through these stories.

- List the people in the stories and reflect on each one in terms of their faithfulness to God.

- There are four primary stories included in this biblical passage. Write the central lesson to be learned from each story:

  1. Jacob’s dream of the ladder and angels descending from and ascending to heaven

  2. Jacob working for Laban for Leah and Rachel

  3. Jacob wrestling with the angel

  4. Jacob meeting Esau (see chapter 33.)

- What do you think was the primary, overall spiritual lesson that Jacob learned through these experiences?

PUNCH LINES
- “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him” (1 John 3:1, NIV).
- “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13, NIV).
- “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has
given us” (Romans 5:3-5, NIV).

- “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

OTHER EYES

- “Don’t waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention.”—F. B. Meyer, 19th-20th-century English Baptist minister.
- “Only he who can say, ‘The Lord is the strength of my life,’ can say, ‘Of whom shall I be afraid?’”—Alexander MacLaren, 19th-century Scottish preacher.
- “If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.”—Betty Reese, current U.S. officer and pilot.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath

Complete the exercise in the What Do You Think? section. Why do you think you answered as you did? When you run headlong into moments when you are faced with your sin, how do you respond? Consider the way Paul encourages us to deal with the suffering we experience because of sin: “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:3-5, NIV). What part of this passage speaks to you in your wrestling with God? (underline it.)

Sunday

Read the Bible story of Jacob’s wrestling with God in the Into the Story section and study the passage using the Out of the Story questions. What do you think is the central issue in Jacob’s struggle? Why? What do you think is significant about Jacob’s testimony at the end of the struggle when he says, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” If God were trying to give you one message in this story, what would that message be?

Monday

Read the Key Text (Genesis 28:13-15) and take some time to imagine God’s voice as He is giving this promise, not just to Jacob, but to you. It is God’s voice that claims “I am the Lord” and “I am with you” and “I will watch over you.” If it were any human making bold promises it might be somewhat suspicious, but God assures Jacob that He will keep His promises. Count on it. Whom do you know who needs to hear this promise from God this week? You can write a note anonymously, or share in person, or even pray that God will give you the opportunity to offer encouragement to someone whose future is uncertain. Pray today that God will show you the right person with whom to share this promise.

Tuesday

In the Flashlight portion you will notice a quote from Patriarchs and Prophets, page 184. Read this commentary on Jacob’s ladder and notice the basic truth it represents. Is there someone in your life who helps you keep the lines of communion open with God? Who encourages you to continue to walk with and talk to the Savior? Let them know this week how they have been a support for you in your relationship with God.

Wednesday

Read through the various passages offered in the Punch Lines section and identify whether the Bible verse offers: (1) encouragement, (2) insight, or (3) a challenge. Choose the Bible verse that you think you need the most today and be ready to share it with someone else. There may come a moment today when someone needs a word of encouragement, or insight, or instruction. Pray that the Lord will help you discover which is most needed in your life today as well as by someone else with whom you may come in contact.

Thursday

To really dig into this story more fully, read chapters 17 and 18 of Patriarchs and Prophets and find the power-packed statements that jump out at you. For example, Ellen White writes: “Jacob prevailed because
he was persevering and determined. His experience testifies to the power of importunate prayer. It is now that we are to learn this lesson of prevailing prayer, of unyielding faith” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 203). God wants us to continue to cling to Him relentlessly! In what way is God challenging you to persevere in prayer? Try to make a brief list of five insights you gained from the reading that you hadn’t really thought about before:

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

**Friday**

Paul knew what it was like to rest in God’s grace when the future was uncertain. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 and notice the tender, sustaining power of God’s grace. Jacob learned through wrestling with the angel and through the drama with his family about the way God interacts and transforms people. What experience in your life resembles most closely the story of Jacob wrestling with God? Why? How have you been transformed by this experience?

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Jacob’s family continues to be a source of great pain during this era of his life. First, there is the fiasco involving his daughter, Dinah. After Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, violated her, Dinah’s brothers, Simeon and Levi, attacked Hamor’s city and slaughtered every male.

Next, Jacob’s family proves to be a source of great personal pain. After returning to Bethel, Deborah, the nurse for Jacob’s mom, died. This loss was followed by Rachel’s tragic death—which occurred while giving birth to Benjamin. Then Jacob’s father, Isaac, died. To make matters worse, during this period Reuben, Jacob’s oldest son, slept with his father’s concubine, Bilhah. She was the mother of two of Reuben’s half brothers, Dan and Naphtali.

