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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Welcome to Cornerstone Connections.

— The Editors

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

*A special adaptation has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.*
what tools are provided for teaching the stories?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. In each lesson students are provided with a reference to the volume from the Conflict of the Ages Series by Ellen White that corresponds with the week’s story. Students who choose to will be able to read the entire series in four years by following the reading plan.
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   Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 62 and 63.
8. Fugitive Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 18 to 27.
   Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 64 and 65.
9. Lunatic Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 29; 30; 2 Samuel 1.
   Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 68.
10. Crowned King Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 2 to 5:5.
    Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 69.
    Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70.
    Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 71.
13. Absalom Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 13 to 19; 24; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 21; 28; 29.
    Commentary: Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 72 and 73.
October

1—Quiet Desperation [p. 11]
Many young people struggle with depression, anxiety, and fear. Suicide is more common now than ever before. Samson’s life offers an opportunity to explore this topic with care and humility.

8—Prayer Power [p. 19]
Hannah is faithful to fulfill the vow she makes to God in anguish.

15—Eli’s Bad, Bad Boys [p. 27]
Poor parenting ends in national trouble and family tragedy.

22—Turn It Around [p. 35]
The story of the ark shows God as holy, just, yet full of mercy.

29—Trading Leaders [p. 43]
God gives Israel the king they beg for, against His better judgment.

November

5—So Long, Saul [p. 51]
Outer appearances can’t be trusted; power almost always corrupts.

12—Giant Faith [p. 59]
Reckless and childlike trust in God turns human reality upside down.

19—Green-eyed Monster [p. 67]
Saul is out to destroy the very person who wins his battles for him.

26—A Sad End [p. 75]
David’s victory celebration is stopped by word of Saul’s final defeat.

December

3—When Will I Be King? [p. 83]
David hangs on to God even though his path is long and difficult.

10—The Golden Age of Israel [p. 91]
After the long struggle to the throne, David finally unites Israel in prosperity.

17—The Fall and Rise of David [p. 99]
Even after years of complete trust in God, David succumbs to self-sufficiency.

24—The Fathers God Chose for His Son [p. 107]
Usually when the Christmas story is shared, Jesus’ genealogy is completely ignored. However, the details of Jesus’ background are critical to understanding the full story of His life.

31—Fatal Fallout [p. 115]
David’s moments of self-sufficiency result in painful consequences that affect both his nation and his family.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Hebrews 11 celebrates some of the most amazing Bible characters as examples of people who found the courage to play a part in God’s plan for salvation. Of that list, Samson is mentioned as one “whose weakness was turned to strength” (Hebrews 11:34). Samson is grouped among those who are historical anchors of the family of faith. Why? Perhaps Samson’s life is a tragic lesson of someone who learns the chief lessons of life the hard way, but nevertheless learns. His story is also darkened, not solely by the way he lived, but by the way he died. Suicide is more common now than ever, and the idea of taking one’s life for good or for evil will be discussed in this lesson.

The reason this subject is rarely discussed/taught has to do with the fact that we can know so little about the motives of people who commit suicide and end their life. Many young people are wrestling with depression, anxiety, and fear. The teen world is connected to a digital world through social networks that present ample opportunities for uncontrolled bullying and intimidation. There are teens who end their life because of pictures, words, and even innuendos displayed online about them. According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the third-leading cause of death of people aged 15-24. You probably know someone who has taken their life.

This lesson will study Samson’s life as well as address the landscape of suicide in the Bible and gently apply some principles that help teachers and parents deal with the subject of suicide and bullying carefully and with humility.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Know the importance and relationship of everyday choices to our calling.
- Feel a sense an urgency to live in harmony with God’s plan for our life.
- Respond in partnership with others to build community rather than isolation.

III. EXPLORE

- Decision-making
- God’s Will
- Suicide

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.

This week’s activity challenges young people on the meaning and value of one’s life. Invite the students to give examples, even create a list of the things in life worth living and dying for. You may have them compile a list of people in the Bible who lived and died for the same causes. For example, some people live for the accumulation of wealth, but is wealth worth dying for?
Conversely, there are those who live to share the good news of Christ to the world, but is that life worth dying for? History is filled with those who believe so.

**Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told about a young Midwestern lawyer who suffered deep bouts of depression. Often the darkness of the challenges that faced him was like a dungeon keeping him captive. His depression became so severe at times that his friends prudently kept all the knives, razors, and dangerous tools completely out of his reach until he could manage. So often he questioned his life’s calling and doubted whether it was wise to try and see it through. During such a dark season he wrote, “I am now the most miserable man living. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not.” But the darkness did not overcome him, and somehow Abraham Lincoln found the encouragement and the fortitude necessary to press through to the other side of the darkness. Over time, the success and the victory stood in stark contrast to the darkness he felt in his depression, making Lincoln one of the most beloved and human presidents of all time (Today in the Word, Moody Bible Institute, December 1989, p. 20; C. Swindoll, You and Your Problems Transformed by Thorns, p. 58).

When heroic people are remembered, there is a tendency to recall their achievements and forget how they learned the great lessons of living. In some cases, their fame is a direct product of learning the hard way. What lessons have you had to learn the hard way? What are some lessons in life you would rather learn from the experience of other faith heroes?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

One of the trends we see in Scripture, and in life, is that many of the great heroes of faith were not only capable of making a great impact on the world but were also capable of being broken and ineffective. What does this mean?

Even though some of the greatest leaders in the world were clearly human, the story of Samson is an example of superhuman possibilities for success as well as failure. Read the whole story of Samson in Judges 13–16 in order to get a more accurate sense of this tragic and triumphant leader. Read the tragic story of Samson’s final moments and answer the questions in the Out of the Story section.

**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 storied life of Samson in Judges 13 to 16. Make notes where Samson could have made decisive changes in the way he lived—for God’s glory or his own folly.

Underline the phrases that describe the choices Samson made that contributed to his failure.

As you read this section of Scripture, underline the parts you think are key. List in order what you think are the most important points in the story.

If Samson’s strength is not really in his hair, why then is his strength gone when he loses his hair? What is the source of Samson’s power and how is it connected to his hair?

How does the Bible describe the effect Delilah’s nagging had on Samson? How is it that the little things in Samson’s life seem to affect the greater outcome? What words or phrases in this story reveal God’s continued mercy on Samson?

What do you think are three valuable lessons this story teaches?

How does the end of Samson’s story teach both sadness and hope?

**Extra Teacher’s Questions**

When Samson prays for revenge on the Philistines for his “two eyes,” what do you think is significant about this request? Is there a spiritual lesson to Samson’s blindness? How had Samson been blinded before his eyes were removed?

As Samson ends his life, he finally begins to achieve what his life was to be about: conquering God’s enemies. Throughout the Bible are several examples of people who deliberately end their own life, including Jesus, who said, “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” and “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life” (John 10:11, 17). Furthermore, Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). The motivation stretches from selfishness and shame to absolute selflessness and love. What are some things we know about the way Samson laid
down his life, and what don’t we know? What lessons can we learn from his life and death?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Psalms 18; 12:1; 5:8; 6:2, 3, 6; 7:1; 107:9; Judges 13:5; 2 Corinthians 12.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Perhaps the problem with Samson was that his great strength also became his great weakness. Because of his physical strength he overlooked the power of disciplining himself to do the little things and recognizing that God’s plan might include some humility. The Nazarite vow—avoiding cutting his hair and drinking wine—was a symbol of a fervent devotion to God. So, did Samson do God’s will?

Ultimately, the Bible says: “For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines” (Judges 13:5, NASB).* Perhaps God could have gone further with Samson had he not played around. The Philistines were enemies of God, and Samson tended to hang out and commiserate with them. Maybe he was so confident in his abilities he thought he was not only stronger than everyone else, but smarter.

As you study with students, the conversation about Samson and his “suicide” will undoubtedly emerge. Suicide is not defined, discussed, or condemned in Scripture. There are about seven instances in which people chose to end their own life, and are listed below. (It is crucial to remember the sanctity of life given in God’s law, but also be very careful not to venture into how God will finally judge these individuals.)

3. Saul (1 Samuel 31:4): Saul was stressed out, unable to live up to certain expectations, and felt rejected and a failure.
4. Saul’s armorbearer (1 Samuel 31:5): On impulse, he wanted to die with his leader. Forty percent of teenage suicide happens as a result of a thoughtless impulse.
5. Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23): Ahithophel was bitter because his advice was not followed.
6. Zimri (1 Kings 16:15-20): His issue was rebellion. Zimri had a problem with authority.
7. Judas (Matthew 27:3-5): Depressed, Judas felt trapped by his betrayal and lost to his guilt and shame.

Throughout the Bible there is a range of “why” people end their own lives. The spectrum starts with abject selfishness and on the other end is utter selflessness. How does Samson’s life fare against the backdrop of the big picture of God’s plan?

• Samson was born miraculously and prophetically (Judges 13).
• Samson, although devoted to God, was divided in

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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.
his behavior, choices, and associations (Judges 14; 15).

- Samson was brought low by trusting in his own cleverness and strength.

But in his final moments Samson, according to Patriarchs and Prophets, “learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance” (p. 566).

Perhaps Samson’s achievements and his lessons learned are what causes him to be mentioned as one of the “heroes of faith” listed in Hebrews 11.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Samson lived alone. Part of his problem was that he had no one to help him remain true to his calling. Give the following Bible passages to students (individuals or in pairs) and have them read and briefly discuss the text:

Romans 15:7
Galatians 6:1, 2
Philippians 2:3
1 Thessalonians 5:15
Hebrews 3:13
James 5:16

Each text has a challenge to be or do something for “one another.” Ask: What would the world, school, or church be like if we were to decidedly live out these passages? How might this kind of action help those who feel desperate and alone think again about ending their lives?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Watching Samson struggle is frustrating. He was so strong and yet so terribly weak. One noticeable thing about Samson is that whatever he did, he did it alone. David had Jonathan. Paul had Timothy. Moses had Aaron. Esther had Mordecai.

More than ever we need to be paying careful attention to each other. We need to be close enough to see the signs of a struggle or even the gradual slipping into depression. When people are tempted to end their own lives, it is often because they feel so alone. Alone with their pain. Alone with shame. Alone without anyone to give them hope.

Like Samson, we all are called to a life of service. In Galatians 6:9, 10 Paul charges: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

(Click out www.cornerstoneconnections.net and click on Resources for more information regarding teen suicide.)

"In suffering and humiliation, a sport for the Philistines, Samson learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance."  

(Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 566).

"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).

"Then Samson prayed to the Lord, 'O Sovereign Lord remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.' . . . Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived."  

(Judges 16:28-30, NIV)

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Photo © Thinkstock 2011
Agree or disagree:
The things in life worth living for are also the things worth dying for.
Share your response to this statement and why you agree or disagree.

________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

what do you think?

“With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death.

“So he told her everything. ‘No razor has ever been used on my head,’ he said, ‘because I have been a Nazirite set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.’

“When Deëlîlah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, ‘Come back once more; he has told me everything.’ So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. Having put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him.

“Then she called, ‘Samson, the Philistines are upon you!’

INTO THE WORD

“He awoke from his sleep and thought, ‘I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.’ But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

“Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

“Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, ‘Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.’

“When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying,

‘Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain.’

“When they were in high spirits, they shouted, ‘Bring out Samson to entertain us.’ So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them.

“When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, ‘Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.’ Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, ‘O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.’ Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.”

(Judges 16:16-30, NIV)
Read the storied life of Samson in Judges 13 to 16, making notes where Samson could have made decisive changes in the way he lived—for God’s glory or his own folly.

**Underline** the phrases that describe the choices Samson made that contributed to his failure.

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Samson committed suicide, yet he is counted among the faithful in the New Testament (Hebrews 11). Can God save people even when their final act is one of despair?

What words or phrases in this story reveal God’s continued mercy on Samson?

What do you think are three valuable lessons this story teaches?

How does the end of Samson’s story teach both sadness and hope?

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**punch lines**

“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).

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies” (Hebrews 11:32-34, NIV).

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11, NIV).

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“Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”—Henry David Thoreau, 19th-century American author.

“Suicide sometimes proceeds from cowardice, but not always; for cowardice sometimes prevents it; since as many live because they are afraid to die, as die because they are afraid to live.”—Charles Colson, 20th-century Christian leader.
Sabbath
As you respond to the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson, read what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What does this passage say about true strength and how we should relate to our weaknesses? How do you see this passage relating to Samson? Where does he seem strong and where do you see his weaknesses? To what degree do you think Samson learned what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 12?

Sunday
Read the previous chapters (Judges 13–15) prior to reading the final event of Samson’s life given in the Into the Story section of this week’s lesson. As you answer the study questions in the Out of the Story part, what questions did you find most relevant to you? What does Samson’s story show us about living up to our potential and how easy it is to get off track? About God’s grace and patience even when we sin again and again? As you read the end of Samson’s story, do you sense more triumph or tragedy?

Monday
Consider the message of the Key Text in this week’s lesson from Judges 16:28-30. What evidences in this verse lead you to better understand Samson’s heart in the final moments of his life? What comparison can you make with Samson to the thief on the cross who also said in his final moments, “Remember me”?

Tuesday
In this week’s Flashlight quote from Patriarchs and Prophets, Ellen White claims that Samson “learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance.” Samson was not only a mighty man of strength—he was a judge. In what areas of your life do you need to have more strength? What areas of your life do you need to feel a greater sense of your weakness? Whom do you know today that is in touch with their strengths and weaknesses? How do they negotiate through life successfully? What lessons can you learn from their walk?

Wednesday
Samson had physical strength, but his spiritual weakness got the best of him. He could have accomplished much more had he learned to control his passions and let God lead.

Read the Punch Lines in this week’s lesson and identify the passage that is speaking to you today. Why does this Scripture seem to be so relevant to you now? Continue to reflect on the passages and cooperate with God to become disciplined and open to His work in your life.

Thursday
In this week’s lesson many questions emerge about Samson’s life and death. In some ways his life is obscured by the way he died. Knowing that even the most respected/fearied man on the planet may be a very lonely person, how might you seek out someone this week and offer your encouragement and prayers for their leadership?

Friday
Reflect on the people in your life who tend to do things alone. Samson clearly had no right-hand man. He had no collaborer or friend. Many in the world today will lay their own lives down because they face life’s challenges alone. What might you do to keep those who are living lives of “quiet desperation” before your eyes?

*This week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 54.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
I. SYNOPSIS

Elkanah had two wives. One was Peninnah; she bore lots of children. The other was Hannah; she had no children. Peninnah liked to mock Hannah and flaunt the fact that she had children and Hannah did not. But even though Hannah had no children, her husband still had a great love for her.

On a certain day, Hannah was sitting by the temple weeping. She was crying out to God and was in deep prayer because she desperately wanted a child. She vowed to God that if He were to grant her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord all the days of his life. And it was while she was in this deep prayer that Eli was sitting on a temple post observing her. He was the high priest. Thinking she was drunk, he rebuked her—telling her to put away her wine. But she responded to him saying that she had not drunk or eaten because she was of sorrowful spirit, and had just poured her heart out to God. So Eli said to her, “Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him” (1 Samuel 1:17, KJV).

And it did come to pass that God granted Hannah a son, and she called his name Samuel, saying, “Because I have asked him of the Lord.” And she weaned the child until he was able to appear before the Lord. And when he was old enough, she gave him to live with Eli in the temple. It was a big sacrifice to give up her son, but she was thankful to God that He had granted her one. He had heard her prayer and fulfilled her request.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand the power of prayer and the greatness of God’s mercy and graciousness. (Know)
- Feel how much God loves them and that He really is listening when they pray. (Feel)
- Learn how to have a better prayer life and have more trust and faith in Jesus Christ. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Prayer
- Service
- Natural world

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 how they feel about prayer. Ask them to share with everyone any experiences in which God has fulfilled their prayers and if He answered them in the way they expected or in a totally different way. Make sure they know that even if God answers their prayers in ways they hadn’t expected or hoped, they must still be thankful to God for listening to them and responding to their prayers. Read the
and although we may not get what we want, He always gives us answers. In this story we will see God’s amazing power and His love toward Hannah.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
Rowena had always been taught to pray, but she seldom did. She thought, If something bad ever happens, I’ll pray for God’s help then. But years went by, and her life continued in its normal way; nothing exciting or terrible happened, and she was content. Her father had just won a family vacation to Italy, and everyone was quite cheerful and happy.

Finally the day came when they left. On the drive to the airport Rowena’s mother said, “Make sure you pray for a safe trip.” Rowena shrugged it off, thinking, What could possibly happen?

It was an hour into the flight when things went drastically wrong. The Fasten Seatbelt sign suddenly lit up. She glanced out the window to see an engine smoking.

“The engine has caught on fire,” said the pilot through the speakers. “We are turning around now to land.”

Relieved that the pilot didn’t sound too worried, Rowena shrugged everything off again. For a moment she thought about praying, but she knew nothing could possibly happen to them.

But she had been mistaken. That night on the news, family and friends watched as information was given about a jetliner crash.

This story is fiction, but the point is very true. And although it ends tragically, we also learn an important lesson from it. It is never the wrong time to pray. We must pray not only in bad situations, but at all times. As we get to know God, we come to trust Him, and then, when we pray it will be because we love Him and love talking to Him, not just to help us out of a bad situation.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

Sometimes when we pray we feel that God isn’t listening. We feel as if we’re talking to a wall. But no matter how far away God seems to be, He is always listening to our prayers. God always answers prayers, and although we may not get what we want, He always gives us answers. In this story we will see God’s amazing power and His love toward Hannah.

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 purpose might God have had to delay Hannah’s childbearing?
• If Hannah could have looked back at the whole life of her special son, what might she have learned about God’s timing? (Samuel was Israel’s last judge, and the best example of what a judge should be. He was also the first priest and prophet to serve under the rule of a king. He was born “right on time” to be at a very special place in Israel’s history.)
• What are some reasons that you can think of for the polygamy practiced by some at this time in spite of God’s clear intent for marriage found in Genesis 2:24? (Look in Sharing Context and Background below for some discussion starters.)
• At one point Hannah is so discouraged that she is physically ill. But on the way back home she has a different attitude (1 Samuel 1:18). What reversed her depression?
  (1. She prayed to God about exactly how she was feeling, 1 Samuel 1:11. 2. She received encouragement from another person, 1 Samuel 1:17. 3. She resolved to leave the problem with God, 1 Samuel 1:18. This is a good way to approach our own discouragement and depression: pray honestly to God, leave the problem with Him, and rely on the support of godly friends.)

Read Hannah’s prayer together from 1 Samuel 2.
• What is the theme of Hannah’s poetic prayer?
• In what ways does Mary’s song (Magnificat) in Luke 1:46-55 remind you of Hannah’s prayer? What do both say about God?

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

• Polygamy in Israel. “In Israel, as in most of the ancient world, monogamy was generally practiced. Polygamy was not contrary to law or
morals, but was usually not economically feasible. The main occurrence of polygamy would be when the first wife was barren, but there are several other factors that encouraged the practice, including (1) an imbalance in the number of males and females, (2) the need to produce large numbers of children to work herds and/or fields, (3) the desire to increase the prestige and wealth of a household through multiple marriage contracts, and (4) the high rate of death for females in childbirth. Polygamy is most common among pastoral nomadic groups and in rural farming communities where it is important that every female be attached to a household and be productive. In the Bible most cases of polygamy among commoners occur prior to the period of the monarchy.”—Bible Background Commentary

“The Bible portrays polygamy, beginning with Lamech onward (Gen. 4:19), as an act of His creatures’ stubbornness. God tolerated it, but it was not His will for their welfare. The pain of Abraham’s life with Hagar (16:1-6), the spiritual calamities that Solomon’s wives brought upon him (1 Kings 11:1-4), and the bitter results of David’s harem arrangements are forceful reminders of the consequences of this deviation from God’s will.

“In lands where polygamy is lawful, the Christian church often finds it difficult to apply the principle of monogamy. However, even in these countries, monogamy is upheld as the marital ideal.”—Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, p. 728.