Jacob’s family woes only intensified as he showed blatant favoritism toward his son Joseph. This sparked intense jealousy among Joseph’s brothers. A dream that Joseph’s brothers would someday bow to him only fueled the inferno of envy. The sibling rivalry grew until Joseph’s brothers betrayed him, selling him to merchants. Then Jacob’s sons deceived Jacob by bringing Joseph’s coat covered in blood, suggesting that Joseph had been killed. There is great irony in their act, for now Jacob was deceived in a fashion similar to the way he had duped his dad. Clearly there is plenty in this story to perplex even professional family therapists.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• See the ugly consequences of sin as they are played out in the context of family. (Know)
• Experience the healing grace that God offers to His children. (Feel)
• Have the opportunity to trust God in all family matters. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Family dynamics
• Peer pressure
• Anger

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

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.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

You come home from school and plop yourself on the sofa to faze out with your favorite reruns. Your thoughts drift to fond images of your close encounter with “Blue Eyes” in chemistry class.

Suddenly your mom interrupts your fantasy. “I think we met the perfect match for you today—Leslie. Yes! We’ve decided it’s Leslie for you.”
Not that your opinion matters, but you saw Leslie once at a youth rally, and your heart didn’t flutter. Not that Leslie’s ugly, but freckles and braces aren’t your thing. Also, you would prefer someone at least as tall as you.

But your parents have been scouring the social circles for years, and they’re convinced Leslie is the one. So after the formal introductions you and Leslie get married and move in together, even though you are strangers.

Does it seem too ludicrous? It’s not unlike a number of situations in which you already find yourself.

Think about it. You had no choice in who your parents would be. Did you choose your brother or sister? Chances are you didn’t choose your teacher. Yet you are forced to live with these people whom you did not select. The results can be as disastrous as an arranged marriage—but not necessarily.

Even today half of the marriages in the world are arranged. Many of these relationships flourish. Likewise your “arranged marriage” can work. Your family connections can be healthy and gratifying. What makes for a healthy family? The key is not in finding the perfect home or getting linked up with exceptional siblings. Rather, functional families result when all the members make choices to support and build up the family unit. By doing this, you can contribute your vital part to building a God-honoring family.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The Bible gives this promise for young people: “Obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. . . . If you honor your father and mother, yours will be a long life, full of blessing” (Ephesians 6:1-3, TLB). In this week’s lesson we observe a family that failed to follow such advice. Our case study features a family that is dysfunctional enough to merit their own reality TV show (similar to The Osbournes!). This takes us back to an era when most marriages were arranged, and yet many of the factors that sabotaged Jacob’s family are just as prevalent today.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- This season of Jacob’s life is filled with many family traumas. Underline each one, then rank them in order of difficulty.
- What picture of God do you get when reading these stories from Jacob’s life?
- Circle the phrases that suggest dysfunction in Jacob’s family.
- What can we learn from this season of Jacob’s life with regard to the following issues? Identify a part of Jacob’s story that informs our understanding of each issue listed below, then write down the principle we learn from the biblical account.
  - The consequences of sin: _________________
  - Sanctification (growing to become like Jesus): _________________
  - Uncontrolled anger: _________________
  - The dangers of being aligned with the world: _________________
  - Peer pressure: _________________
  - Community: _________________
  - Revenge: _________________
  - Human nature: _________________
- If the following stories were produced into Hollywood movies, what titles would you give them?
  - Dinah and the Shechemites (Genesis 34) _________________
  - Jacob’s return to Bethel (Genesis 35:1-15) _________________
  - The deaths of Rachel and Isaac (Genesis 35:16-29) _________________
  - Joseph’s dreams (Genesis 37:1-11) _________________
  - Joseph sold into slavery (Genesis 37:12-36) _________________

Sharing Context and Background

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

There are many details worth exploring deeper (with the help of a good commentary) in this lesson. Here are some cultural insights that illuminate the major stories in Genesis 34 to 37:

Dinah and Peer Pressure—In his treatment of the story of Dinah’s rape, Josephus, the first-century
Jewish historian, mentions the ancient custom for the girls of Shechem to participate in wild festivities. Dinah, believed by scholars to be about fifteen years old at the time of the incident, was likely in the habit of hanging out with the Shechemite women. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 1, offers this insight: “Dinah was curious to know the ways and customs of the surrounding people. This led to unguarded intimacy with them and ended in her disgrace. Her danger came from seeking to be free from parental control and supervision, and from disregarding the admonition to remain separate from idolaters and their evil habits” (pp. 412, 413). In ancient times, as well as today, peer pressure is an important issue for teens. “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33, NIV).