- **Shame of childlessness.** “Since bearing children was a sign of God’s greatest blessing (Psalm 127:3), the inability to bear children was often viewed as a sign of God’s punishment. Additionally, a woman’s status in the family would be very tenuous if she had not borne children. A barren woman could be and often was discarded, ostracized, or given a lower status. Mesopotamian prayers and legal texts show that these same issues existed throughout the ancient Near East.”—Bible Background Commentary

- **Double portion for Hannah.** “The description of Hannah’s portion is obscure in the Hebrew. Most translations identify it as a double portion (NIV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV), while other suggestions have been ‘only one portion’ (RSV) and ‘special portion’ (NLT). Many of the commentators favor ‘only one portion’ because that sets up the contrast that makes most sense of the context.”—Bible Background Commentary

- **Hannah’s Song (1 Samuel 2:1-10)** “The actions of God were often seen as bringing reversal to the world. This reversal could be in terms of the created world (mountains reduced to dust, valleys lifted up, sun going dark); the social world (the poor receiving honor, as here, the mighty being deposed); or...
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 55 and 58.

*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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

the political world (empires tumbling). This world-upside-down motif was a way of expressing God’s sovereign control. It could be used to convey judgment or reward and came to be connected with the future kingdom of God, where wrongs would be set right and a new order would take shape.”—Bible Background Commentary

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Divide the students into small groups of three or four. Ask each group to make a list of three ways God might answer prayers in ways we don’t expect. Share the lists with the whole class and encourage students to agree or disagree with what others wrote.

Ask if there is anyone who can report an unexpected answer to prayer that they or someone in their family has had.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
Hannah had no children; her husband’s other wife, Peninnah, had many. So Hannah prayed to God to grant her a child. She vowed to God that if He answered her prayer, she would give the child back to live the rest of his days for God. She prayed day in and day out unceasingly. She also fasted from food and drink. And in the temple, when Eli thought she was drunk, she responded that she was not, but she was of a sorrowful spirit. She told him of her prayer and her vow to God. Eli then blessed her and she went on her way. God granted Hannah a son, and she praised the Lord. And when the child was old enough, she sent him to live with Eli in the temple to serve God. We must remember that God gave Hannah what she asked for, but she also remembered to fulfill her vow to God.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching
Research
Help the students get involved with the lesson by asking some of them ahead of time to research the cultural setting of a particular Bible story. Some will enjoy this particular type of learning more than others, and they may come up with some interesting background that will bring the lesson to life for the entire class.

In today’s world that often does not revolve around an agricultural society, some background about polygamy and childlessness in its cultural context might be helpful for understanding the issues in this lesson. Assign some of the more analytical students to bring information to share with the entire class. It will also give those students a chance to be the “authority” for a while instead of it always being the teacher.
Hannah’s prayer was granted; she received the gift for which she had so earnestly entreated. As she looked upon the child, she called him Samuel—‘asked of God.’ As soon as the little one was old enough to be separated from his mother, she fulfilled her vow. She loved her child with all the devotion of a mother’s heart . . . but she had received him as a treasure consecrated to God, and she would not withhold him from the Giver of His own” (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 570, 571).
**what do you think?**

(T) True or (F) False:

___ You have been mocked for not having certain things that others have.
___ God answers your prayers every single time, although sometimes not in the way you expect.
___ God has spoken to you before. Even if it hasn’t been a literal voice, you have heard His words in your heart.
___ You have prayed to the Lord that He would grant you something, and He has given you what you asked for.

**INTO THE STORY**

“There was a certain man from Ramathaim. . . . He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

“Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh. . . . Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.”

“One day when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord’s temple. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, ‘O Lord

“...Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.’

“As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, ‘How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine.’

“‘Not so, my lord,’ Hannah replied, ‘I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.’

“Eli answered, ‘Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.’

“She said, ‘May your servant find favor in your eyes.’ Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Eli anah lay with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the Lord for him.’”

(1 Samuel 1:1-5, 9-20, NIV)

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**did you know?**

Only 16 percent of Protestant ministers across the country are very satisfied with their personal prayer life. Thirty percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and seven percent are very dissatisfied. There is only a slight variation in satisfaction level by denomination. However, Methodists are usually a little more satisfied with their prayer life than others, and Presbyterians are a lot less satisfied. In fact, only 5 percent of all Presbyterian ministers are extremely satisfied with their prayer life, and Presbyterians are usually more likely to be dissatisfied than to be satisfied with it.—“Research on Protestant Ministers Reveals Roadmap for a Satisfying Prayer Life,” Christianity Today, May 24, 2005.
**punch lines**

“Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again” (Genesis 20:17, NIV).

“O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant, saying, ‘I will build a house for you.’ So your servant has found courage to offer you this prayer” (2 Samuel 7:27, NIV).

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full” (Matthew 6:5, NIV).

“But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God” (Nehemiah 9:31, NIV).

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6, NIV).

“Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.” —Søren Kierkegaard, 19th-20th-century Danish philosopher and theologian.


“Prayer is not merely an occasional impulse to which we respond when we are in trouble: prayer is a life attitude.” —Walter A. Mueller.

“We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.” —Oswald Chambers, 19th-20th-century Scottish minister and teacher.
**Sabbath**

In the *What Do You Think?* section, you were asked true or false questions about yourself. Most of them were about prayer. Do you think that prayer has the same effect on everybody? Do you think God answers everyone’s prayers differently? God answered Hannah’s prayer and gave her a child, but she also made a sacrifice by giving him back to God and letting him live in the tabernacle. Do you think you could give God something you cherished so much? Explain.

Try to see prayer in this perspective: if you had a friend who never gives of themselves to you, but expects you to give them your time, attention, and even things, how would that make you feel? It’s the same with God. We can ask Him for things, but we must also thank Him and give of ourselves to Him in return.

**Sunday**

In *Into the Story* we see why Hannah experienced intense grief. She had birthed no children of her own, yet her husband’s other wife, Peninnah, had birthed lots of children. This wounded her and filled her with sorrow. In the *Out of the Story* section you were asked why Hannah wanted a child. It wasn’t just because Peninnah had children, although that was part of it. She wanted something to love, and although she had the Lord and her husband, she ached for a child, and God granted her one.

Go to a concordance, look up the words “pray” and “prayer,” and find other verses about prayers that were answered.

What can we learn from these stories of answered prayer?

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**Monday**

Refer to this week’s *Key Text*. Hannah named her baby Samuel because it meant that he was something she had asked God for. Think about your life. What is something you asked God for and received? Is it something to which you could give a special name? Naming her son Samuel was one way Hannah showed God how thankful she was for His grace. She also praised God by dedicating him to work for God all his life. Have you dedicated yourself to work for God? If so, how?

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**Tuesday**

The *Flashlight* quote leads us to think about how difficult it must have been for Hannah to give up her son. He was a cherished gift from God, and Ellen White says that “she loved her child with all the devotion of a mother’s heart.” Imagine giving up someone you love because of your greater love for God. Samuel was a treasure to Hannah, yet she would not “withhold him from the Giver of His own.”

What do you think you would have done in Hannah’s position? How willing are you to make even small sacrifices because of your love for God?

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**Wednesday**

In the *Punch Lines* are four verses about prayer and one about mercy. In what way can you connect them together?

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**Thursday**

What are some different ways that we can pray to God? Are there right and wrong ways of asking God for something? What should be our attitude if our prayer is answered to our liking? What should be our attitude if our prayer is not answered to our liking?

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**Friday**

If you fervently prayed to God for something for a long time, and He finally granted it to you but asked that you dedicate it to Him in return, how would you react? What would your heart want—to honor God, or to cherish and use His gift the way you wanted to? In what areas in your life might this scenario apply? A friendship? A talent? What might it look like to dedicate something back to God?

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**this week’s reading**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 55 and 58.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Eli tried to serve Israel faithfully, yet his own children began to sorely affect his leadership. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were not only poor examples of behavior but they belligerently mocked God’s law and His presence. Their rebellion was a display of blatant hypocrisy and disregard for true humility. Ellen White observed that the source of the problem was in Eli’s parenting practices. In Patriarchs and Prophets she summarizes Eli’s failure directly:

“Loving peace and ease, he did not exercise his authority to correct the evil habits and passions of his children. Rather than contend with them or punish them, he would submit to their will and give them their own way. Instead of regarding the education of his sons as one of the most important of his responsibilities, he treated the matter as of little consequence” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 575).

Paul would take the issue a step further and challenge parents to a more proactive style of parenting, saying, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV).

This lesson can be approached from the point of view of students who will one day become parents and adopt parenting styles that need to be guided by God’s will and His Word. Furthermore, the story of Hophni and Phinehas could also foster discussion about the impact spiritual leaders have on communities of faith. It might be a good idea to allow the students to read the story and share what they think the central meaning of the passage conveys.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Discover the reality of cause and effect in parenting and leadership. (Know)
- Sense a deep conviction for the need of a genuine relationship with God. (Feel)
- Decide to become the kind of person today who will one day become a godly parent or leader. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Reverence
- Family dynamics
- Self-discipline

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.

Why did you rank the items in the order you chose? If you were to pick what you think is the most important season of development for your relationship with God, what stage would that be, and why?
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A boy sailed his toy boat out on a pond in the park. He imagined the waters rolling up the side of his fearless ship, and the stories of danger and rescue played graphically in his mind. He became so engaged in his play that his boat floated well out of his reach, gradually making a journey away from shore to the middle of the pond. A man sitting on a park bench noted the little boy's predicament and volunteered, “Would you like some help?” The young boy, nodding, replied, “Yes, thanks.”

To the boy's surprise, the man walked to the other side of the pond and began throwing rocks at the boat. The rocks fell just short of smashing the boat and sending his toy to a watery grave. The boy yelled, “Hey mister, stop throwing rocks at my boat!” He ran to the other side of the pond while the man continued throwing rocks at his boat. When he got to the other side he began to implore the man to stop when he noticed that his boat was almost back to the other side of the shore. The man was not throwing rocks at his boat but on one side of his boat, causing the ripples to slowly but surely move the boat back in the right direction.

Often discipline and accountability can upset our lives and rock us like a boat on the water. The experience is rarely comfortable, but it is necessary to move us in the right direction. Perhaps this is relevant to more than the obvious connection to parenting. To which other areas of life can this story apply? Our relationship with friends? Teachers? God?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Eli, as Israel's leader, chose to avoid disturbing the peace with his children. Instead of causing waves of discipline and correction to move his boys back to the right way of living, he left them to float along according to their own whims. Eli's hands-off approach proved disastrous, but it marks a lesson for young and older about the value of discipline. Read the following story and discover insights into God's way of dealing with people and how parents should relate to their children.

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 this story, what key facts or insights did you notice that are important to this story? (Underline them.)
- What part of this story challenges your view of God? Your view of spiritual leaders?
- Who are the main characters mentioned in this passage and what are some of the weaknesses this story exposes? (Circle them.)
- What other biblical stories does this passage remind you of? Why?
- Read 1 Samuel 2:13-17. They give more insight into the sons of Eli.
- Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What basic truth does it convey about God? What does it say about people?
- What do you think it means when the Bible says about Eli’s sons, “they have no regard for the Lord”? What would this story look like today?
- What lesson emerges from this story that is particularly relevant to young people today?
- To what degree do you think Eli is responsible for his sons’ behavior? At what point do individuals need to own their own choices?
- What are the most effective ways you have been corrected?

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


Sharing Context and Background

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

It is important to remember when you read the stories in 1 Samuel that Israel is moving from a theocracy (being directed by God through prophets and judges) to a kingdom (guided primarily by a king). Even with ample stories of both God's gracious provision and His unflinching judgment, people such as Hophni and Phinehas still wander away from God but stay close enough to wreak havoc on God's people.

In 1 Samuel 2:12 the word the Bible uses to describe the two boys is *belial*, which means “worthless,” “good for nothing,” or “wicked.” In the New Testament the word morphs some and gets used as a proper name for Satan. The sons of Eli grew to be cor-
rupt, and so the Scriptures claim that they did not know the Lord. The Hebrew word for “know” is yada, and it conveys knowing intimately someone or something as opposed to simply being aware. This word means “to perceive,” “to understand,” “to have a personal experience with another person.” This might be a good opportunity to discuss the difference between the tendency for people to know about God rather than knowing Him intimately.

The rest of the story of Hophni and Phinehas is tragic but proves to amplify the way God works with His people. In verse 27 a prophet came to Eli and reminded the aged priest (possibly in his mid-90s) about the sacred work of the priesthood. He prophesied: “And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day” (1 Samuel 2:34, NIV). What a sad lesson for Eli and all of Israel to learn. But why is Samuel’s story mixed into the narrative of Hophni and Phinehas? In verse 25 Eli tries to rebuke the wayward young men, but the Bible says: “His sons, however, did not listen to their father’s rebuke.” Hophni and Phinehas were given a chance to repent and turn around, but they closed their ears to God’s call, whereas Samuel was a servant who heard God’s voice clearly and responded.

Perhaps this is an opportunity to ask the students, “Are you listening for God’s voice, or do you resist and block it out?” This is a question more for reflection than for answering; however, it is still one that needs to be asked.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students individually, but anonymously, to make a list of three qualities this story encourages

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.
them to hold in high regard. After everyone has had a chance to make their list, post the lists on a wall or a table where everyone can read them and ask, “Did you notice a trend or pattern of qualities repeated? Which ones? Why do you think this is so? Which qualities were unique but caused you to think differently about the story?”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Eli was getting old when his boys, Hophni and Phinehas, were getting set in their evil ways. But Eli missed opportunities to discipline his children, and they simply lived their lives by their own passions and desires. I suppose no parent enjoys correcting their kids; however, faithful parents try to instruct their children in the best ways to live. Hophni and Phinehas were given the chance to stop their self-absorbed behavior themselves, but they did not listen to God’s voice.

God has spoken in His Word, through His Son Jesus, and through the lives of faithful believers over the centuries. But even with many voices calling, it is still possible to close our ears to God’s call. If you are curious about that voice or only a little bit interested, I challenge you to, like Samuel, respond, saying, “I hear You.” God does not impose Himself on us but pleads and woos us toward Him. Maybe, as in the illustration used earlier in this lesson, God is throwing rocks to cause ripples that draw you closer to Him. I hope you will not resist His promptings.

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 56.

*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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
There is no greater curse upon households than to allow the youth to have their own way. When parents regard every wish of their children and indulge them in what they know is not for their good, the children soon lose all respect for their parents, all regard for the authority of God or man, and are led captive at the will of Satan (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 579).

Eli’s bad, bad boys

“Eli’s sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord.”

(1 Samuel 2:12, NIV)

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”

(Proverbs 22:6, NIV)
Rank the following authority-figure roles in order of importance for the different stages in life:

Formative years (birth to age 8)

____ Teacher ____ Caregiver
____ Role model ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian

Primary school years (ages 9 to 15)

____ Teacher ____ Caregiver
____ Role model ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian

Youth through young adult (ages 16 to 25)

____ Teacher ____ Caregiver
____ Role model ____ Friend
____ Disciplinarian

Why did you rank the above roles differently at different stages?

What do you think is the most critical stage for character building?

What makes a parent successful?

Studies report that several parenting qualities contribute to raising children effectively:
- demonstrating love
- exhibiting patience
- enforcing discipline
- offering understanding. (Adapted from the Barna Research Group Web site)

... ‘Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: “I promised that your house and your father’s house would minister before me forever.” But now the Lord declares: “Far be it from me! Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man. Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life.

... ‘And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always. Then everyone left in your family line will come and bow down before him for a piece of silver and a crust of bread and plead, ‘Appoint me to some priestly office so I can have food to eat.’”

(1 Samuel 2:12, 22-25, 27, 30-36, NIV)
“Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11, NRSV).

“For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Genesis 18:19, NIV).

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6, NIV).

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV).

“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death” (Proverbs 19:18, NIV).

“Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21, NIV).

“Children can stand vast amounts of sternness. It is injustice, inequity, and inconsistency that kill them.” — Robert Capon, current U.S. Episcopal priest and New Testament scholar.

“There is only one way to bring up a child in the way he should go, and that is to travel that way yourself.” — Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th president of the U.S. (1861-1865).
Sabbath

The ranking activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week's lesson challenges you to think about how parents impact children throughout the different stages of growth. After you complete the activity, reflect on the well-known passage in Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) which states: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” What are some examples of ideal training?

Sunday

Read the passage in Into the Story and answer the questions listed in the Out of the Story of this week's lesson. What do you think should be highlighted: Eli's breakdown in parenting or his sons' (Hophni and Phinehas) hypocrisy and the impact it had on Israel? What other story in Scripture does this story bring to mind? What do you think is the message God has for you in this story?

Monday

First Samuel 2:12 is one of this week's Key Texts, introducing a brief summary of the whole story: "Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord." It is clear from Patriarchs and Prophets that the problem with Eli's sons was a gradual and continual rebellion that went unchecked and eventually spun out of control. Hophni and Phinehas served as religious leaders but were openly belligerent and careless about their calling. Perhaps you have friends or relatives who have steadily built a wall between their heart and God's Spirit. Pray for an awakening in their heart to see the destructive patterns in their life and respond to God's urging to experience a genuine walk with Christ.

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight quote for this week and reflect on the truth contained in such a pointed warning to parents. Think of a moment when your parent(s) held you accountable or refused something you wanted that upon later reflection you realized was a probably a good thing for them to do. Do you know someone—not your parent—who models a fair and thoughtful approach to disciplining their children? What specific behaviors do you want to adopt when you have children?

Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines listed in this week's lesson and choose the verse that seems to speak to you most today. Why did you choose that verse? Which verse seems to capture the message of this week's story of Eli and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas? Maybe this week you will encounter someone who, like Hophni and Phinehas, has no regard for the Lord. What will be your response to such a person? You might encounter a parent who feels regret about their parenting choices. How could you be a source of encouragement to them?

Thursday

Make a list of five qualities you want to have as a parent.

Of the five qualities you have listed above, which do you think will be the most difficult challenge and why?

Friday

Reflect on the impact that spiritual leaders had on Israel's morale and effectiveness as God's chosen people. Who are some spiritual leaders in your life that have made a positive difference in your relationship with God? What specific stories or events have shaped your perception of them as godly leaders?

Invite someone you respect to help you develop this quality in your character.

this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 56.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After a surprising defeat by the Philistines, Israel ordered the ark of the covenant to come into battle with them to secure a victory. Israel was living in rebellion against God, but thought if they had the ark, then God would have to do whatever they wanted. God decided to teach Israel a lesson they would not soon forget. The ark of the covenant was captured by the Philistines who also thought they had captured God. God decided to show both Israel and the Philistines that He was God, He was holy, and He was not to be trifled with.

Israel for so long had been doing what was right in their own eyes that they forgot God’s eyes were the only ones that mattered. Because of God’s love for Israel, God punished them so they could be in right relationship with Him. After a series of defeats and plagues, Israel finally learned this lesson and repented of their sin. They made a new commitment to honor and serve God alone.

Several lessons emerge from this story:

• There are consequences to our actions, even though they are not always immediate. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7, NIV).
• God is holy and is to be treated as such. We should worship Him as He tells us to.
• In the midst of judgment, there is always mercy. This is shown when God forgave Israel and then fought for Israel.
• God is a jealous God who requires all of our worship and attention. This is best achieved through a personal and intimate relationship with God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand there are consequences for our actions even though they may not be immediate. (Know)
• Sense the need for repentance and total commitment to God. (Feel)
• Have an opportunity to give up things that can get in the way of their relationship with God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Repentance
• God’s holiness
• Personal relationship with Christ
• Consequences of disobedience to God

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.

As you get the students’ responses, ask the fol-
This was about to come to an end. God was about to show Israel in a way they would never forget that He is holy and He alone is to be worshipped.

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 major players in this story?
- Underline the key facts of this story.
- What might have been a reason the ark of the covenant was captured?
- After the ark of the covenant was captured, it was placed in the temple of Dagon, the Philistine god. Each morning Dagon would be on the ground lying prostrate before the ark. What do you think was the significance of this?
- What does this story teach about God?
- What do you think made the people turn back to God?
- What did Samuel tell the Israelites to do to return to God?
- What reasons can you give for Samuel setting up the stone memorial, Ebenezer?
- What gods do you have in your life that you need to put away?
- What do you think is the most important message of this story?
- How will the message of this story change the way you live for God this week?
- Ebenezer means “stone of help.” What would you like God to help you with?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:
Psalm 78:52-66; Exodus 20:3-6; Galatians 6:7, 8; 1 Peter 4:17; Joel 2:12, 13; Deuteronomy 6:4, 5.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

Burmese pythons are becoming popular pets. Relatively inexpensive, you can buy a hatchling for as little as $20. People, however, do not realize how big they grow. They can grow up to 20 feet. Owners often decide they cannot handle the large snake, so they let them go free in the wild. This is a lot like sin. It starts out small and looks very innocent and manageable; however, we seldom know how big sin can get if left unchecked. Many times sin grows out of control and becomes deadly. We have to let it go!

Looking at pythons from a different angle can teach us another lesson about sin. The python, though treated like a pet, is really a predator. It was reported that a 13-foot Burmese python swallowed a 6-foot alligator in the Florida Everglades. This was a risky venture for a python. Apparently, this was not the first time a python had eaten an alligator. There were at least four other reported cases, so maybe this snake thought he could get away with it. However, the consequences of that action were deadly. The alligator was still alive and split the snake open, literally from the inside out.

That is what sin does to us. It, too, can destroy us from the inside out. We may think we have found something great. We may even get away with it for a little while. Though it may look like there are no consequences to our actions, there are. If we are not careful, and do not repent, sin can destroy us from the inside out.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

Israel had been doing things their own way for a very long time. They thought they were above the law and could do whatever they wanted to do. For a while, they did not see any consequences to their actions. This was about to come to an end. God was about to show Israel in a way they would never forget that He is holy and He alone is to be worshipped.

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

The story of the ark’s capture is one of the darkest times in Israel’s history. God had been warning of pending judgment for a long time, but it had not come. Israel thought they could do whatever they wanted and get away with it. Even the priests thought this. Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were very wicked. They had not been reprimanded by their father or punished by God, so they had become bold in sin, and the people followed. This is why God
refused to fight for Israel. They had to learn that God will not share His glory with idols.

The Philistines also learned this lesson after capturing the ark. They put the ark in the temple of their god, Dagon. Dagon was the chief god of the Philistines. The ark was a trophy for them. Placing the ark in Dagon’s temple was a symbol of submission to Dagon.

The first morning, however, Dagon was found bowing in submission to the ark. The temple workers promptly propped him back up, but the next morning Dagon was found bowing in submission again. This time his hands and head were cut off. Hands in Hebrew represented power, and the head represented reason. Dagon lay in submission to God, without power or intelligence. God then showed His power by laying a heavy hand on the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:6). He caused a plague of tumors to come on them.

When they finally sent the ark back to Israel, the men of Beth Shemesh did not respect God enough to follow His orders about how to handle the ark. Not even the Philistines dared to remove the covering of the ark, but these men looked into the ark and God struck them dead.

They got the message. They ordered someone to be consecrated to keep the ark. Soon Israel’s heart groaned for God. They mourned after God. They were sorry for all they had done, and Samuel encouraged them to repent of their sin. He reminded them they must put God first and put the other gods away. God would share Israel no longer.

Through fasting and prayer, God heard them, healed them, and helped them. When the Philistines heard about this big prayer gathering, they came out to fight Israel again. There will always be obstacles to your faith when you try to get on the right path for God. Samuel continued to pray for the people, and God delivered them from the Philistines.

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SPECIAL NOTE TO TEACHERS: The New International Version says that 70 men were slain, whereas the King James and New King James versions say 50,070. This may confuse students and spark up a discussion about mistakes and contradictions in the Bible. This is a hard question for even Bible translators and scholars.

The original manuscripts written in Hebrew literally say, “seventy men, fifty thousand men.” Some manuscripts do not have 50,000 in them at all. When presented with this information, different translators approached it differently. The SDA Bible Commentary shares some possibilities: “Some have suggested, ‘He smote seventy men; fifty out of a thousand,’ or ‘He slew seventy men out of fifty thousand men.’ . . . Most commentators agree that only 70 men of Beth-shemesh were slain.”

Ellen White, on translation errors, says, “Some look to us gravely and say, ‘Don’t you..."
think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators? This is all probable. ... God committed the preparation of His divinely inspired Word to finite man. This Word, arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world, bequeathed [given] to them that, by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul would lose its way to heaven.” 2 Translation difficulties may prove discouraging for the students, but assure them God has clearly provided in His Word all they need to make it to heaven.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words. Give each student some clay. Instruct them to make something that young people often put before God. After giving them time to make the sculptures, allow time for the students to share what they have made. Remind students of the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3, NIV). Collect all the sculptures and heap them together. Make a cross from the clay. While you are making the cross, remind students that God should always have first place in our lives.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
This story is a story of revival and repentance. God taught Israel the lesson that He was holy and He alone should be worshipped. He tried telling them. He tried showing them. He tried wooing them. He tried warning them. But Israel would not listen. God allowed Himself to be captured and taken into the Philistine camp. His absence definitely made Israel’s heart grow fonder. Israel soon understood they could not have God on their terms. It would either be God’s way or the hard way. God, through some unfortunate circumstances, was disciplining them, as a father or mother disciplines the child they love.

God will do the same with us. If we do not learn from Israel’s mistakes, we will have to learn from our own. God will do all that He can to show His love to us and to help us come into a meaningful and real relationship with Him. When we make mistakes or missteps, when we sin against God, we must repent. We must turn around and walk God’s way and He promises to hear, heal, and help.

1 The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 478.
2 Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 16.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Why Ask Why?
When students hear the question “Why?” outside of the classroom, they often have to explain why they did something wrong. For example, “Why did you leave the milk out?” or “Why didn’t you clean your room?” Some students become defensive as soon as they hear “Why” at the beginning of a sentence. Try disarming students by using more creative ways of asking why. Consider asking:

What is the significance of . . . ?
What reasons can you give for . . . ?
Will you tell me more about . . . ?
There is need today of such a revival of true heart religion as was experienced by ancient Israel. Repentance is the first step that must be taken by all who would return to God. No one can do this work for another. We must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols. When we have done all that we can do, the Lord will manifest to us His salvation” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 590).

And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, ‘If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.”

(1 Samuel 7:3, NIV)
Have you ever done something or made a decision without thinking about the consequences? When we do things that are wrong and our actions do not have immediate consequences, sometimes we think we can get away with them.

Below is a list of actions; label them by their consequences, whether they have immediate consequences (IC), delayed consequences (DC), or have no consequences (NC).

- Cheating on a test
- Making fun of the new kid
- Skipping class
- Forgetting to say your grace
- Playing with your cell phone during church
- Eating five candy bars
- Attending a Friday night basketball game
- Telling your friends a little white lie
- Not studying your Sabbath School lesson

The ark of the covenant was a sacred box that God told Moses to build. It was made of wood and covered in gold. On the top of the box sat two gold-covered angels with their wings raised, facing each other. God’s glory and presence dwelled between the angels (1 Samuel 4:4). God was very particular about the ark of the covenant. It was housed in the Most Holy Place. No one was to look at it, except the high priest, once a year. When it traveled, it had to be wrapped in a veil, badgers’ skin, and a blue cloth to keep it hidden from human eyes.

“Do you know?”

The ark of the covenant was a sacred box that God told Moses to build. It was made of wood and covered in gold. On the top of the box sat two gold-covered angels with their wings raised, facing each other. God’s glory and presence dwelled between the angels (1 Samuel 4:4). God was very particular about the ark of the covenant. It was housed in the Most Holy Place. No one was to look at it, except the high priest, once a year. When it traveled, it had to be wrapped in a veil, badgers’ skin, and a blue cloth to keep it hidden from human eyes.

“The Lord’s hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with tumors. When the men of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, ‘The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon our god.’”

“They placed the ark of the Lord on the cart and along with it the chest containing the gold rats and the models of the tumors. Then the cows went straight up toward Beth Shemesh, keeping on the road and lowing all the way; they did not turn to the right or to the left. The rulers of the Philistines followed them as far as the border of Beth Shemesh.

“But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. The people mourned because of the heavy blow the Lord had dealt them.”

“It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriat Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord. And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, ‘If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.’”

“Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, ‘Thus far has the Lord helped us.’ So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again.”

(1 Samuel 4:1, 10, 11; 5:2, 4, 6, 7; 6:11, 12, 19; 7:2, 3, 12, 13, NIV)
“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV).

“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Exodus 20:3, 4, NIV).

“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols” (Isaiah 42:8, NIV).

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool” (Isaiah 1:18, NIV).

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:7, NIV).

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).

“God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.”—Augustine, 4th-5th-century theologian, writer.

“Conscience is God’s built-in warning system. Be very happy when it hurts you. Be very worried when it doesn’t.”—Anonymous.
Sabbath
The *What Do You Think?* section of the lesson challenged you to look at some actions and think about the consequences. This week’s lesson shows the consequences of not following God. Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked priests. They performed a lot of evil acts, yet nothing happened to them for a long time. They began to think they were above the law. When you get away with unacceptable or ungodly behavior, are you more likely to do it again or to repent? Why do you think that is? The Bible says: “And that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done” (Psalm 62:12, NIV). What does this verse say to you?

**Sunday**
Read the *Into the Story* section, which tells of the ark of the covenant being captured, and answer the study questions provided in the *Out of the Story* section. Both the Philistines and Israel upset God and both experienced judgment from Him. What reasons can you give for God’s being upset with the Israelites?

This story includes a lot of judgment and punishment. But with judgment, God always shows mercy. What elements of this story show the mercy of God?

**Monday**
Read the *Key Text* and memorize it this coming week. Israel did what was right in their own eyes instead of what was right in God’s eyes. Israel learned their lesson and were now sorry for their actions. Samuel told the children of Israel what God wanted from them. God wanted them to turn from idols and wanted their complete attention and worship, just like He wants yours. Rewrite the key text to include specific things God wants you to turn from, as you commit your ways to Him.

**Tuesday**
The quote in the *Flashlight* section lays out the steps Israel took to get back to God. First Samuel 7:2 says that “all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord” (NIV). They experienced sorrow for what they did and wanted to make it right. They experienced repentance, which means they turned from their old ways and walked in a new direction. God calls for us to repent of wrong and experience His salvation. People often try to ignore the guilt they feel after doing wrong. What good can guilt and sorrow over wrong play in our lives?

**Wednesday**
Read the Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section. Which verse stood out to you the most? Why? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this passage?

One of the *Punch Lines* is 2 Corinthians 7:10. In The Message, it reads like this: “Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets.” Think about a time when you felt godly sorrow. What did you learn from that experience?

**Thursday**
We all know that bad behaviors and actions can keep us from God. But good activities can also keep us from God. School, jobs, spending time with friends, and just good old fun all have their place, but sometimes we allow these activities to take priority over God. God does not want to come before just evil activities in our lives; He wants to come before everything in our lives. What are some activities that are not necessarily bad but have taken priority over God in your life? What can you do to make sure you have a balance between the good and God?

**Friday**
When we turn from doing things our way and begin doing them God’s way, God will bless us. He blessed Israel with deliverance from the Philistines. When Israel repented, they were heard by God and were helped by God. Samuel set up a stone memorial so that Israel would remember how God helped them. He called it Ebenezer, which means “a stone of help.” Can you find a symbol that will help you remember the commitment you made to God this week? Write a prayer dedicating your life to God. Place your symbol in a prominent place so you will remember your commitment.

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**Out of the Story** and answer the study questions provided in the *Into the Story* section, which tells of the ark of the covenant being captured, and out of the week. Israel did what was right in their own eyes instead of what was right in God’s eyes. Israel learned their lesson and were now sorry for their actions. Samuel told the children of Israel what God wanted from them. God wanted them to turn from idols and wanted their complete attention and worship, just like He wants yours. Rewrite the key text to include specific things God wants you to turn from, as you commit your ways to Him.

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**Key Text**
Monday
Read the *Key Text* and memorize it this coming week. Israel did what was right in their own eyes instead of what was right in God’s eyes. Israel learned their lesson and were now sorry for their actions. Samuel told the children of Israel what God wanted from them. God wanted them to turn from idols and wanted their complete attention and worship, just like He wants yours. Rewrite the key text to include specific things God wants you to turn from, as you commit your ways to Him.

**Flashlight**
The quote in the *Flashlight* section lays out the steps Israel took to get back to God. First Samuel 7:2 says that “all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord” (NIV). They experienced sorrow for what they did and wanted to make it right. They experienced repentance, which means they turned from their old ways and walked in a new direction. God calls for us to repent of wrong and experience His salvation. People often try to ignore the guilt they feel after doing wrong. What good can guilt and sorrow over wrong play in our lives?

**Punch Lines**
Read the Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section. Which verse stood out to you the most? Why? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this passage?

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**this week’s reading**
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 57.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Samuel was getting old, and his sons were in no way ready to take over leadership positions in Israel. Israel had been a theocracy, but the people were clamoring for the kind of government they saw in the nations around them. Although God knew what the tragic consequences would be, He gave them what they asked for. Therefore, He chose Saul to be their king. While the people of Israel were happy, Saul was not known for making the best decisions. As we read the story we are reminded of what it takes to be a strong and God-centered leader.

We are hoping to use this lesson to bring about a better understanding of God-led leadership and to have the students realize that they are all called for leadership positions in the kingdom of heaven. By assessing their characters they will take a hard look into what would make them good leaders. As well, they will learn what they can do in order to become better leaders in their realm of influence.

An interesting side note is the fact that while God did not approve of the idea of a king for Israel, He allowed and finally chose the king Himself. This makes for an interesting discussion point during the lesson.

II. TARGET
The students will:

- Know the story of Saul’s rise to power and what happened then. (Know)
- Get a feeling for what makes a good leader and what makes a bad leader. (Feel)
- Look for leadership opportunities within their scope of influence. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Leadership
- Talents/gifts
- Feelings (coping with)

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.

Discuss what would be the natural outcome of following “man’s plan” as they described it in the What Do You Think? activity. Discuss what might be the consequences of following “God’s plan” as they described it. Then discuss what type of leadership abilities would emerge in middle life for a person who followed either of the plans you have discussed.

What might this activity say about the qualities to look for when voting for a leader?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
“He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk.”—Unknown
As a senior in college I was asked to be a substitute P.E. teacher in the local elementary school. My first day was exciting! I couldn’t wait to be called coach by the little kids I would be teaching. I went to my first class, which happened to be a third-grade class of very excited kids. As I left the classroom with them I made the mistake of going first and assuming that they would stay behind me as we walked to the playing field. I soon learned the very valuable lesson of the quote at the beginning of this story.

Within a few minutes I had third graders bouncing off the walls in the hallways. I had teachers coming out to find out what was happening, and what was so loud. I shouted to get their attention, and then I finally had to use the whistle to get them to listen to me.

I learned something that day—sometimes you have to lead from behind. What that means is this—sometimes it is important to help people get to where they are going by gently encouraging them to move ahead rather than to run before them and assume they are following. This is sometimes a much harder way to lead, but it can be much more rewarding in the end for everyone involved.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

Not everyone is born a leader; some of us have to learn how to be effective leaders. Saul was not a very quick learner. From his reluctance to lead, to his misunderstanding of his power and even to his abuse and arrogance of power, Saul did not always do what was best for the people with whose care he had been entrusted.

How do we choose to care for those we are responsible for and to? Do we become prideful and arrogant in this process or do we continue to lead from gentle encouragement with care and love for those we are supposed to be leading? Perhaps an even bigger question is: Do we know where we are going? These are good questions to ponder as we prepare to lead young people to the foot of the cross.

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

- Underline the specific commands God gives the children of Israel in this story.
- What promises does God make in this story?
- Circle the texts that indicate God does not approve of this plan to have a king.
- Highlight the moments when it seems Saul is reluctant to become the king of Israel.
- Put a square around those words that seem to evoke emotion as you read the story. What sort of emotions do they evoke in you? Why do you think that is?

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

1 Thessalonians 2:6b-9; Proverbs 29:18; Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 4:12, 13.

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

It is important to remember the Israelites’ state of mind at the time of this story. Besides being jealous of the cultures around them, they were also scared for their future because they knew that Samuel’s sons were not to be trusted. Rather than simply trusting God, they were eager to take matters into their own hands so that they might have a king to judge them. Perhaps it was not even so much that they did not trust God, but they were fearful of what might happen to them.

It is interesting that they would want a king in the fashion of those countries around them. You see, the yoke of servitude to an ancient king at that time was exceedingly heavy. It was not like some of the freedoms that we observe today. It was at times unjust and very authoritarian. But still the children of Israel seemed to want something tangible so they could feel as if they were part of the society around them. Perhaps it was jealousy and envy, perhaps simply foolish pride that prompted them to ask God for a king.

It is interesting that even though God knew it was not the best for them, He was willing to allow the children of Israel a chance to decide their own fate. This speaks to the loving kindness of God, as well as to His wisdom. God could have shown His authority by not allowing a king to be put in place. But God often allows us to learn the lessons that arise from the consequences of following a path we think is better than His.

Another important note is that Saul was what one
would look for in a king at first glance. It is noted that he was very tall, some even proposing that he was close to seven feet in stature! He was stately and good looking, always a plus in a leader, and seemed to be a great choice for a king. Even though he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the smallest tribe in Israel, he was still the kind of person people would follow.

Samuel was called a seer at that time, meaning one who received visions from God. This is not to be confused with a more modern interpretation of the word, which means more of a fortune-teller. Samuel was considered the conduit through whom God governed His people.

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.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

The Socratic Method

Most of us have heard of Socrates, the great Greek philosopher. However, did you know there is a particular style of guided questioning that is given his name? This method is used in many law schools as a way of helping students think through a topic logically and arrive at a knowledgeable conclusion without having been “told.”

The basic method is to ask logical, incremental, step-by-step questions pertaining to the story or topic. The teacher does not “tell” or lecture. The teacher needs to think through the logical progression of thought they would like to follow beforehand. However, student answers may make it necessary to adapt the preplanned questions in order to get to the final point the teacher hopes to reach. This method keeps students involved and feeling as if they are discovering truth for themselves.

For most Sabbath School teachers this method may require too much preparation (try searching “Socratic method” on the Internet); however, the basic concept of leading students to learning through sequential questioning can be adapted and bring significant rewards to both students and teachers.

In this week’s story there are many lessons about leadership. Here are some tips as you lead the class to insight through careful questioning:

1. Keep the discussion focused.
2. Keep the discussion intellectually responsible.
3. Stimulate the discussion with probing questions.
4. Periodically summarize what has and what has not been dealt with and/or resolved.
5. Draw as many students as possible into the discussion.
III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words. Have the students write down the name of one or two leaders they would be willing to follow. Then have them write the characteristics that attract them to these leaders. Follow with these questions:
1. Who were the leaders you chose?
2. Why did you choose them? What characteristics do they have that attract you?
3. Do you find yourself with any of these characteristics?
4. How many of these characteristics did Jesus exhibit?
5. What, in your estimation, makes a good leader?
6. Was Saul this type of leader?
Close with a prayer that your students might become great leaders.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
This week was all about leadership. We can look at the leadership of God through Samuel and the leadership of Saul and see whose was better for the children of Israel. We want the students to ask the question “Who am I going to follow?” and, of course, we are hoping their answer will be “God.”

Perhaps young people haven’t had a chance to think critically about what makes a good leader. We all follow intuitively those we trust or see as responsible; but this week, let’s be more intentional about how we approach those we follow and seek to bring some real thoughtful discretion into the process.

Working with young people is always a bit scary in that they are more than willing to be totally honest about themselves and those around them. This is good for the discussion, but will also challenge us as leaders to be the kind of leaders we are speaking about.

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 59 and 60.
* 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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
When the Israelites first settled in Canaan they acknowledged the principles of theocracy, and the nation prospered under the rule of Joshua. . . . Gradually they lost their reverence for God and ceased to prize the honor of being His chosen people. Attracted by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity. Jealousy and envy sprang up between the tribes. . . . As they departed from obedience to God's law, they desired to be freed from the rule of their divine Sovereign; and thus the demand for a monarchy became widespread throughout Israel” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 603).