Jacob as a Father—There are numerous hints in the text that Jacob was far too passive in his role as father and spiritual leader in his family. For example, when Jacob learned that Reuben had committed incest with Bilhah, the mother of two of his half brothers, Jacob failed to confront the sin. Notice in Genesis 35:22, 23 when the writer discloses the sordid affair, he then drops the story and goes on to list the names of Jacob’s twelve sons. Another example of Jacob’s passivity is recorded in Genesis 34 when he failed to do anything after his daughter was raped. Understanding this character defect in Jacob helps to explain the deception, the anger, and the out-of-control jealousy that poisoned the ranks of Jacob’s sons—all of these attributes were modeled by the father.

Joseph’s Coat of Many Colors—Old Testament scholar, H. C. Leupold, points out that Joseph’s coat of many colors was sleeved and extended to the ankles. His conclusion is based on the Hebrew word used to describe Joseph’s coat, passeem, which means “ankles” or “wrists.” Consider the implications of Leupold’s assertion: this was a garment of nobility. This was not clothing that would have been worn by the working class. The laborer’s garb in that day consisted of a short, sleeveless tunic. Such an outfit

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 Patriarchs and Prophets. 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.
enabled the worker to freely move his arms or legs. By dressing Joseph in “a richly ornamented robe” Jacob was saying, “You can sport this beautiful garment because you don’t have to work like those brothers of yours.”

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have the students write modern paraphrases of the following passages:

Proverbs 6:20-22
Romans 12:9-13
Ephesians 6:1-4

In closing, remind the students that no family is perfect. Parents are far from perfect, and kids are just as flawed. However, every family can improve if each member is willing to invest in making it better. The late President John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but instead what you can do for your country.” The same principle rings true for families. Challenge the students: “Ask not what your family can do for you, but what you can do for your family.” Let students know that you are willing to support them in their quest to improve less-than-ideal home situations. Remind them as well that God is a ready help through any trouble.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

While families have changed through the years, in many ways they remain the same. Jacob’s family lived around 4,000 years ago. Although the culture has changed, some of the moral failures and relational challenges prevalent in Jacob’s family are still common today. From Jacob’s experience, it is important to remember these principles:

• The consequences of sin can plague a family for many generations.
• Sin must be confronted in the family. Ignoring issues only exacerbates the problems.
• Peer pressure and friendships outside of the family have great potential for good or evil.
• Left unchecked, rivalries, envy, and anger can destroy a family.
• You were created for community. It is the one nonnegotiable condition for flourishing as a human being.
• God can bring grace and healing—even to the most horrific and dysfunctional families.

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 Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 19.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets 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
KEY TEXT

“And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. . . . The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.’” (Genesis 35:11, 12, NIV)

FLASHLIGHT

“There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one’s own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 207).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Circle three words that best describe your family:

Busy        Loving        Stressed
Critical    Caring        Noisy
Cheap       Happy         Funny
Dysfunctional Growing       Outgoing

Clueless        Peaceful       Close
Fractured       Christian       Disconnected
Embarrassing    Conservative

Allowing for the possibility of a “perfect family,” finish the following statements:

“A perfect family would always _________________ ___________________________.

“A perfect family would never _________________ ___________________________.

DID YOU KNOW?

By the time Joseph turned 10 years old, here’s the situation in his family: The father is a polygamist, fathering 12 sons from four women (two of whom were sisters) who lived in the same household, as did all of the brothers and half brothers. His only sister had been raped. His older brothers were guilty of murder, plundering, theft, and gross immorality. His half brother Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah, who was the mother of two of his half brothers. And Jacob, his father, did nothing about the family fiasco. Here’s a family ready to star in a TV reality show that redefines “dysfunction.”

INTO THE STORY

“Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to
Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her.”

“All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised. Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male.”

“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Go up to Bethel.’”

“Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died.”

“Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. . . . So Rachel died.”

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, . . . and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.”

“Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.”

“So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the richly ornamented robe he was wearing—and they took him and threw him into the cistern.”

“Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed.

“So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.”

“Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, ‘We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.’

“He recognized it and said, ‘It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.’”

(Genesis 34:1, 2, 24, 25; 35:1, 8, 16-19; 37:3-5, 23, 24, 26-28, 31-33, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

• This season of Jacob’s life is filled with many family traumas. Underline each one, then rank them in order of difficulty.