“But the people refused to listen to Samuel. ‘No!’ they said. ‘We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.’”

(1 Samuel 8:19, 20, NIV)

“The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.”

(1 Samuel 2:7, NIV)
What do you think?

Would you rather depend on how God leads you or on how human culture leads you? Look at these scenarios and write down what God has planned as opposed to what man has planned:

- Revenge on someone who has wronged you:
  
  **God’s plan** _________________________________

  **Man’s plan** ______________________________

- Becoming intimate with a boyfriend/girlfriend:

  **God’s plan** __________________________

  **Man’s plan** ________________________

- Stealing something you want but cannot afford:

  **God’s plan** ______________________

  **Man’s plan** _____________________

The word “theocracy” comes from the Greek theokratia, which is by definition a government directly guided by God. This was the governmental structure God had set up and which was actually working well in Israel. However, the people wanted to be like their neighboring countries and have a king they could call their own. Sounds as if they might have given in to some peer pressure, doesn’t it?

“Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, saying, ‘Has not the Lord anointed you leader over his inheritance? When you leave me today . . . three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them.

“After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.

“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.’ . . .

“As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.”

“Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the Lord at Mizpah and said to them, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.” But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said, “No, set a king over us.” So now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and clans.’

“When Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri’s clan was chosen. Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. So they inquired further of the Lord, ‘Has the man come here yet?’ And the Lord said, ‘Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage.’

“They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others.

“Samuel said to all the people, ‘Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.’ Then the people shouted, ‘Long live the king!’”

(1 Samuel 10:1-9, 17-24, NIV)
“If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully” (Romans 12:8, NIV).

“When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, ‘The Lord is with you, mighty warrior’” (Judges 6:12, NIV).

“He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens” (Exodus 18:25, NIV).

“The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly” (1 Chronicles 29:9, NIV).

“Leaders must live by higher standards than their followers.”—Anonymous.

“A godly leader finds strength by realizing his weakness, finds authority by being under authority, finds direction by laying down his plans, finds vision by seeing the needs of others, finds credibility by being an example, finds loyalty by expressing compassion, finds honor by being faithful, finds greatness by being a servant.”—Roy Lessin, Christian pastor and author.

OUT OF THE STORY

What did you think of the introduction speech that Samuel gave to the people before introducing Saul? (verses 17-19) Would you like to be introduced that way?

What prompted the people of Israel to want a human king?

How do you think choosing to be ruled by a human king as opposed to by God was a bad idea for the Israelites?

What is the background of Samuel’s sons (1 Samuel 8)? How do you think these activities might have played into the people’s desire for a king?

What themes do you see displayed in this reading?

Why was Samuel so specific in the instructions that he gave to Saul?

In what ways do you think Saul had what it took to lead a group of people? In what ways didn’t he?
Take time to do the exercise in the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. Do you think it would be harder to do what people would have you do or what God would have you do? It seems that we often do things to impress other people, and those things are rarely what God asks us to do. Even the children of Israel tried to impress their neighbors by obtaining a human king, when they already had the Creator of the universe as their leader. Seems crazy, doesn’t it?

What can you do to counteract these influences in your life?

Read Into the Story about how Saul became the king of Israel. Do the questions in Out of the Story. What do you think was the attitude of God, as reflected through His prophet Samuel? Do you think it was happy, sad, or mad? Spend some time writing the emotions you would feel if you were leading a group of people who just couldn’t seem to listen to you and take you seriously.

The Scripture story says that God’s Spirit changed Saul into a different person. How has God’s Spirit changed you? In what ways do you still need His Spirit to work in your life?

Read the Key Text and see how the people reacted to having a king. Why do you think they were excited to have a human king when they had the King of the universe as their leader? Do you think they understood what God had been doing through Samuel for all this time? Do you think they were happy that God listened to their desire for a king? Explain.

The Flashlight section gives us some insights from inspired commentary on the texts we have been studying. Ellen White uses a few words that are interesting; “jealousy” and “envy” are the first two that jump off the page. Do these words have any meaning in your life? Have you ever asked for things out of jealousy and/or envy? Have they ever been the motivating factor in purchasing something, saying something, or looking or acting a certain way? It is a good time to ponder what motivates us to do the things we do. Usually, a negative outcome occurs when we do something out of jealousy and envy.

We often are critical of those in charge, but we rarely think about what we would do given a certain situation. List the qualities you have that would make you a good king or queen. If you are really brave, give your list to someone else to verify that you are who you think you are.

You have seen what the people asked God to do—give them a king! You have seen the kind of king Saul turned out to be—a weak one! You may have even looked inside yourself to see what kind of leader you might be. Now take a minute to think about what type of people you would like to lead, and how you might be able to do that. The world and the church are in need of thoughtful leaders, whether it be in business, politics, sports, music, entertainment, academics, or even working at the neighborhood fast-food restaurant. What leadership role do you think God might have for you?

If you have the book or a computer available, read chapter 60 of Patriarchs and Prophets. What will you see are the many mistakes and character flaws that were exhibited by Saul during his reign. In his pride he ordered his son Jonathan be put to death. You should have already thought about those characteristics you have that would make you a great leader; now take some time to think about those aspects of your character that are not so great. What can you do to eliminate those character traits so that you might be more effectively used by God and not fall into the traps that Saul found himself trying to muddle through?

Read chapter 60 of Patriarchs and Prophets. What will you see are the many mistakes and character flaws that were exhibited by Saul during his reign. In his pride he ordered his son Jonathan be put to death. You should have already thought about those characteristics you have that would make you a great leader; now take some time to think about those aspects of your character that are not so great. What can you do to eliminate those character traits so that you might be more effectively used by God and not fall into the traps that Saul found himself trying to muddle through?

so long, Saul

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Saul’s story is a tale of power gone sour. He began with so much promise. Scripture describes him as “an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others” (1 Samuel 9:2, NIV). He was humble (see 1 Samuel 9:21) and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power (see 1 Samuel 10:6, 10).

But a cancer of the soul corrupted Saul, and he succumbed to a spirit of self-sufficiency. He disobeyed God but felt no remorse for his wrongdoing. Instead, he defended himself as if he needed to answer to no one—not even God. Thus Samuel delivered the sobering message: “You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel!” (1 Samuel 15:26, NIV). The Bible adds: “The Lord was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:35, NIV).

From that point on, Saul’s life continued on a downward spiral. He battled mental illness. He became pathologically jealous of David and tried to murder him. He got involved in the occult, seeking counsel from the witch of Endor. In the end, Saul killed himself in one crowning act of insanity.

Saul’s story has much to teach us about the perils of arrogance and selfishness. This story also offers a spiritual perspective on depression and mental health. Another topic that emerges from this story involves the perils of dabbling in the occult. Clearly, there are many gems to be mined from the experience of Saul.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Think about the effect of selfishness on one’s spiritual life. (Know)
- Sense the potentially fatal consequences of rebelling against God. (Feel)
- Be challenged to commit fully to God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Selfishness
- Depression
- Mental health

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Read some of the statements from the What Do You Think? section and instruct the students to stand on one side of the room if they agree with the statement or the other side of the room if they disagree. While they’re standing ask for volunteers to share why they answered as they did. Here are some more statements you can use:

- Wearing satanic graffiti is just as evil as playing with a Ouija board.
- Every sin is a manifestation of selfishness.
• Fortune-telling is harmless entertainment.
• Our society today is too quick to blame everything on “mental illness.”
• If Saul had remained humble before God he would not have gone insane.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

The Associated Press once carried the story of a toddler who found a baby rattlesnake and began playing with it, not realizing that his “toy” was a deadly serpent. The article pointed out that a single drop of venom from a baby rattlesnake is much more potent than the same amount of venom from a fully grown rattlesnake.

The mom discovered her child happily at play, holding the deadly reptile in his hand. Before she could attempt a rescue, however, the snake bit the boy’s arm. Her child was rushed to the hospital and fortunately, survived. But the story could have ended tragically, had the mother not found the child before the venom worked its lethal results.

In the same way, many Christians “play” with sin, thinking it won’t bite. As evangelist Billy Sunday once observed: “One reason that sin flourishes is that it is treated like a cream puff instead of a rattlesnake.”

On the night of October 3, 1998, a snake-handling evangelist named John Wayne Brown, Jr., wasn’t as fortunate as the toddler. He was bitten by one of his own timber rattlesnakes in the middle of his sermon. Though Pastor Brown continued to preach at Rock House Holiness Church, he soon collapsed onstage. The congregation gathered around him—praying and cooling him with an electric fan—but Brown died within minutes.

Brown, 34, was known throughout southeastern Appalachia as having handled snakes since he was 17. He was also known for having survived 22 previous bites. Pastor Brown left behind him five orphaned children—his wife, Melinda, had died from a snake bite during a revival service in 1995.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
The serpent from the Garden of Eden is alive and well today. First Peter 5:8 (NIV) tells us: “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Satan wants your soul. And he’s happy to weasel his way into your heart through any method you allow—impure movies, witchcraft, raunchy music, drugs—he’ll destroy you however he can. Play with the devil and your game will get deadly. The story of Saul illustrates the consequences of playing with the devil. What may have seemed like small compromises ultimately claimed his soul.

Are there any areas in your life in which you are allowing the evil one to gain access to your mind and soul? If so, consider carefully the lessons we can learn from the life of Saul.

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

The story of Saul is a case study in what happens when a devoted Christian puts selfish interests above obedience to God. Review the highlights of Saul’s story, then facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:

• What strategy did Satan use to take Saul down?
• What similar methods does he use today?
• In what area do you think teens are most vulnerable to Satan’s attacks?

After discussing these questions about the methods of Satan, lead the students in a Bible study on the evil work Satan is doing today.

This can be done by assigning the following texts for students to look up in search of some of the names the Bible uses for Satan: accuser (Revelation 12:10), tempter (Matthew 4:3), enemy (1 Peter 5:8), liar (John 8:44), and evil one (1 John 5:19). It’s important to emphasize that Christ came to destroy the work of Satan (1 John 3:8), that Christ has supremacy over the devil (Colossians 1:18), and that the power of Christ dwelling within through the Holy Spirit is greater than the devil (1 John 4:4).

Another area to explore with the students in this lesson highlights the symptoms of Saul’s mental illness.

Some mental health professionals suggest that there are five basic categories of psychological disorders: anxiety disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, dissociative disorders, and schizophrenia. Gain a working knowledge of these disorders (this shouldn’t take long on the Internet) and describe them to your students. Next, find examples from the life of Saul that illustrate some of these mental challenges.
Discuss how we are all spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental beings. In order to enjoy optimum life we must be balanced and healthy in all of these spheres.

Review the tragic ending of Saul’s life.

Discuss how it might have ended differently. Ask for students to share their opinion as to whether or not there was a key event in Saul’s life that spelled his doom (if so, what was it?); or was Saul’s demise the sum total of many small compromises?

Sharing Context and Background

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

Each chapter in the assigned reading offers rich biblical insights worth exploring. Here is a little background from each chapter you may wish to use to dig deeper:

1. **1 Samuel 15**—Why was God so insistent about destroying King Agag and all of the Amalekites? Was Saul’s failure to obey God in this regard all that significant? It’s helpful to understand that the Amalekites were guerilla terrorists. They survived by attacking other nations and pillaging their wealth and families. They were the first to attack the Israelites when God’s people entered the Promised Land. They continued to raid the Israelites on a regular basis. Thus God knew that as long as the Amalekites were around, the Israelites would never live without fear. Moreover, the idol worship and corrupt religious teachings that the Amalekites practiced threatened Israel’s relationship with God. The only safeguard against this warlike nation was to utterly destroy them.

2. **1 Samuel 28**—Lord Byron said of the narrative of the witch of Endor: “I have always thought this the finest and most finished witch scene that ever was written or conceived, and you will be of my opinion if you consider all the circumstances of the actors of the case, together with the gravity, simplicity, and density of the language. It beats all the ghost scenes I have ever read.” Without question it is a gripping story. Witchcraft was a practice that the Israelites picked up from the original inhabitants of Canaan. In the Old Testament, the practice of the “black arts” was strictly forbidden (see Exodus 22:18 and Leviticus 20:27) by penalty of death. The New Testament speaks of “seducers,” “seducing spirits,” “unclean spirits, working miracles,” all of which are associated with the works of Satan.

3. **1 Samuel 31**—It’s interesting to note that Saul faced his death the same way he lived his life—he took matters into his own hands. He acted apart from the counsel of God. Sometimes people plan to “fix” their relationship with God while on their deathbeds in order to sneak into heaven at the last minute, thus amending a lifetime of sinful indulgences. The reality is, when nearing death, we will most likely respond to God in the same way that we have been responding to Him.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book 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.
all along. Challenge the students by saying, “How do you want to face death? That’s how you ought to face life today.”

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words. Bring a radio and explain how it can provide entertainment, music, news, a weather report, and so on—just by tuning in to different frequencies. The broadcast you receive all depends on the station you’re tuned in to. If you’re not familiar with the options available, you have to scan the stations to find what you prefer. Some options are better than others.

Ask the class how the radio is like spiritual guidance. Explain that there are many spiritual counterfeits clamoring for our attention. The one we tune in to makes all the difference in spiritual life.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words: Many young people are following the example of Saul and receiving counterfeit spiritual guidance. Consequently, their soul is at peril. To conclude, read Deuteronomy 18:9-15 as a challenge to tune in to God’s voice. Invite them to experience the adventure of radical obedience to God. When they make this kind of nothing-held-back commitment to God, all of the issues that this lesson addresses (such as depression, selfishness, dealings with the occult, mental health, etc.) will be shaped by the strong hand of God. Only then can a person experience the more abundant life in Christ.

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Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Learning by Teaching

One effective way to enhance learning is by encouraging the learners to teach the material themselves. By explaining concepts and lessons to others, the teacher, by default, becomes the most engaged student. To put this teaching tip into practice, ask the students the week before to come the following week prepared to teach one element of the story. For example, one student may teach a brief history lesson on the Amalekites. Another student may be assigned to give a brief lecture on the geography of the battles mentioned in 1 Samuel 15; 28; and 31. Of course, all of the students will learn from the peer presentations, but the “teachers” will learn the most!
so long, Saul

flashlight

“When Saul chose to act independently of God, the Lord could no longer be his guide, and was forced to set him aside. Then He called to the throne ‘a man after His own heart’ (1 Samuel 13:14)—not one who was faultless in character, but who, instead of trusting to himself, would rely upon God, and be guided by His Spirit; who, when he sinned, would submit to reproof and correction” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 636).

“Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel: ‘I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.’”

(1 Samuel 15:10, 11, NIV)
what
do you think?

Agree or disagree? Discuss your answers with a friend.

___ Games with a satanic theme (Ouija boards, tarot cards, Dungeons and Dragons, etc.) are relatively harmless.
___ The root cause of depression is selfishness.
___ Demons and the occult are the creation of superstitions imaginings.
___ Demon possession happened only in Bible times but is not a problem today.
___ Mental health and spiritual health are closely related.
___ Satan cannot tempt us if we are fully committed to God.
___ One of the ways Satan gains access to our minds is through horoscopes.

INTO
THE
STORY

“Samuel said, ‘Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel. And he sent you on a mission, saying, “Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.” Why did you not obey the Lord?’ …

“But I did obey the Lord,” Saul said. “I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal.’

“But Samuel replied: ‘Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.’”

“The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at Gilboa. When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him by dreams or Urim or prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.’

“There is one in Endor,” they said.

“So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. ‘Consult a spirit for me,’ he said, ‘and bring up for me the one I name.’”

“Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. Saul said to his armor-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.’

“But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.”

(1 Samuel 15:17-22; 28:4-8; 31:1-6, NIV)

did you
know?

Doctors and social scientists have long believed that many teens begin drug use and sexual activity to deal with depression. However, a study published in the October 2005 edition of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine reverses such beliefs.

Health policy researcher Denise Dion-Hallfors explains: “Findings from the study show depression came after substance and sexual activity, not the other way around.”

The research came from a national survey of 13,491 adolescents. Approximately 25 percent, called “abstainers,” had never had sex, smoked, drunk alcohol, or taken drugs. Only 4 percent of these teens experienced depression. According to the study, girls among the 75 percent who had taken drugs and experimented with sex were two to three times more likely to experience depression than abstaining girls. Boys who engaged in binge drinking were 4.5 times more likely to experience depression than the abstainers.¹

²

³
“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (Mark 14:38, NIV).

“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6, 7, NIV).

“Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 12:28, NIV).

“Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:13, 14, NIV).

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1, NIV).

“If you are successful, it becomes possible for you to leave an inheritance for others. But if you desire to create a legacy, then you need to leave something in others. When you think unselfishly and invest in others, you gain the opportunity to create a legacy that will outlive you.”—John Maxwell, author and speaker, Thinking for a Change (Warner Books, 2002).
**Sabbath**

The *What Do You Think* section of the lesson connects Saul’s story with modern-day temptations posed by the occult. Read Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; and James 4:7, then answer this question: How can Christians stand against Satan?

Have I ever grieved God? If so, how?

Does God still “turn away from” people He has called to leadership? Why or why not?

What can I do to safeguard myself from God’s withdrawing His Spirit from me?

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**Sunday**

Read 1 Samuel 15; 28; and 31 to get a broader perspective on Saul’s story. In 1 Samuel 15:10, 11 God tells Samuel that He is grieved He made Saul the king. How would you explain these kinds of regrets expressed by God? Why did God choose Saul as king in the first place? Did God not know how this decision would turn out?

Another question that emerges from the story is this: What was Saul’s “big” sin that ultimately contributed to his demise? Why did Saul’s sin of keeping animals to sacrifice to God result in the death penalty and yet David committed adultery and murder (see 2 Samuel 11) only to be venerated as a man after God’s own heart? What was the difference, in God’s eyes, between David and Saul?

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**Monday**

Memorize the Key Text then reflect on these questions:

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**Tuesday**

Identify two people you know who strike you as persons who might be described as David was: i.e., a person after God’s own heart. List the characteristics that come to mind when you think of these people.

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**Wednesday**

Think about the steps that led to Saul’s downfall. Read 1 Samuel 15:9-11 and notice how spiritually strong Saul was when he began. Note how in the beginning of Saul’s career that “God changed Saul’s heart” (1 Samuel 10:9, NIV) and he prophesied along with the prophets in Gibeah. Notice the story of Nahash the Ammonite and think about Saul’s fearless resolve to fight for God.

But then, as you see in the Punch Lines, something deep within Saul’s character began to unravel. Identify the steps in Saul’s downfall. What can we do today to avoid this spiritual spiral toward destruction?

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**Thursday**

C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Screwtape Letters*: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”

Which ditch am I more inclined to fall into—the ditch of disbelieving in demons or the ditch of obsessing about them? How can I view them in a balanced way?

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**Friday**

One of the primary reasons for Saul’s demise was his selfishness. Ask yourself: How can I become more selfless? What examples from Christ’s life give me a picture of what a selfless life looks like? Who is God calling me to selflessly serve today?

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1 Taunya English, “Teen Sex and Drug Use May Be Cause of Depression, Not the Effect,” Health Behavior News Service (September 2005).


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**this week’s reading**

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 61, 66, 67.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Perhaps no Bible story has captured the imagination quite like the well-worn tale of David and Goliath. In spite of the story’s familiarity for all generations, there are still numerous insights and lessons to be gleaned from it.

Before the epic battle with Goliath we meet David as a humble shepherd. As the youngest of Jesse’s boys and a resident of the small and nondescript town of Bethlehem, David represents the least likely candidate for king. But God measures greatness by a standard different from ours. We consider the outward appearance of a man while God’s concern is the heart.

This lesson offers an ideal template that lends itself to a variety of discussions. For example, David’s experience reminds us of the exciting rewards of recklessly trusting God. Regardless of the giants we face, ultimately God is in charge and we can trust Him. The story also illustrates God’s calling. Just as God called David to a big, bold vision, so He calls each of us to be high-impact players for His kingdom. Another discussion you may wish to facilitate based on this lesson explores the topic of talents and spiritual gifts. In David’s case, it wasn’t that he had some supernatural ability; rather, he had availability to be used by God. Thus God used a very ordinary kid to accomplish some extraordinary things. Still another avenue down which you may wish to take this lesson looks at the issue of competition. David’s story offers a different paradigm for competition and reminds us that in God’s game plan the weak become strong, and those who are in last place rise to the top.

All in all, this lesson is rich with possibilities. The directions you can go with it are endless. Pray that God will guide you to shape this lesson to the specific needs of the young people in your group.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• See that God is absolutely trustworthy, in all circumstances. (Know)
• Experience the joy of feeling unafraid when facing giant obstacles. (Feel)
• Commit fully to God to be used in mighty ways to build up the kingdom of heaven. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Competition
• Purpose (knowing your)
• Talents/gifts

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 think of other people in the
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
In the end, character pays. So pay close attention to character.

The reason David was chosen to be the king of Israel was because of his character. David’s oldest brother, Eliab, was the obvious choice for king. When Samuel saw Eliab he thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord” (1 Samuel 16:6, NIV).

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart’” (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

When God looks at your heart, what does He see?

Out of the Story for Teachers
In the introduction of William Bennett’s The Book of Virtues he writes: “Moral education—the training of heart and mind toward the good—involves many things. It involves rules and precepts—the dos and don’ts of life with others—as well as explicit instruction, exhortation, and training. Moral education must provide training in good habits. Aristotle wrote that good habits formed at youth make all the difference.”

3 Bennett then points out that one of the ways youth learn virtues is through stories.

The Bible is rich with such stories, and perhaps there is no better story for illustrating character and virtue than that of David.

• After reading the Into the Story section, have the students identify David’s virtues (e.g., courage, faith, integrity, patience to practice delayed gratification, etc.) that emerge from the text. As they call out these traits, write them on a chalkboard or a large page of newsprint paper.

• Next to the list of character qualities have students share the physical attributes (height, nice smile, chiseled stomach, etc.) they look for in someone they’re interested in dating. Read this paraphrase of 1 Samuel 16:7: The Lord does not look at this list (point to the list of physical attributes); man looks at this list, but the Lord looks at the heart! (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

When God looks at your heart, what does He see?
• Why has the story of David and Goliath held such a strong appeal for kids?
• In light of David’s calling, how do you explain other stories in the Bible (e.g., anointing Saul, calling Peter, using Rahab, etc.) when God chose people who had less than sterling characters?
• Look at David’s story from the perspective of his spiritual gifts (for a list of the spiritual gifts see Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 27-31; and Ephesians 4:7-13). What were David’s spiritual gifts? Ask the students to identify spiritual gifts they share with David and spiritual gifts they see in themselves but not in David. Invite students to affirm the gifts they recognize in one another.

Sharing Context and Background

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

There are three primary stories in this passage. The following commentary fleshes out each story:

1. Samuel Anoints David—The act of anointing David was a customary practice in ancient times. The anointing service set every king and high priest apart for God’s service. In this story David was anointed in secret; it was not until later that he was anointed in public (2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3).

2. David Serves as a Musician in Saul’s Service—First Samuel 16:14 records: “Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him” (NIV). Saul committed the unpardonable sin when he rejected the Spirit of God. It was not that God withdrew from Saul; but rather Saul rebelled and refused to listen to the promptings of God’s Spirit. Read Psalm 139:7 and discuss this part of the story in light of our free will.

Temporary relief came to Saul through the music of David. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: “as Saul listened to David’s music his wicked feelings of self-pity and jealousy left him for a time, only to return with double power as time went on” (vol. 2, p. 531). As Saul kept rejecting God’s guidance, he became like the demon-possessed man of Christ’s parable in Luke 11:24-26 in which the last condition of such a soul is considerably worse than the first state of the soul.

3. David and Goliath—In his book David: A Man of Passion & Destiny pastor and author Charles Swindoll suggests that there are four lessons that emerge from the story of David and Goliath:

A. Facing giants is an intimidating experience. With the passage of time it’s easy to skim David’s story and forget how scary it must have been to engage in combat with that brute.

B. Doing battle is a lonely experience. No one can fight for you. Nobody faces the same Goliath that you do. It’s a lonely battle, but it enables you to grow up and trust 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.
C. Trusting God is a stabilizing experience. David brought the giant to his knees with one stone. We don’t know for sure, but we can surmise that David overcame any jitters because he was stabilized by his trust in God. If you try to win your spiritual battles in your own strength, you’ll lose. But when you battle after spending sufficient time in prayer, it’s amazing how stable you can be.

D. Winning victories is a memorable experience. As we remember the victories of the past we can march confidently with God into the future.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Allow for a quiet time of reflection to close the lesson. Ask students to write two letters. The first is a letter from God to themselves that begins with “Dear __________, Just as I had a great calling for My child David, so I am calling you to . . .” The second letter is their response to God.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
Ellen White reminds us: “The education and training of the youth is an important and solemn work. The great object to be secured should be the proper development of character, that the individual may be fitted rightly to discharge the duties of the present life and to enter at last upon the future, immortal life. Eternity will reveal the manner in which the work has been performed.”

With that sobering perspective in mind, use the story of David to challenge and inspire young people to carefully consider character issues. Remind them that God has not changed. Just as God anointed a young person with a sterling character in ancient times, so He continues to call young people with character to impact the world today. Each student studying the story of David should ask, “Do I have the kind of character that God can use?”

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 62 and 63.

*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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
“David, in the beauty and vigor of his young manhood, was preparing to take a high position with the noblest of the earth. His talents, as precious gifts from God, were employed to extol the glory of the divine Giver. . . . The love that moved him, the sorrows that beset him, the triumphs that attended him, were all themes for his active thought; and as he beheld the love of God in all the providences of his life, his heart throbbed with more fervent adoration and gratitude, his voice rang out in a richer melody, his harp was swept with more exultant joy; and the shepherd boy proceeded from strength to strength, from knowledge to knowledge; for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 642).
If you took a test that measured how much faith you have in God, what grade do you think you would deserve? (Circle only one grade.)

A  B  C  D  E  F

If your friends graded the test, what grade do you think they would give you?

A  B  C  D  E  F

Rank the following Bible stories in order from the person who demonstrated the greatest faith (1) to the one who showed the least faith (10).

____ Noah and the ark
____ Daniel in the lions’ den
____ Peter walking on the water
____ David slaying Goliath
____ Naaman dipping seven times in the Jordan River
____ Esther approaching the king to save her people
____ Moses leading the Israelites through the Red Sea
____ Rahab hiding the Israeli spies
____ Joseph refusing to compromise with Potiphar’s wife
____ Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice

The Lord said to Samuel, ‘How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.’

“Samuel did what the Lord said. . . . Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.’

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’

“Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, ‘The Lord has not chosen these.’ So he asked Jesse, ‘Are these all the sons you have?’

“There is still the youngest,’ Jesse answered, ‘but he is tending the sheep.’

“Samuel said, ‘Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.’

“So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.

“Then the Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him; he is the one.’

“So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.”

“Then [David] took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached [Goliath] the Philistine. . . .

“David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head.’

“As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

“So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a
sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.”

(1 Samuel 16:1-13; 17:40-50, NIV)

punch lines

“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged” (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV).

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4, 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).

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13, NIV).

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

OUT OF THE STORY

The narrative of David and Goliath is perhaps the most well-known and beloved story in Scripture. Perhaps the timelessness of the story can be explained by the fact that it contains the essential elements of classic drama: the smaller and weaker prevails against the taller and stronger; one kid changes the destiny of nations; with God’s help, a humble boy triumphs against impossible odds.

Read the entire chapter of 1 Samuel 17 and underline any details of the story that are new to you. What jumps out at you that you haven’t noticed before? To what do you attribute the story’s timeless appeal to children? What do you think is the most important point of the story? How does the story apply to your life today?

What does the story teach us about the following topics:

Competition? ______________________________________________________

Purpose in life? ______________________________________________________

Talents and spiritual gifts? ____________________________________________

Faith in God? ______________________________________________________

“A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”—John Shedd, 19th-20th-century U.S. philanthropist.

“Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn’t really matter.”—New Tribes Missionary (author unknown), Eternal Perspectives Newsletter (Fall 2003), p. 15.

“The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows less and less about the meaning of his own life, but that it bothers him less and less.”—Vaclav Havel, current Czech playwright and president of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992).
Sabbath
Share in your small group your reasons for ranking the Bible characters in the order that you did. Discuss these questions:

What other Bible stories come to mind when you think about death-defying faith?

Is there a modern-day equivalent to David? Do you know of anyone who demonstrated similar faith to the shepherd boy marching toward some giant obstacle with unflinching courage?

What would it take to build the kind of faith we read about in the Bible?

Sunday
Read the story of David’s anointing as king and his encounter with Goliath. The following commentary may be helpful in understanding the story better.

The main text in the story of David’s anointing is verse seven: “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” (NIV).

The NIV Life Application Bible offers this commentary:

Saul was tall and handsome; he was an impressive-looking man. Samuel may have been trying to find someone who looked like Saul to be Israel’s next king, but God warned him against judging by appearance alone. . . . Appearance doesn’t reveal what people are really like or what their true value is.

Fortunately, God judges by faith and character, not appearances. And because only God can see on the inside, only He can accurately judge people. Most people spend hours each week maintaining their outward appearance, they should do even more to develop their inner character.†

From the selected verses in 1 Samuel 16 and 17 the character that has the most impressive outward appearance is clearly Goliath. Goliath appears from the camp of the Philistines as a “champion” (verse 4, NIV), using a rare Hebrew word that occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible (1 Samuel 17:4, 23). The word translated “hero” in verse 51 is a more common Hebrew word. In the War Scroll discovered at Qumran, the word seems to mean “infantryman.”

What can I do to value the true worth in others and not rely on outward appearances?

Monday
Personalize the Key Text to carry with you as a promise this week when you battle temptation. For example, your personal translation might be something like this: “Satan, you come to me through [pornographic Internet sites], but I come to you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This battle belongs to the Lord.”

Tuesday
Read the Flashlight section and then reflect on the following questions:

What is a love that moves you?

What are sorrows that beset you?

What are triumphs that attend you?

How can your answers to these questions become “themes for [your] active thought” so that your heart might thro “with more fervent adoration and gratitude” and your voice ring out in “a richer melody” so that you can live from strength to strength?

Wednesday
Read the Punch Lines and pray about God’s purpose in your life. What is God calling you to do?

Thursday
Think about Eliab, Abinadab, and Shamshah. Chances are you don’t even know who they are, right? They were three of David’s brothers who paraded in front of Samuel in hopes of being anointed as king. These were the same brothers who were in Saul’s army and listened to Goliath’s taunts for 40 days, while cowering in fear. Because they allowed their fears to paralyze them, and not one of them had the kind of heart that David possessed, they have been forgotten while David’s legacy lives on.

What risk is God asking you to take? How can you swallow your fears and step out in faith in order to be like David and do something great for God?

Friday
What qualities in David’s heart does God want to develop in you?


this week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 62 and 63.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
This week’s lesson explores the complicated relationship between two of God’s anointed leaders, Saul and David. David’s conquest of Goliath and the subsequent routing of the Philistines by the Israelites made David quite popular among the Israelites. But, to be sure, not everyone can enjoy and appreciate the successes of others. This seemed to be one of Saul’s chief failings.

Ironically, it was David’s loyalty and ability to get the job done—no matter what the mission given him by Saul—that led Saul to promote him (1 Samuel 18:5). His service to King Saul was so exemplary that the people serenaded him with song: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (verse 7, NIV).

Inspired by Satan, Saul concluded that David desired his throne, and from that moment on Saul looked for opportunities to kill David. Were it not for the intervention of God, Saul’s javelin would have killed David (verse 11). Ironically enough, his efforts were undermined from within his own house. Saul’s son, Jonathan, developed a covenant of friendship with David that was stronger than his familial ties, and he protected David.

In the succeeding chapters we have a front-row seat to Saul’s personal destruction. His jealous hatred of David was so unquenchable that when he found out Ahimelech the priest had housed the fleeing David, he ordered the killing of Ahimelech, his household, and 84 other priests at Nob. The favor of God at work in the life of David seemed to bring out the worst in Saul.

In spite of Saul’s jealous rage, David refused to harm him for he was still God’s anointed, and David would not allow feelings of revenge to cloud his respect for God.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that pride, and its twin, jealousy, are precursors to destruction. (Know)
• Become aware of the peace that comes from obedience to the will of God. (Feel)
• Seize opportunities to trust God in the most difficult challenges of life, instead of following their own inclinations. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Giving
• Adversity/trials
• Stress
• Courage
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.
through warning after warning, blinded by his own pride and jealousy. Not once but twice, David spared his life, and the sheer magnanimity of the act cuts him to the heart; but a few hours later he is undeterred. Saul’s rejection of God’s restraints leaves him in a free fall, and his only path forward is down.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• Underline the verses in which significant shifts occur in the story.
• Is there anything particularly startling about the relationships among the main actors in the drama? Identify one motivation behind each of their actions.
• Are there places in the story in which the Spirit of God can be seen, or His presence felt? Draw a star by those spots.
• If this passage of Scripture was all that we knew of these characters, what might we conclude about the way each of them lived their lives?
• Circle the “minor” players in the narrative. Who are they, and how do they affect the thinking of the main character?
• There are gender issues at play in this story. How do the women and men relate in this episode, and what are the effects of their interaction?
• What lessons are there to be learned from this biblical episode?
• Who in the narrative most exemplifies the character and spirit of Jesus?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 15:1-17; Romans 8:18-27; 1 Samuel 20:1-4.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Compare and Contrast. While reading the story of Saul’s fall from grace and David’s rise to the throne, it is helpful to consider the differences in their responses to difficulties right from the beginning. Saul, king and commander in chief of Israel’s defense forces, endures the daily insults
of Israel and their God by Goliath. David, on the other hand, is offended and motivated to vindicate God's name and character. Saul is offended by the praise heaped on David; David is humbled by it. When Saul offers David the hand of his eldest daughter, Merab, in marriage, he responds: "Who am I . . . that I should become the king's son-in-law?" (1 Samuel 18:18, NIV). Saul, in fact, was planning to have the Philistines murder David (verse 17) in battle.

Saul grew more and more fearful of David with each missed assassination. Why? "Because the Lord was with David but had left Saul" (1 Sam. 18:12, NIV). When God does not guide the life, our decisions become an exercise in force rather than faith.

2. The Friendship. Few biblical friendships carry the depth of emotion as the friendship between Jonathan and David. Many writers tend to focus on David's vulnerability in this story, but consider Jonathan's circumstance for a moment. Jonathan was a prince, an heir to the throne of Israel, and was no weak warrior. With his armor-bearer alone he once slew 20 Philistines on a half-acre plot of land in close combat. He, too, heard the people chanting David's name after he killed Goliath and led successful military campaigns for his father. He saw how the women of the city fawned over David. Jonathan could have easily formed an alliance with his father and killed David, but he chose not to. This choice meant that he would probably never see the throne of his father, Saul. He knew that David would be king, possibly taking his place, yet he was undeterred in his love for David. Jonathan was one of the most selfless persons in all of Scripture.

3. Far From Perfect. During his life as a fugitive, David made some bad decisions under major duress—once being when he traveled to Nob to see Ahimelech, the high priest (1 Samuel 21). "He [Ahimelech] inquired what had brought him there. The young man was in constant fear of discovery, and in his extremity he resorted to deception. David told the priest he had been sent by the king on a secret errand, one that required the utmost expedition. Here he manifested a want of faith in God, and his sin resulted in causing the death of the high priest. God requires that truthfulness shall mark His people, even in the greatest peril" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 656). Not only did Ahimelech die, but just about all other members of his family and 84 other priests.

4. A Quiet Death. The death of Samuel is mentioned briefly in 1 Samuel 25:1. The chapter does not elucidate the ceremony that ensued. It states only that the people "assembled and mourned for him" (NIV), then they buried him at his home in Ramah. In the death of Samuel per-

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.
haps there was an opportunity for Saul to reflect. This was the man who had anointed him king, who pointed out his faults and warned him to obey God. Of course, this was also the man who told him that God had taken the kingdom from him because of disobedience. The kingdom was lost, but Saul needn’t lose his eternal life. One can only wonder what he thought as he led the funeral service for Samuel.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give each student an index card and a pencil. Make the statement that Saul’s pursuit of David is very similar to Satan’s pursuit of us. He is constantly looking for ways to harm us physically and spiritually. Ask the students to make two lists. The first is a list of the snares that Satan tries to use to trip us up. The second list should consist of the safeguards that God has given us to help us avoid imminent destruction.

After the students have finished, ask them to share some of their answers. Ask a volunteer to pray, thanking God for His protection each day.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

To the average onlooker, the stories in God’s Word often seem like . . . well . . . just stories. While this view may be pervasive, once one begins to dig around in the narratives that make up the Old Testament in particular, one cannot help noticing their universal principles.

Some years ago in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—and in cities around the world—a group of teens killed one of their friends, in large part because they were jealous of him. They were actors in a play whose plot has been playing out for centuries. Saul’s unwillingness to obey all that God commanded him inevitably led to his losing the throne of Israel, and to his oppression of Israel. Unrestrained pride and arrogance led him to persecute a young man who brought him nothing but accolades.

In spite of Saul’s behavior—the ugly example of leadership he set—David remained his servant, refusing twice to take his life when the chance presented itself. For his refusal to choose the path of revenge, David was driven from his home, chased into the camp of Israel’s sworn enemies, enduring long nights in the wilderness. There were moments when his faith in God faltered, but David would take his failures to God. It was this practice that differentiated him from Saul.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Word Association

One of the great opportunities you can use to widen the learning of this week’s lesson is to play a word association game with your students. Here’s how it might work: Place the name of Saul on a chalkboard. Ask the students to shout out words that come to mind when they think of the Old Testament Saul. Write their answers on the board around Saul’s name. Ask the students to do the same with David and Jonathan. This exercise is a great way to gauge the level of knowledge your students have about a given Bible character, thereby allowing you to focus more on information that will be new or previously unconsidered by them.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 64 and 65.

*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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
“Though Saul was ever on the alert for an opportunity to destroy David, he stood in fear of him, since it was evident that the Lord was with him. David’s blameless character aroused the wrath of the king; he deemed that the very life and presence of David cast a reproach upon him, since by contrast it presented his own character to disadvantage. It was envy that made Saul miserable and put the humble subject of his throne in jeopardy. What untold mischief has this evil trait of character worked in our world!” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 651).
Complete the following statement in your own words:
I dislike people who are jealous because________________________________________
________________________________________
_______________________________________

What are some qualities about themselves that jealous people overlook when envying others?
__________________________________
_________________________________
________________________________
_______________________________
______________________________
_____________________________
_____________________________

id you know that jealousy is referred to as the “green-eyed monster”? We have William Shakespeare to thank for turning jealousy green. It was the great English poet who first used a form of the phrase in his play The Merchant of Venice.

“How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,
And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy!” (The Merchant of Venice, 3.2.115-116).

“When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs

and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.’

“Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. ‘They have credited David with tens of thousands,’ he thought, ‘but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?’ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

“The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, ‘I’ll pin David to the wall.’ But David eluded him twice.

“Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with David but had left Saul. So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did he had great success, because the Lord was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.”

(1 Samuel 18:1-16, NIV)
punch lines

“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love” (John 13:1, NIV).

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matthew 16:25, NIV).

“A man’s pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor” (Proverbs 29:23, NIV).

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you” (Romans 12:3, NIV).

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29, NIV).

“The Lord replied, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest’” (Exodus 33:14, NIV).

“Love looks through a telescope; envy, through a microscope.”—Josh Billings, 19th-century U.S. humorist.

“Military power wins battles, but spiritual power wins wars.”—General George Catlett Marshall, U.S. military commander during World War II.

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main players or characters in this biblical narrative? Circle their names.

What is the relationship between them? Are they family members, friends, acquaintances?

What events have brought these people to the place where their lives intersect?

Underline the Scriptures in which you see a significant shift in the story.

Do you see God in this passage? Where is He mentioned?

Whom do you admire most in the passage? Why?

How can you emulate that person in the way you live today? This week?

What are two lessons that you think God wants you to take from this biblical episode?