• What picture of God do you get when reading these stories from Jacob’s life?

• Circle the phrases that suggest dysfunction in Jacob’s family.

• What can we learn from this season of Jacob’s life with regard to the following issues? Identify a part of Jacob’s story that informs our understanding of each issue listed below, then write down the principle we learn from the biblical account.

  The consequences of sin:

  Sanctification (growing to become like Jesus):

  Uncontrolled anger:

  The dangers of being aligned with the world:

  Peer pressure:

  Community:

  Revenge:

  Human nature:

• If the following stories were produced as Hollywood movies, what titles would you give them?

  Dinah and the Shechemites (Genesis 34)

  Jacob’s return to Bethel (Genesis 35:1-15)

  The deaths of Rachel and Isaac (Genesis 35:16-29)

  Joseph’s dreams (Genesis 37:1-11)

  Joseph sold into slavery (Genesis 37:12-36)
PUNCH LINES

• “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” (Proverbs 17:1, NIV).
• “Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honor the Master. Husbands, go all out in love for your wives. Don’t take advantage of them. Children, do what your parents tell you. This delights the Master no end. Parents, don’t come down too hard on your children or you’ll crush their spirits” (Colossians 3:18-21, Message).
• “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:5-7, NIV).
• “A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones” (Proverbs 14:30, NIV).
• “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth” (James 3:14, NIV).

OTHER EYES

• “Jacob is a classic illustration of a man who was too busy for his family, too preoccupied and unconcerned, which meant he was too passive to deal with what was occurring in the lives of his children.”—Charles Swindoll, current U.S. writer and clergyman.

MAKING IT REAL

Sabbath

Do the What Do You Think? activities listed in the beginning of this week’s lesson and respond to the questions given. While the “perfect family” may be hard to find, sometimes knowing what is most important aids in evaluating whether a family is functional or dysfunctional. What do you think about the following passage cut from the words of the wise man?

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” (Proverbs 17:1, NIV). My paraphrase:

What do you think is the central truth in this passage? How do the words of the wise man relate to your family?

Sunday

Read the snapshots of Jacob’s family traumas in the Into the Story section. As you read each passage carefully, how do you feel about some of the unsavory stories (such as that of Dinah) that are included in the Bible? Why do you suppose God included such sordid tales in the Sacred Record?

Response to the questions in the Out of the Story section as they guide you into a deeper understanding of the family issues of this Bible story. What do you think God is trying to say to you in the snapshots you have read?

In a relatively short time Jacob lost three close companions (Deborah, Rachel, and Isaac). What’s the best thing you can do for somebody like Jacob who is grief-stricken with loss?

Monday

Read the Key Text for this week and reflect on why this promise is significant. One important reality to consider is that from the promise of a Savior in the Garden of Eden to the time of Jacob, people were waiting for a Savior to come from within their family line—family dynamics are extremely crucial! It must have been frustrating for Jacob to watch the way mistake after mistake marred the family peace and to still believe that God could truly fulfill His promise. But God had made a clear and simple promise (Genesis 35:11, 12). Compare this promise with Philippians 1:6. How can God fulfill this promise in your life?

Tuesday

Ellen White reveals a masterful insight on the power of choice in the Flashlight quote. Examine this
statement and think about two people you know: one who may be resisting the promptings of God’s Spirit in their life; another who is aligning their life in harmony with God’s plan for their salvation. Both have a choice to make. Pray for them, as well as yourself to deepen your commitment to God’s work in your lives.

**Wednesday**

Read the *Punch Lines* and choose the verse that seems to speak to the scenario in which you live today. Of all the passages offered in this section, which do you think would make the biggest difference in families today if taken to heart and applied? Why? Share this scripture with your parents or others you know who might need a helpful word from God in their daily struggles. Be sure to let them know you are praying for them.

**Thursday**

Read chapter 19 in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and try to glean from this reading three insights that open your eyes to aspects of Jacob’s life that are like your own. Write them in the space below:

**Like Jacob/Like Me**

1. 
2. 
3. 

Go out of your way this week to be a peacemaker, and God will go with you and bless you!

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What lesson in this chapter do you think would benefit families and believers in any generation?

**Friday**

Paul offers a prayer for believers, saying, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God”

(Romans 15:5-7, NIV). As you look at the way you relate to your family members, do you see a message God might have for you in the above text?

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