If you could share one point from this story with a friend, which would it be? Mark that place in the story with a star.
Sabbath

Long before Shakespeare (check out the Did You Know? section), Israel’s first king, Saul, was giving new meaning to the word “jealousy.”

Refer to your answers for the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. Read 1 Samuel 18:8. What was it that got Saul so angry at David? ____________________________

Did David do anything to warrant Saul’s response? What blessing or blessings did Saul overlook in his jealous rage at David?

Sunday

The Into the Story biblical narrative for this week’s lesson begins a dark chapter in the lives of David, Jonathan, and Saul. After reading 1 Samuel 18:1-16, complete the Out of the Story study questions.

Having completed the study questions, list two specific ways that Saul could or should have addressed his feelings of envy toward David.

1.________________________________
2.________________________________

Monday

This week’s Key Text captures a scene at the end of a long chase. Read the following scriptures to get up to speed on what’s going on: 1 Samuel 19:1; 1 Samuel 20:1; 1 Samuel 21:1, 2; 1 Samuel 22:1; and 1 Samuel 23:7. By the time the story gets to 1 Samuel 24:12, our key text for this week, David has been on the run for some time, struggling to stay out of Saul’s sight.

In his pursuit of David, Saul stopped to rest in the very cave where David and his men were hiding (1 Samuel 24). While Saul slept, David took a knife and cut off a piece of the king’s robe, proof that he could have killed him if he had wanted to do so.

What reason does David give for refusing to hurt Saul? (1 Samuel 24:10).

________________________________

How can that reason help us in our disagreements with fellow believers?

________________________________

Tuesday

Read this week’s Flashlight quotation. Did any part of the quotation stand out to you? Notice the first part of the second sentence: “David’s blameless character aroused the wrath of the king.”

What was it about David’s life and character that made Saul’s character seem so bad? Do you think the slaying of Goliath by David exposed flaws in Saul’s character? Explain.

________________________________

________________________________

Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines for this week. Choose the scripture that really speaks to you, then complete the following statements:

This scripture is meaningful to me because

________________________________

If I follow the lesson taught in this scripture, it will help me deal with _______________________

________________________________

Thursday

This week you studied about Saul’s all-consuming jealousy of David’s success in military endeavors, popularity with the subjects of his kingdom, and the favor of God that seemed to rest on David’s life.

Have you ever been jealous of a family member or friend? How did you deal with your feelings? Did you tell the person of whom you were jealous how you felt about them? Did you tell God?

Friday

One of the most beautiful themes in this week’s lesson is the friendship that developed between Jonathan, Saul’s son, and David. Jonathan risked his life to save David from his father’s wrath. How is what Jonathan did for David similar to what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross?

________________________________

We may not all be asked to risk our lives for a friend. However, the depth of love that Jonathan felt for David is a beautiful example of godly friendship. How can you develop this type of godly friendship in your life?

________________________________

________________________________


this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 64 and 65.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
I. SYNOPSIS
Victory was in the air. The spoils of victory were everywhere. David, his mighty warriors, and their families all raised their voices in exultation. They had just defeated the pesky Amalekites, who had burned their homes in Ziklag and taken their wives and children captive. The celebration was made even more stupendous because the rescue was quite daring (1 Samuel 30). David and his men were able to destroy the Amalekites and rescue all the captives without any of them being harmed. It was a great military victory, a testament to God’s protection over His people.

While they were celebrating their victory against the Amalekites, another sad saga was coming to an end. Saul, utterly routed by the Philistines, fell on his sword and committed suicide to avoid humiliation at the hand of his enemies (1 Samuel 31). A young Amalekite seeing this took the news to David, along with Saul’s crown and armband (2 Samuel 1), claiming to have been the one who ended Saul’s life.

The young man expected David to celebrate the death of his archenemy. He was deathly wrong. David was so incensed that the young alien would dare kill God’s anointed that he had one of his men kill the young man on the spot. He then wept bitterly at the loss of Israel’s king, and his best friend, Jonathan.

David’s respect for God’s anointed knew no bounds, as evidenced by his lament.

II. TARGET
The students will:

- Understand the hardships and trials inherent in serving God. (Know)
- Feel a sense of God’s presence even when we feel alone and tried. (Feel)
- Seek to accept God’s call to love our enemies and those who do us wrong. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Doubt
- Mental health
- Friendship

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

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.

From their answers you may be able to draw some lessons about delayed gratification, trust in God, and perseverance.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

The Fence
“There was a little boy with a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, to hammer a nail in the back fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Then it gradually dwindled down. He discov-
ere it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn’t lose his temper at all. He told his father about it, and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed, and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, “You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say or do things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one.”

(Source: www.learntofeelgood.com/fence.html)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In the illustration just shared, the father makes the compelling point that uncontrolled, untempered anger often leads to decisions that hurt others as well as ourselves. The temptation to give in to his anger must have been very powerful for David. Due to the actions of one extremely powerful person, Saul, he was forced to make his living in caves and hillsides, fending for food where he could get it, even camping among Israel’s enemies. David somehow never gave place to his anger. Perhaps it was all that David had experienced at Saul’s hand that taught him the patience needed to rule God’s people.

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.

- After reading the Into the Story Bible passage, what immediately strikes you, stops you cold, stands out?
- What did David make the men of Judah do? Why did he do this? What was he attempting to teach them?
- What did David mean by the following phrases: “Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights” (NIV) “Tell it not in Gath” (NIV) “Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and gracious” (NIV)
- Was David underplaying the evil that Saul had done during his lifetime?
- What circumstances surrounded Saul’s death? What did the Philistines do with Saul’s body? (1 Samuel 31:7-10). Do you think David had knowledge of this when he prepared his lament?
- Do you think David felt relieved that his long nightmare was finally over?

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

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Lowpoint. Sometimes low moments will come into our lives, no matter how gifted, talented, and anointed we are. David experienced one of these moments when he returned to Ziklag and found his home and the homes of his men burned to the ground, and their loved ones captured and taken away by the Amalekites. Ellen White wrote: “David seemed to be cut off from every human support. All that he held dear on earth had been swept from him. Saul had driven him from his country; the Philistines had driven him from the camp; the Amalekites had plundered his city; his wives and children had been made prisoners; and his own familiar friends had banded against him, and threatened him even with death. In this hour of utmost extremity David, instead of permitting his mind to dwell upon these painful circumstances, looked earnestly to God for help. He ‘encouraged himself in the Lord.’ He reviewed his past eventful life. Wherein had the Lord ever forsaken him? His soul was refreshed in recalling the many evidences of God’s favor” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 692).

2. One Mountain. Two Battles. In 1 Samuel 28:4 the Bible states: “The Philistines assembled and came and set up camp at Shunem, while Saul gathered all the Israelites and set up camp at Gilboa” (NIV). Saul prepared for the final battle of his life, though he did not know it. Many years earlier another group assembled on this same mountain range, down by a spring. “So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord
told him, ‘Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.’ Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The Lord said to Gideon, ‘With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place’” (Judges 7:5-7, NIV). As we know, Gideon and his men routed the Philistines with God’s help. But the Lord was not with Saul. The Philistines decimated his forces, and Saul committed suicide. Mount Gilboa witnessed two huge battles with two very different outcomes.

3. **Watch Your Mouth.** In his lament David cries out: “Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon” (2 Samuel 1:20, NIV). Gath and Ashkelon were major cities of the Philistines. David shuddered at the thought that these cities would now rejoice at the expense and sorrow of God’s people. He was urging his people to be discrete in the way they handled this bit of news. Many times we are less than judicious with our statements, especially when they involve some juicy tidbit of information. What does David’s plaintive wail say to us?

4. **Thanks for All the Help!** After defeating the Amalekites, the Bible says: “When David arrived in Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, ‘Here is a present for you from the plunder of the Lord’s enemies.’ He sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir; to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa and Racal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athach and Hebron; and to those in all the other places where David and his men had roamed” (1 Samuel 30:26-31, NIV). David did not forget those who had helped him. When God blessed him, he blessed others! What a servant! In spite of his flaws, David exemplified the heart of God in his actions.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

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

Divide the class into groups of two or three. Ask each group to come up with two attributes of David, one that made him a great leader, and one that made him a great servant of God.

After a few minutes, ask the students to share their findings with the class. Then ask, How can we develop similar attributes in our lives? Close with a prayer asking God’s help to make all of you better leaders for Him, but more important, better followers of Him.

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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.
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:
The book of 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul, quite a horrifying scene. How could someone who had been given so much—good looks, a royal throne, the anointing of God—go astray? His life and death are a stark reminder to us that except we abide in Christ, we can do nothing.

His demise is juxtaposed against the rise of David, God’s handpicked successor to the throne. If we needed any more evidence of David’s fitness for high office, he delivers it in the way in which he handles the death of Saul. God didn’t tell David to hold a special ceremony or to mourn Saul’s death. Upon hearing of Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths, David immediately forgot all the harm that Saul had caused him. All that consumed him was the love he had for both Saul and Jonathan, and the way in which the enemies of God would reproach His name, because they had successfully killed Israel’s king.

When the glory of God supersedes everything else in our lives, we will approach the spirit that David exhibited that day in Ziklag.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

In-class Journal

Consider purchasing some inexpensive journals for your class, or you may ask your students to buy them. Allowing opportunities for reflective journaling is one of the best ways to change the week-to-week dynamics of your classroom. For instance, this week’s topic offers several perfect opportunities for personal reflection. You might ask the students to write about an experience in their life, or in the life of a friend, when, say, a bully got his just deserts. How did they feel when they heard what happened to their nemesis? Or you might ask them to write a paragraph or two about what they’d miss most about their best friend.

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 68.

*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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
David seemed to be cut off from every human support. All that he held dear on earth had been swept from him. Saul had driven him from his country; the Philistines had driven him from the camp; the Amalekites had plundered his city; his wives and children had been made prisoners; and his own familiar friends had banded against him, and threatened him even with death. In this hour of utmost extremity David, instead of permitting his mind to dwell upon these painful circumstances, looked earnestly to God for help. He ‘encouraged himself in the Lord’” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 692).

"Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.”

(2 Samuel 1:11, 12)
**What do you think?**

Which do you like better, the beginning of a long journey or the ending of one? Explain your answer:

[Blank space for response]

Do you remember a particularly trying time in your life that you wished would come to an end? What did you learn from that experience?

[Blank space for response]

**Did you know?**

Do you know the meaning of the word “lament”? A lament is a song or poem expressing grief, regret, or mourning. Many of the oldest and most lasting poems in human history have been laments. Laments are present in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in the Hindu *Vedas*, and in ancient Near Eastern religious texts, including the Mesopotamian city laments such as the Lament for Ur, and the Jewish *Tanakh* or Old Testament. (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lament).

The mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied.

“Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

“O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold.

“How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights.

“I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.

“How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!”

*(2 Samuel 1:17-27, NIV)*

**Into the Story**

“David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar):

‘Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen!

“Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice.

“O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings of grain. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul—no longer rubbed with oil.

“From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of...
“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Ephesians 4:1, NIV).

“Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you” (Job 22:21, NIV).

“Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies—make straight your way before me” (Psalm 5:8, NIV).

“My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds; my neighbors stay far away” (Psalm 38:11, NIV).

“For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you” (Isaiah 41:13, NIV).

“If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man’s life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.”—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 19th-century U.S. poet, educator, linguist.

“The angels minister to God’s servants in time of hardship and danger.”—Billy Graham, current U.S. evangelist.
Sabbath

Read and respond to the What Do You Think? questions in this week’s lesson. Life is filled with beginnings and endings, journeys started and ended, projects begun and finished. In this week’s study, David’s life as a fugitive comes to an end, as does Saul’s life of disobedience to God.

King David’s son, Solomon, wrote: “The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride” (Ecclesiastes 7:8, NIV). Do you agree? ______________

How are Solomon’s words applicable to the experience his father went through while running from Saul? ______________

Sunday

As you read the Into the Story passage and complete the Out of the Story study questions, keep the setting in mind. David, his men, and their families have just returned to their burned-out homes after a daring rescue from the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30).

As they struggle to survey the damage to the city and their homes, an Amalekite brings news of Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths. Remember, David respected Saul, and he loved Jonathan.

What do you think David felt as all of these events came together at once? ______________

Monday

Read this week’s Key Text. The news of Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths devastated David and his men. Read 2 Samuel 1:5-10. How did David and his men find out about Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths? ______________

What did David do to the Amalekite who killed Saul (2 Samuel 1:14, 15)? ______________

Why? ______________

What does this act tell you about David’s respect for the person God chose to be king? ______________

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight focus for this week. Ellen White is writing about one of the lowest moments in David’s life. As great as David was, he was not without human flaws. As he fled from Saul, David made a pact with Achish, a Philistine commander, and hid among his people (1 Samuel 27:1-4).

How did the alliance fall apart? Read 1 Samuel 29:1-7. ______________

Why did David put his safety and that of his people in the hands of an enemy? What does this say about his trust in God’s protection? ______________

Wednesday

As you read this week’s Punch Lines, focus on the promise given to us by God in each one. God’s promises are always conditional upon our obedience. Choose two scriptures from the Punch Lines list and state below the promises God makes and the conditions we must meet to receive them.

Promise __________________________
Condition __________________________

Promise __________________________
Condition __________________________

Thursday

Do you know of someone at your church, school, or in your community who has been hurt or killed? What can you do to help this person and/or their loved ones during this difficult time?

Not sure what to do? Why not ask God to show you how to help, then talk with your parents, pastor, and youth leader to get ideas about what you can do.

Friday

When King David and his men returned to Ziklag—their home among the Philistines—following their broken alliance, they found the city in flames and their families taken captive.

The Amalekites were exacting revenge on David for his raids on them. David’s alliance with the Philistines brought him much trouble. How did David’s failure to trust God affect those around him? How do your failures to obey God affect others? ______________


this week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 68.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
I. SYNOPSIS

David had been preparing to be king since he was a teenager. Samuel had anointed him and declared him Saul’s successor, but David’s road to the throne was long and filled with challenges. There were high points, such as his victory over Goliath and his friendship with Saul’s son Jonathan. There were long years of low points, when David and his band of followers lived as outlaws in the hills, fugitives from an angry king. Even after Saul’s death, David did not have an easy path to the throne. For many years he fought to win his claim to the throne of all Israel.

Through it all, David trusted God. He trusted that God’s promise for his life would be fulfilled, even when it seemed least likely. He remained open to God’s leading even in difficult times. And his faith was finally rewarded. At the age of 37, having spent his entire youth and young manhood in a quest for the throne, he became king of the united 12 tribes of Israel, and began the most successful reign in the history of the Jewish monarchy.

This week’s lesson focuses on how we, too, can trust in God’s promises and God’s plan for our lives even when the road is long and difficult. High school-aged Christians will be able to relate to the young David being anointed by Samuel, with a sense that God has a calling and a purpose for their lives. But when that purpose seems a long way from being fulfilled, and faith grows weak, how do we hold on and keep trusting God? That question is at the core of David’s story this week.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that David’s experience of trusting God through difficult times can be an example for them.
- Feel confident that God has a plan for their lives.
- Choose to trust in God’s plan even when it seems difficult or impossible. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Trust
- Patience
- Perseverance
  OR
- Forgiveness of others
- Selflessness
- Perseverance

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 students to share stories of times they had to wait for something. Encourage them to begin with trivial experiences if that’s what they’re comfortable
download a page on the Internet. TV has presented us with a world in which complex problems are solved in 30 or 60 minutes, while the ‘real’ news is compressed into 15-second sound bites. We want what we want, when we want it—right now!

One thing that can never be rushed is the process of growing into the person God has destined us to be. For David, it took 20 years of fighting, running, and hiding before he was crowned king. Other biblical characters experienced the same kind of waiting period before they realized their destiny. We, too, may have to wait to see God’s will worked out in our lives, but that doesn’t mean God isn’t working with us. He always has a plan!

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We live in a society in which everything is instant. We get impatient if it takes longer than a minute to microwave our lunch, longer than a few seconds to download a page on the Internet. TV has presented us with a world in which complex problems are solved in 30 or 60 minutes, while the ‘real’ news is compressed into 15-second sound bites. We want what we want, when we want it—right now!

One thing that can never be rushed is the process of growing into the person God has destined us to be. For David, it took 20 years of fighting, running, and hiding before he was crowned king. Other biblical characters experienced the same kind of waiting period before they realized their destiny. We, too, may have to wait to see God’s will worked out in our lives, but that doesn’t mean God isn’t working with us. He always has a plan!

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.

- After Saul’s death, what obstacles did David still face on the way to the throne?
- How much time passed between Saul’s death and David’s coronation as king of both Israel and Judah? Draw a time line of the events that happened during those years.
- How do you think David felt during the years that he fought a civil war to win power over all Israel?
- How do you think David felt on the day when he was finally crowned king of a united nation? What do you think he might have said to God in prayer on that day?
- What kind of obstacles do young Christians today face in achieving their destiny? What might stand between you and the “throne” God has planned for you? How can you deal with these kinds of obstacles?

Sharing Context and Background

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

The idea of kingship was still a new one for the nation of Israel. In fact, the idea of being a “nation” was pretty new, too! David was only the second king of Israel. Before the time of Saul, Israel was a collection of tribes with no central government. The only real figures of central power and authority were the judges, prophets, and priests that God used to bring His word to the people.
But the Israelites wanted a king. They wanted to be a powerful nation like the countries around them. Although this wasn’t God’s original plan, He allowed the prophet Samuel to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. When Saul proved unfaithful to God, Samuel anointed David—the youngest son of an obscure family, with no connection or claim to the throne—to succeed Saul.

But that promise took years to fulfill. At first David was the younger son who stayed at home while his brothers went off to war. Later he was the young hero who killed a giant; the musician whose playing soothed the king’s nerves; the best friend of the king’s son; married to (and then divorced from!) the king’s daughter; and finally an outlaw on the run, head of a group of desperate men who lived in hills and caves. David’s teens and 20s were filled with narrow escapes, desperate measures, and brushes with death.

Most of us don’t live at that level of excitement, but we can relate to the boy who was anointed by Samuel, looking forward to being king. We all have our hopes and dreams for the future. God assures us that He has a plan for our lives, yet we often don’t see how it’s ever going to be accomplished. From the story of David we can learn about patient faith and trust in God.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Drawing a Time Line

It’s often difficult for students to get a sense of events happening in history, especially when a Bible passage (like this week’s) covers a long period of time with many events. You can show students how to draw a time line by demonstrating on the chalkboard or whiteboard, using your own life or anyone else’s life as an example. Draw a horizontal line, and mark key life events on it in the order they occurred. Students can practice the skill by drawing a time line of important events in their own lives. Then apply the skill to the Bible story. Individually or as a group, draw a time line of the events that happen in this story. This will help students to grasp the outlines of the story and to see cause and effect in the story’s events.

Besides being king of Israel, David was known as a poet and musician who composed many of the psalms in our Bible. If you read the Psalms you’ll see that the full range of human experience is represented there—joy, faith, despair, anger, fear. David wrote about the highs and lows of his experience.

If you were to write a psalm that expressed where you are in your life path and your walk with God right now, what would it say? Take a few minutes to write a short prayer to God that tells what you are feeling and...
what you need from God right now. This is not to be shared with anyone unless you want to. When you’ve written your psalm, keep it in your Bible and share it with God in your private prayer time. Remember that whether you feel glad, sad, mad, afraid, impatient, or alone, it’s OK to tell God what you really feel—just as David did. He is watching, He is listening, and He does have a plan for your life!

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

David waited, worked, and fought to become king of Israel from the time he was a teenager till he was in his late 30s. He never stopped believing that God had a plan and that God was on his side, even when things got difficult. His faith was eventually rewarded when he sat upon the throne of Israel.

As a young person, you can be assured that God has a plan for your life. As He says to the people of Israel in Jeremiah 29:11, He has plans to give you hope and a future. But those plans may not always seem obvious to you. Sometimes the path in front of us gets dark, and we have nothing but faith to move us forward. When you get discouraged and begin to doubt that God is working in your life, remember David and his long road to the throne. Even in the darkest hours, when he was living in caves and on the run for his life, David was in God’s care, in God’s plan. And so are you.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 69.

*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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
The hour for the coronation was appointed; the man who had been expelled from the court of Saul, who had fled to the mountains and hills and to the caves of the earth to preserve his life, was about to receive the highest honor that can be conferred upon man by his fellow man. . . . The time had come, and David, by solemn rite, was consecrated to his office as God’s vicegerent. The scepter was placed in his hands . . . , and the people gave their pledges of loyalty. The diadem was placed upon his brow, and the coronation ceremony was over. Israel had a king by divine appointment. He who had waited patiently for the Lord, beheld the promise of God fulfilled” (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 701, 702).
what do you think?

Which statement best describes your attitude when you have to wait a long time for something?

- I feel frustrated and angry, and everyone knows it.
- I feel angry, but I keep the anger inside and it stresses me out.
- I really don’t care.
- I feel excited because I know the thing will be worth waiting for.
- I try to change the situation to see if I can make things happen faster.
- I lose interest and move on to something else.

into the story

“In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. ‘Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?’ he asked. ‘The Lord said, ‘Go up.’”

“David asked, ‘Where shall I go?’ ‘To Hebron,’ the Lord answered.

“So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns. Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. . . .

“Ish-Bosheth son of Saul was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned two years. The house of Judah, however, followed David.”

“The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time. David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker. . . .

“Abner conferred with the elders of Israel and said, ‘For some time you have wanted to make David your king. Now do it! For the Lord promised David, “By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies.”’

“Abner also spoke to the Benjamites in person. Then he went to Hebron to tell David everything that Israel and the whole house of Benjamin wanted to do. When Abner, who had twenty men with him, came to David at Hebron, David prepared a feast for him and his men. Then Abner said to David, ‘Let me go at once and assemble all Israel for my lord the king, so that they may make a compact with you, and that you may rule over all that your heart desires.’ So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.”

“All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, ‘We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, “You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.”’

“When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.”

(2 Samuel 2:1-4, 10; 3:1, 17-21; 5:1-3, NIV)

did you know?

What did it mean to be a king in Bible times? A king was far more than just a head of state, much more powerful than a president or prime minister today. While a king in the ancient world would usually have advisors or counselors, he wasn’t required to take their advice. He was considered “above the law.” Everything in the nation was believed to be the king’s property—including all the people—and the king was free to use the land, its resources, and its people as he chose.

The idea of having a king was new for the people of Israel. Until Saul was chosen king, the Israelites had had no single, all-powerful ruler except God. The role of king placed a huge amount of power in the hands of one man. He couldn’t be voted out of office—removed only by death! When David was crowned king, people in Israel hoped to have a king who would rule justly and follow God’s laws, rather than one who would abuse his power and make his people suffer as so many kings at that time did.
If God had chosen David as king, why did David have to fight a long and bloody civil war to secure his right to the throne?

Do David’s actions throughout this story indicate that he was, in fact, following God’s will? Why or why not?

What was David’s attitude toward his defeated enemies? What does this tell us about David?

How do you think David felt about finally becoming king after waiting so long?

What type of leader do you think David was, considering that the elders of Israel asked that he become king over them as well as over Judah?

How do you think David was able to maintain his faith in God, and his trust in God’s promise, when he had to wait so long and fight so hard to become king?

“After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do’” (Acts 13:22, NIV).

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).

“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31, NKJV).

“Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness” (Psalm 72:1, NIV).

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, NKJV).

“I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness and the willingness to remain vulnerable.” —Joseph Addison, 18th-century English writer.

“Never think that God’s delays are God’s denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out. Patience is genius.” —George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, 18th-century French scientist.
Sabbath

David was called by God as a young boy to become Israel’s king, yet he had to wait for many years and experience many hardships before he finally wore the crown. What do you think kept him going during his years as an outlaw? What obstacles did he still face even after he was crowned king of Judah?

During those years, David’s faith must have wavered at times. It seemed as if God’s promise was so far from being fulfilled. Yet the difficult experiences of those years prepared him to become the king Israel needed.

How do you feel when you pray and do not seem to see results? Why does God’s plan sometimes include waiting, struggling, and learning?

Second Samuel 5:3 tells us that after David’s long years of struggle and hardship he finally received his promised reward: he became king of all Israel. We too will receive God’s blessings if we learn to wait patiently for Him.

Sunday

When we read the stories of King David, we step into a world very different from our own. It’s often more like a fantasy novel than like the world we know: a world where kings rule by absolute power and disputes are settled by hand-to-hand combat. A world where a young man’s destiny can be changed forever by a prophecy that takes half a lifetime to fulfill.

Yet in this remote and ancient world, God taught His people lessons that are still relevant today. How clear is your sense that God has a plan for your life? Even if it isn’t clear, or easy to trace, in what ways are you able to believe that it is there?

Like David, we may spend years preparing for our destiny, but those are never wasted years. God is with us as He was with David throughout the years in the wilderness—teaching, guiding, training.

Monday

The fulfillment of the prophecy Samuel made when David was a teenager finally came about on the day that David was crowned king of the united kingdom of Israel and Judah. God kept His promise, just as God always does.

How does the story of David help you trust God’s promises? How many years did he have to wait to become king of all Judah and Israel?

It may take a long time before others see and recognize what God has seen in you all along—the person you are capable of becoming. During the years David was a shepherd boy, an outlaw, and a pretender to the throne, God always saw him as a king. Eventually, others recognized the person God had created David to be.

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight section of the lesson. As Ellen White describes in this passage, life takes unexpected twists and turns. Just look at the lives of celebrities who can be popular and adored one minute, hated or forgotten the next. But when we, like David, allow God to take control of our lives, we can be assured that life’s twists and turns will always end up being for our good. Can you think of some “ups and downs” in your life that have worked out for the best in the end?

Wednesday

This week’s Punch Lines come from various places in the Bible. Choose the one that speaks most directly to you and look it up, noting the context in which it is written. How does that verse, its context, the account of King David’s life, and yours all relate to one another?

Thursday

Can you think of an area in your life where it’s hard for you to trust God’s promises? Maybe you’ve prayed for help in a situation but don’t see any immediate results. As you think of David’s long journey to the throne, write a brief prayer telling God what you want to happen in your situation, and promising to trust Him with the future outcome. (Use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.)

Friday

David was probably just about the age you are now when he was anointed by the prophet Samuel and began his journey to the throne. By age 30, he was king of Israel. Where do you imagine yourself at age 30? Take a little time to picture your own future. Do you believe that God has a plan for you? Do you have a sense that He is calling you toward a particular role, or is the future still very unclear for you? Do you trust Him to lead you in the direction that’s best for you?

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 69. *A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
the golden age of Israel

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
The early years of David’s reign were considered a “golden age” in Israel’s history. After the years of conflict and civil war after Saul’s death, David’s coronation marked the beginning of a period of peace and prosperity. Israel defeated their old enemies, the Philistines. David showed mercy to his defeated enemies, the family of Saul. He established his new capital city at Jerusalem and brought the ark of the covenant back to that city. His eventual goal was to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem, but this was a goal that was to be realized not by David, but by his son Solomon. David’s success as king was due to his faithfulness to God, but success also created temptations for David, just as it does for anyone—the temptation to trust in his own strength rather than relying on God’s power as he had been forced to do during the long, hard years before he became king.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that faithfulness to God is sometimes—though not always—rewarded with success in this life.
• Feel they can trust God with the success or failure of their dreams.
• Respond by thanking God for the blessings He has given and trying to use those blessings to bless others.

III. EXPLORE
$\text{Joy} \quad \text{Praise} \quad \text{The Judgment}$
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 the student lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Divide into groups of three or four and give each group poster board, magazines and catalogues to cut up, scissors, glue, and markers. Ask each group to make a collage that illustrates the concept of “success.”

When the groups have finished, discuss their posters. Do the images they chose illustrate success from the world’s point of view or from God’s? Can the two ever be the same? Give examples of people who are successful both by worldly terms and on God’s terms. What opportunities do such people have? What special challenges or dangers might they face?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
A Buddhist parable tells of a rich man who was unhappy with his life. He had lots of money, but had to travel and be away from his family all the time. His life
was very stressful. He envied the lifestyle of his poor friend, who had almost no money but was happily married and content in his home life.

One day he told this to another man, who said, “If you wish your life could be more like the life your poor friend enjoys, why not try giving away some of your money to him?” The rich man immediately gave several hundred thousand dollars to his poor friend. He could easily afford it, but it was enough to transform the poor man’s life.

At first, the poor man was ecstatic. But then he began to worry about where he should keep the money, how he should invest it, and whether it might be stolen. He and his wife, who had previously been so happy together, began to quarrel about how to spend the money. Finally they decided that the money was destroying their peaceful and happy life, and they agreed to give it back.

Blessings—money, success, other good things—can come into anyone’s life, but they don’t necessarily bring happiness unless they are accompanied by the proper spirit. In fact, success can be just as much of a spiritual problem as failure, unless we learn how to deal with it properly.

### II. TEACHING THE STORY

#### Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

A lot of times as Christians we focus on how to deal with hardship, difficulty, and failure. But how do we deal with the good things that happen? Hardship causes some people to lose their faith in God—but so does success! Sometimes when people get ahead in this world, they begin to trust in themselves rather than in God. They may forget to be grateful to God for His blessings, or forget to share their blessings with people who are less fortunate.

We all have hardships and difficulties. But we also have all been given blessings, talents, and abilities. This week’s lesson uses the story of King David’s most successful years to explore how we can respond when God is doing good things in our lives.

#### Out of the Story for Teachers

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

Brainstorm with the group about the qualities that you think make a good leader. Write them on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart as the group comes up with ideas.

- Would these be good qualities for a leader today?
- What about for a king in David’s time?
- What differences are there between what was required for a leader then, and what we look for today? What are the similarities?

Discuss how David’s personal qualities and experience measured up to the list.

- What made David a good king?
- In the light of difficulties David faced on the road to becoming king, what strengths do you think he gained during those years that helped him when he was king?
- How do you think becoming king changed David?

Look in the Bible passages for evidence to support the group’s answers to those questions.

### Sharing Context and Background

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

When God has blessed us with good things, the appropriate response is gratitude. One of the reasons that King David was a “man after God’s own heart” was that he knew how to respond in joy and gratitude to the good things God had given him. The prayer David prayed after the prophet Nathan told him he was not called to build God’s Temple demonstrates that David realized all his success was due to God. He gave God credit for placing him on the throne and keeping him there.

David’s name is associated with many of the beautiful ancient hymns in the Bible book we know as Psalms. Though David did not write all the psalms, he is believed to have written many of them. The psalms David wrote express the whole range of human emotions, from fear and sadness to hope and gladness. Many of them are beautiful hymns of praise expressing King David’s gratitude for all God had done for him.

There are many other interesting events that take place in the overall biblical passages for this week: 2 Samuel 5:6-25; 6; 7; 9; 10, with commentary in Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70. A few notes relating to other incidents besides Into the Story follow:

**King’s ownership of the city (2 Samuel 5:9):** “The
title ‘City of David’ may reflect the ancient practice that the capital city became not only the royal residence but the personal estate of the reigning king and his successors . . . much the same way that Omri bought the site for his new capital, Samaria (1 Kings 16:24).”—Bible Background Commentary

David’s activity (2 Samuel 6:14-21): “The verb translated ‘danced’ in verses 14 and 16 is used only in this passage. The use of the word in the related language of Ugaritic shows it to be something one does with fingers, thus suggesting snapping or waving fingers. The verb translated ‘leaping’ in verse 16 is used only here and in a slightly different form in Genesis 49:24, where it is a description of the agility of the arms. In the parallel passage, 1 Chronicles 15:29, the verb translated ‘dancing’ is only used of human activity twice (once parallel to singing and rejoicing, Job 21:11; and once opposite to mourning, Eccl. 3:4). It generally conveys swaying, trembling or vibrating movements. It is possible, then, that David is not involved in dance at all but is swaying his arms and snapping or waving his fingers.”—Bible Background Commentary

David’s action contrasted to normal (2 Samuel 9:7): “Mephibosheth had good cause to be afraid of David. There is wide precedent in Mesopotamian texts for the elimination of all rival claimants to the throne when a king comes to power (compare Baasha’s murder of Jeroboam’s family in 1 Kings 15:29). Such purges also occurred years later as a form of revenge for political opposition or rebellion attempted against previous rulers. For example, Ashurbanipal mutilated, executed, and fed the bodies of his grandfather’s rivals to dogs as part of his first official acts as king of Assyria. David, however, treats Mephibosheth, the only surviving male member of the royal family, as the rightful heir to Saul’s estates. His generosity is coupled with the command to eat at David’s table. In this way Mephibosheth is treated with honor, though some have noted it also keeps him under observation should he be inclined to subversion.”—Bible Background Commentary

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Arts and Crafts

Although many high school-aged youth feel that they’ve outgrown “arts and crafts,” students have a variety of learning styles. Making a collage, as suggested in the opening activity for this lesson, allows those whose skills are more visual than verbal to explore the lesson ideas in their own way. Be sure to provide a variety of magazines to cut up that you know will contain pictures relevant to the subject of the collage. For example, for a collage about success, you might choose business and celebrity magazines that will contain pictures of wealthy and powerful people, as well as mission magazines that will show pictures of people who have found success through serving others.

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

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

Read Psalm 63 together as a group. You may read in unison (making sure everyone is using the same translation) or assign a verse at a time for people to read. When the psalm is done, ask: What does this psalm tell us about David’s relationship with God? How did he relate to God in good times and in bad times? What can we learn from David that will help us when we deal with both good times and bad times in our Christian lives?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Every life includes highs and lows. For David, the early years of his reign were a “high” time when he finally experienced victory and success after years of waiting and struggle. These years were a “high” time for Israel, too, as the nation experienced unity, strength, and prosperity unlike anything they had known before.

We all know we need to cling to God during the low times, but what about when things are going well? That’s when we need to praise God for what He has done for us. That’s when we need to share His blessings with others, as David did by ruling Israel justly and showing compassion to the relatives of his defeated enemies. Most of all, our successful times are the times when we need to continue trusting God, recognizing that our success is not our own achievement but a gift from Him. When hard times come again—and they will—we need to know we still have God's power to rely on.


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 70.

* 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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
“The kingdom of Israel had now reached in extent the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, and afterward repeated to Moses: ‘Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates’ Genesis 15:18. Israel had become a mighty nation, respected and feared by surrounding peoples. In his own realm David’s power had become very great. He commanded, as few sovereigns in any age have been able to command, the affections and allegiance of his people. He had honored God, and God was now honoring him” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 716).
what do you think?

Choose the best response to the statements below:
When things are going well for me, I feel . . .

a. guilty
b. worried that it can’t last
c. excited
d. grateful

I think that God has blessed me . . .

a. a little bit
b. not that much, right now
c. a great deal
d. not at all

INTO THE STORY

"After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, ‘Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.’"

"Nathan replied to the king, ‘Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you.’"

"That night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:"

"‘Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’’"

"‘Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies."

"‘The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’""

(2 Samuel 7:1-16, NIV)

did you know?

Historians think King David probably ruled from about 1004-965 B.C. It was during his reign that Israel became recognized as a nation rather than just a collection of tribes. King David established Israel’s power in two ways: first, by defeating Israel’s enemies, particularly the Philistines, and second, by forming alliances with friendly neighboring countries. “His authority was recognized from the borders of Egypt and the Red Sea to the banks of the Euphrates.” (See www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org.) He united the 12 tribes and established the nation’s capital at Jerusalem. David’s reign was later looked back on as the “Golden Age” of Israel’s history.
“He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever” (Psalm 18:50, NIV).

“I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David from the deadly sword” (Psalm 144:9, 10, NIV).

“And now, Lord God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever” (2 Samuel 7:25, 26, NIV).

“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:31-33, NIV).

“Success is more dangerous than failure, the ripples break over a wider coastline.”—Graham Greene, 20th-century English novelist.

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”—Colin Powell, general, U.S. Army (ret.), secretary of state (2001-2005).

“Always remember that striving and struggle precede success, even in the dictionary.”—Sarah Ban Breathnach, 20th-century U.S. author.
Sabbath
Success affects different people in different ways. After experiencing many hardships in his youth, David was richly blessed by God when he became king. Read his words in 2 Samuel 7:18-29. Sum up in your own words how David responded to the blessings God had given him:

What can we learn from David about how we should respond to the good things God does for us?

Sunday
As David reflected on how God had blessed him by making him king, he wanted to do something to honor God in return. His idea seemed like a good one: he would build a permanent temple in which to worship God, to replace the movable tabernacle that had been God's house in Israel ever since the days of wandering in the wilderness.

What was the first thing David decided to do to secure God's presence in his new capital city? How did God respond? What was God's response to the second part of David's plan?

Monday
God promised David that a king from his line of descendants would sit on the throne and rule Israel forever. At first glance, this seems like a promise that was not fulfilled. The line of kings descended from David ruled only until the Babylonian captivity—and for most of that time, the nation was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, with the kings of David's line ruling only in Judah.

Christians believe that God's promise was fulfilled in a spiritual sense through Jesus, who came from King David's family line and whose reign will last into eternity. What evidence can you find in the Bible for that view? (See Acts 2:29-36 for one example.)

God's promises to us are not always fulfilled in the way we expect them to be. God's plan may be far greater than we can comprehend, yet we can always trust Him to eventually bring good out of whatever happens.

Tuesday
As Ellen White points out in the Flashlight quote the reign of David was a golden age for Israel in terms of power and influence among the nations. For a brief time the 12 tribes were united into one kingdom that was victorious over its enemies and prosperous within its own borders.

Why do you think God blessed David's rule in spite of the very human and serious mistakes he made? What can we do to open the way for God's blessing in our lives?

When our lives are in harmony with God's will, it's easier for God to pour out His blessings on us and to use us to bless others.

Wednesday
David experienced success during the early years of his reign. He had worked hard and earned that success, but success has its dangers as well as its benefits. A successful person can come to believe that he is "self-made."

While David never lost his sense of gratitude to God, unfortunately he fell to the temptation to put his faith in himself. How is it possible to be successful while not becoming overconfident, or acting as if ordinary rules don't apply to you?

Thursday
How well do you handle success? Check one or more responses below:

___ I haven't experienced enough success to know.
___ Success worries me. I'm not comfortable with it.
___ I'm grateful when God sends good things my way.
___ I get conceited and make mistakes when things are going well.

When you are trying to succeed at something—school, sports, anything that's important to you—you probably pray and ask God to help you do well. Next time, also pray that if you succeed, God will help you to handle success well and use it to glorify Him and benefit others—just as David did during the "golden years" of his reign.

Friday
Gratitude is good for you! When you reflect on the good things in your life, it lifts your spirits and strengthens your faith in God.

Make a list of 10 things you are grateful for. (Use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.) Pray a prayer of thanks to God for those blessings. Then, think of other people who have been part of those good things. Write a card, note, or e-mail to each of those people to say thanks for what they have done for you.

This week's reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
the fall and rise of David

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
David’s storied life is characterized by devotion to God. But the praise that would naturally be given to David is quieted by one disgraceful season in his life. On the surface, David’s desire for Bathsheba is often used as a starting point in discussing what went wrong as David simply “gave in” to temptation. But murdering the husband of his mistress and arranging a royal cover-up signify a condition in David’s heart that goes way beyond succumbing to a moment of weakness. Ellen White claims: “It was the spirit of self-confidence and self-exaltation that prepared the way for David’s fall” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717). David’s fall was the result of a subtle shift from recognizing God as the source of his success to believing that his royal future was well-deserved. David’s misdeeds are clear and well known.

Perhaps the pressing issue in this story is not David’s misdeeds, but his missed deeds. David missed the opportunity to repent and surrender his humanness to God and submit to God’s power and grace. Lust, adultery, deceit, and pride all find their way into the story of David because those elements were allowed to grow in his heart going unchecked by repentance. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, warned, “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28, NIV). Sin seems to be sinful only when it is discovered in action, but young people need to examine and discuss the source of David’s debacle—self. David lost his way before the whole mess became visible to others.

Students need to discover that David’s conviction and sincere repentance, which occurred after the fact, is actually the way to avoid such a fall.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Understand the way sin, repentance, and grace work in our lives. (Know)
- Experience the joy of repentance and trust in God’s grace. (Feel)
- Commit to regular repentance and submission to God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Marriage
- Boredom
- Confession/repentance

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.

At what point do you think it would be the most difficult to turn around and confess? When do you think it would be easiest? Why?

In groups of two or three, share a hypothetical
trays the horror of sin but magnifies the amazing grace of God.

Read carefully this story-making note of insights that may be new to you.

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.

While this story is one of the more familiar narratives in the Old Testament, read 2 Samuel 11:1-17 first; then examine the dramatic conclusion and answer or do the following:

- Circle all the key people mentioned in this story.
- What are some reasons that you think David relentlessly pursued the course he chose?
- What details of 2 Samuel 11:1-17 are new to you?
- Why do you think Nathan confronted David with a parable?
- How might David's reaction to the story have been different with another approach?
- How would you describe David's repentance?
- Do you think David sincerely repented because he was convicted of his sin or because he was caught? How do you tell the difference?
- What do you think is the key verse or sentence in this story? Why?
- Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What message(s) does it convey to us today?

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

Acts 13:22; Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 8:12.

Sharing Context and Background

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

Consider a few insights to common questions on this story:

1. Why was David back home when his men were fighting a battle?

   This story takes place in the springtime, and his soldiers were out fighting the Ammonites while David was lounging around Jerusalem playing king. This fact is a window into the mind of David. Israel wanted a king—a leader. Remember the hopeful claim a king would bring: “Then we will be like all the other nations,
with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:20, NIV). David was no longer the mighty king leading his people to victory but the self-absorbed king who had people do his bidding.

2. Why didn’t Bathsheba resist? Wasn’t she as guilty as David?

Clearly, Bathsheba was obligated to do whatever the king asked. Perhaps she was flattered by David’s attraction. Either way, the law of God states in Leviticus 20:10 that both David and Bathsheba were guilty: “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” If the husband, Uriah, had discovered the true situation, he would have been allowed under Levitical law to put them both to death.

3. What happened to David’s keen sense of right and wrong?

Clearly, this story portrays David losing all his moral reference points. In a way, it was as though he was above the law. This is not hard to understand when you look at the prevailing customs of Eastern rulers. The crimes that merited punishment and judgment were not applicable to the king, so leaders did not feel an obligation to restraint or caution. David became comfortable with the idea that he could suspend or live above the laws of God and of the people.

4. Why did David tell Uriah to “go down to your house and wash your feet”?

Since Bathsheba had become pregnant as a result of her affair with David, the young king thought he could cover his sin if Uriah went and had sex with Bathsheba. The phrase “wash your feet” was a euphemism for engaging in sex. David simply wanted to find another way to obscure his sin without admitting it. But Uriah was a dedicated soldier and leader and would not go home during a time of war and be entertained with distractions. So Uriah, instead of sleeping with his wife, stayed the night on the palace grounds.

5. Why did Nathan use a parable?

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Teaching by Storytelling

Perhaps the oldest teaching strategy is storytelling. The reason stories are so effective is that they immediately arrest and engage the students. Most of our lives can be described in a series of stories. For example, if you were to tell three stories from your life that were pivotal moments in shaping who you are today, what stories would you tell? When you use stories to teach, remember that the story is often the lesson, and if told or read well, it needs very little explanation. You might read a story and ask, “What do you think this story teaches?” or “Why do you think I chose this story?”

RABBI 101

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.
Prophets have always used dramatic methods to get the point across. Whether it was fire from heaven on Mount Carmel or walking through town with a yoke around the prophet's neck, the purpose of such an approach was to arrest attention and to emphasize the point. Also, David had diluted his own thinking so much that he could rationalize anything. Had Nathan confronted David directly, he most likely would have become defensive and not admitted to his wrong. However, when David made a final judgment of the man in the story, he could no longer hide.

David's repentance is key to this story. If you want to read the song he wrote as a testimony to this event, you can read it in Psalm 51.

III. CLOSING

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

Invite the students to create and write a brief parable that would have a similar impact as Nathan's story had on King David. Students should work in groups of two to four. Invite the students to read the parables and have the other students ascertain what the central message of the story is.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Ellen White comments about how quiet the Scriptures are in praising people for the virtues and skills that they demonstrate throughout the course of their life. In Patriarchs and Prophets she asserts: “All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 717). Whether David had vanquished a lion, a bear, or a giant, a passionate song of praise to God was never far from his mind or his lips. But as time wore on and success framed David's life, the young king failed to recognize God's plan at work in his life.

His affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband mark David's glorious rise to greatness with a dark stain of shame. But what makes this story so powerful is how we see the deep and earnest repentance David makes as well as the cleansing power of God's forgiveness. Do you sense that God is urging you to repent and turn from a course of behavior or a pattern of thinking that is destructive? You can try to ignore it or cover it up, but David would plead with you to be honest with yourself and with God and experience the liberty of God's promised forgiveness.

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 71.

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"Whoever under the reproof of God will humble the soul with confession and repentance, as did David, may be sure that there is hope for him. Whoever will in faith accept God’s promises, will find pardon. The Lord will never cast away one truly repentant soul" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 726).

**keytext**

"Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.’"  
(2 Samuel 12:13, NIV)
It is a well-known truth that dishonesty has a way of building and compounding the more one tries to maintain the lie. At what point on the continuum do you think it is most difficult for someone to confess and repent of a lie?

1—When you first realize that lying is an option.
2—After you have made the first step into dishonesty.
3—After you have had to cover the first lie with another.
4—When all the evidence is making it clear that you have been dishonest but it is too big to own.

Why? ________________________
____________________________
____________________________
____________________________

n 2 Samuel 12:5 (NIV) the Bible says, “David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.’

‘Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.”

‘This is what the Lord says: “Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.”’

‘Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.’”

(2 Samuel 12:1-13, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

While this story is one of the more familiar narratives in the Old Testament, read 2 Samuel 11:1-17 first, then examine the dramatic conclusion and answer the following questions.

Circle all the key people mentioned in this story.

What are some reasons you think David relentlessly pursued the course he chose?

Are any details of this story new to you?

Why do you think Nathan confronted David with a parable?

How might David’s reaction to the story have been different if Nathan had used a different approach?

How would you describe David’s repentance? Do you think David sincerely repented because he was convicted of his sin or because he was caught? How do you tell the difference?

What do you think is the key verse or sentence in this story? Why?

What do you think this story is in the Bible? What message(s) does it convey to us today?

punch lines

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalm 51:10-12, NIV).

“Then I let it all out; I said, ‘I’ll make a clean breast of my failures to God.’ Suddenly the pressure was gone—my guilt dissolved, my sin disappeared” (Psalm 32:5, Message).

“For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable” (Hebrews 4:12, 13, NLT).

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7, KJV).

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27, 28, NIV).

“Years of repentance are necessary in order to blot out a sin in the eyes of men, but one tear of repentance suffices with God.”—French proverb.

“Sin would have few takers if its consequences occurred immediately.”—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century U.S. writer, scholar, preacher.

other eyes

Years of repentance are necessary in order to blot out a sin in the eyes of men, but one tear of repentance suffices with God.”—French proverb.

“Sin would have few takers if its consequences occurred immediately.”—W. T. Purkiser, 20th-century U.S. writer, scholar, preacher.
Sabbath
Read and respond to the exercise in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. Some may acknowledge the wrong they do and immediately confess and ask forgiveness. Others give in to the notion that they can escape the shame of their wrongdoing by another lie. In Hebrews 4:13 (NIV) the Bible says: “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” How does being aware that God knows everything impact whether you expand on a lie or confess it?

Sunday
As you read the Into the Story passage for this week answer the questions in the Out of the Story section. What is the message you think God is trying to tell you? What part of David’s experience do you relate to the most? From David’s fall with Bathsheba to the point where he confessed and found forgiveness with God, what part of the story speaks to you today?

Monday
The Key Text this week conveys the full and complete repentance of David saying, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die” (2 Samuel 12:13, NIV). With all the people that David hurt in this whole experience, why do you think he begins with confessing his sin against the Lord?

When we reflect on the hurtful things we do to others we often fail to recognize what it does to God. Consider for a moment how your thoughts or behavior affect God.

Tuesday
Take a moment to read and reflect on the amazing promise written by Ellen White in this week’s Flashlight quote. What part of this promise would you like to claim today?

Write a prayer to God embracing this promise to you. Think about someone you know who responds to God’s voice promptly when they sense they have done something wrong. For some the words “I was wrong” or “I was being selfish” or “I’m sorry” ring with humility and sincerity. How has such a person shaped your life? How do you see their example helping you in the future?

Wednesday
Read the Punch Lines for this week’s lesson and highlight the key phrases that speak to you in each verse. Reflect for a moment why you think those phrases are particularly relevant to you today and write out your own paraphrase of the one verse you want to share with someone else this week. Pray that God will cause you to encounter someone who will need a promise found in these passages and be looking for an opportunity to share how the story of David’s fall and repentance has deepened your walk with God.

Thursday
In what area of your life do you struggle with temptation, and not just the temptation itself, but the hiding of the fact when you give in to it? Maybe this week you could share your struggle with a godly friend who can pray for you and hold you accountable for making the right choice in your next hour of temptation. There’s a freedom that comes from sharing your struggle with a safe friend. They may strengthen you in ways that might be surprising. As you do this, write down what you think was most helpful: (1) the liberating feeling of honest confession; (2) the support you felt because your friend was praying for you; (3) the knowledge that your friend was going to hold you accountable for a good choice.

Friday
Reflect on David’s struggle story and ruminate on how his struggle mirrors aspects of your own life. How have you reacted toward God after making a regrettable choice? Do you tend to first try to find a way of escape? When in your life have you simply hoped the problem would just go away? Think of the rich joy and grace that awaits anyone who will face God with honest and humble repentance, trusting in God’s forgiving nature.

*This week’s reading*
Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 71.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Since this Sabbath falls on Christmas Eve, the lesson merges the seven lessons preceding it on the life of David with the Christmas story. The confluence of these two topics showcases the significance of Jesus as the Son of David.

The Christmas story recorded in both Matthew and Luke include the genealogy of Jesus. Usually when the Christmas story is shared, however, that slice of the story is completely ignored. No doubt the Bible writers did not intend for the reader to skip “the begats.” The details of Jesus’ background are critical to understanding the full story of the Incarnation. Listing the ancestry of Jesus underscores the fact that He was indeed the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of David. In the 17 different verses in the New Testament where Jesus was referred to as the Son of David, it was primarily meant to refer to His Messianic title as the Old Testament prophesied concerning Him.

There are many relevant talking points in this lesson. For example, by highlighting some of the unsavory characters in Jesus’ family tree you may wish to emphasize the unconditional love of God. No matter how spectacular our sin, God is not afraid to include every one of us in His family.

Whatever elements you choose to feature, the lesson should be all about Jesus—His ancestry, His birth as the fulfillment of prophecy, His life and claims to be the Messiah (i.e., the Son of David), and His death as our only hope of salvation. Focus on Jesus and you can’t go wrong.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• See the importance of genealogies in the ancient world. (Know)
• Sense the validity in Jesus’ claim of being the Messiah. (Feel)
• Be challenged with the question Jesus put to His disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Life of Christ
• Prophecy
• God’s Unconditional Love

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, grade the quiz and have each student share briefly their family history.

As an alternate way to introduce the topic, instruct each student to write a catchy, gripping opener to a book (give them the option of texting the assignment to you). Share the following examples from the “100 Best First Lines of Novels,” compiled by the editors of American Book Review:
• “Someone must have slandered Josef K., for..."
one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested” (The Trial, 1925, by Franz Kafka).

- “This is the saddest story I have ever heard” (The Good Soldier, 1915, by Ford Madox Ford).
- “The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel” (Neuromancer, 1984, by William Gibson).
- “Mother died today” (The Stranger, 1942, by Albert Camus).
- “It was the day my grandmother exploded” (The Crow Road, 1992, by Iain M. Banks).

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

After sharing catchy openers, transition into the lesson by saying something like “Now that’s the way to start a book. Grab the reader’s attention. This begs the question What was Matthew thinking? Clearly his introduction would land him at the top of a list called ‘100 Worst First Lines of Books.’ Just listen to his opening [for effect, read all of “the begats”]:

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; and Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; and Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; and Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; and Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; and Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; and Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon; and after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; and Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ’ [Matthew 1:1-16, KJV].”

There you have the first two sentences in Matthew’s book. Perhaps you dislike the list as much as the spell check on the computer! Again, we ask: What was Matthew thinking?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

In your own words explain:

In ancient Israel, they loved genealogies. Imagine their world: no ipads, no ipods, no TV. At night people would sit around the fire and tell stories. One of their favorite methods of storytelling was listing names. This gave people a sense of identity, passing from one generation to another. Hearing the lists they would conclude, “I’m not just a rootless, illiterate nomad. Ask me who I am, I’ll tell you about my people.” Still today in the Middle East there are tribal nomads who can spend hours just reciting the names of ancestors.

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.

Jesus lived in an oral culture. For the most part, they did not keep written records. This meant that the only way to establish legal status, financial standing, vocational credibility, and property rights was to depend on their memory of genealogies. For example, if you wanted to be a priest in Jesus’ day, you had to prove that you were in a line of descendants dating back to Aaron from the tribe of Levi.

So it’s not surprising that Matthew would begin his book in the manner that he did. People would have loved that. To establish the identity of the Messiah—this rabbi who spoke with unrivaled authority—and show that this Anointed One came from the right line was not only captivating but also very important.

From the beginning of his Gospel, Matthew is establishing the fact that this baby “born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod” (Matthew 2:1, NIV) was indeed the Messiah, the Son of David.

There is some dispute about Jesus’ genealogy in Luke. Some scholars argue that it is Mary’s genealogy. Others explain that it is Joseph’s legal genealogy as opposed to his biological genealogy, given that there was an adoption in Joseph’s ancestry. In either case, since Joseph was a faithful Jew, his marriage to Mary indicates that she was from the house of David as well,
since it was against the law to marry a person from a different ancestry. What is important to know is that Jesus descended from David through both parents, fulfilling the requirement for inheritance of the throne through Joseph, and fulfilling the prophecy of being the seed of David through Mary.

Sharing Context and Background

Explore with the students the scandalous background of the women that Matthew includes in the opening paragraph of his book. Explain to the students how the inclusion of these women in the lineage of the Messiah would have been a shocking attention-grabber to any reader in the ancient world.

Tamar

The first names mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah—would have been expected. But then he mentions “Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar” (Matthew 1:3, NIV). To include the name of a woman was shocking. To mention the name of Tamar was downright reprehensible.

Check out Genesis 38 for this R-rated scandal: Judah was going to choose a wife for his son, and he found a Canaanite woman named Tamar. He married her to his oldest boy, Er, who was then put to death because of his wickedness. Judah was then obligated to care for Tamar because he had taken her away from her homeland. But he abandoned her.

Being a woman in that day meant that Tamar had no legal rights. So she disguised herself as a cult prostitute and got business from her father-in-law. It was dark, she was veiled, and he didn’t recognize her. He slept with her and then gave her his staff as a pledge to pay her.

A few months later Judah was told that hiswidowed daughter-in-law Tamar was pregnant. He got all self-righteous, and he said: “Bring her out and have her burned to death!” (Genesis 38:24, NIV). Tamar brought the staff with her, and Judah was busted.

Rahab

Matthew continues: “Salmon, the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.” (Matthew 1:5, NIV). Here’s another pagan Gentile. She didn’t just pretend to be a prostitute; she was one. In the ancient world, if a woman was not married and she wasn’t under the care of a family, she basically had three choices: she could starve to death, she could beg, or she could be a prostitute.

Ruth

Next, Matthew mentions “Boaz, the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth” (Matthew 1:5, NIV). You may remember the story of Ruth, but there is something about her you may not know. Ruth was not just a Gentile; she was a Moabite. According to Genesis 19:37, the Moabites were the product of an incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters. Moabites were considered by the Israelites to be so unclean that the law said: “No . . . Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord, even down to the tenth generation” (Deuteronomy 23:3, NIV). The Israelites considered the

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.
Moabites to be the vilest people on the planet.

Bathsheba

Matthew is not done yet. “David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife” (Matthew 1:6, NIV). Remember Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba? Once again Matthew includes another sordid story. Uriah was a Hittite, which means Bathsheba was a Gentile by marriage.

It’s as if Matthew searched the Scriptures for the most unsavory folk he could find and then connected them to Jesus. This made for some riveting reading indeed!

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give each student a scarlet ribbon as a Christmas gift. Wrap each one individually and let them open the present at the end of class. See the summary below to connect the ribbon with the stories in this study. Close with an appeal to accept Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

Summary

Consider the scarlet ribbon that weaves its way through the genealogy of Jesus:

Tamar gives birth to twin boys. One of them reaches his hand out of her body first and the midwife ties a scarlet cord around his wrist. In this way they could identify the firstborn—indicating which boy would receive the inheritance. You see, there is a blessing that is being passed down from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Judah. The ultimate blessing, our inheritance of eternal life, will be the Deliverer who will come from this line.

The spies informed Rahab, “We’re coming back, and the city is going to be destroyed. Because of your kindness to us, however, you can just tie a scarlet cord to the window where you let us out, and we will spare you and your family. When we see the scarlet cord, it will be a sign, and you will be saved. The scarlet cord will be a sign of salvation” (see Joshua 2:17-21).

“Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him” (Matthew 27:27, 28, NIV). Indeed, the scarlet robe is a symbol of our inheritance. It is a symbol of our blessing. And it is a symbol of our salvation. 

As quoted at www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst;jsessionid=D2F03EA9AFE85ACB0955170D7D488861.inst3_2b?docId=5010937268.

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 70.

*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 Beginning of the End at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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**flashlight**

“The Pharisees had gathered close about Jesus as He answered the question of the scribe. Now turning He put a question to them: ‘What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?’ This question was designed to test their belief concerning the Messiah—to show whether they regarded Him simply as a man or as the Son of God. A chorus of voices answered, ‘The Son of David.’ This was the title which prophecy had given to the Messiah” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 608).
what do you think?

Here's a quiz to see how well you know genealogy:

1. You have the names of three siblings born between 1884 and 1887 and need to know the names of their parents. Which census would be the best one to start with?
   ___ 1880 ___ 1900 ___ 1910

2. The best place to start your genealogical research is . . .
   ___ the Internet ___ Grandma ___ the Mormon Library

3. Your grandfather's sister's daughter is your . . .
   ___ great-aunt ___ second cousin ___ first cousin once removed

4. You found several records that give your ancestor's birth date. Which source is most reliable?
   ___ 1834 baptismal record ___ 1850 census ___ 1902 death record

Answers:
1. 1900; the siblings were not born yet in 1880, and by 1910 they were probably not living with their parents.
2. Grandma; start with your relatives. The biggest regret family historians report is that they didn't interview relatives when they could.
3. First cousin once removed.
4. The baptismal record, because it was recorded when the event occurred—the closer the record to the event, the more reliable.

into the story

“I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

“A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:
Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,
Rama the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,
Nahshon the father of Salmon,
Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,
Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.

“David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, . . . and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”

“Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph,
the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos,
the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein,
the son of Joseph, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa,
the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel,
the son of Neri, the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer,
the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,
the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan,
the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, . . . the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”


did you know?

There are 17 verses in the New Testament that describe Jesus as the “Son of David.” But how is it possible for Jesus to be David’s “son” if David lived approximately 1,000 years before Jesus? Matthew 1 outlines the genealogical proof that Jesus was a direct descendant of David through Joseph, Jesus’ legal father. The genealogy in Luke 3 gives Jesus’ lineage through His mother, Mary. Thus, Jesus is a descendant of David, both through Joseph by adoption and Mary by blood.
punch lines

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit’” (Matthew 1:18-20, NIV).

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘How is it that they say the Christ is the Son of David?’” (Luke 20:41, NIV).

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5, 6, NIV).

Why do you think God tells David that He will be a father to his son and will punish him when he does wrong? Do you think this is a promise or a threat? (See Proverbs 3:12 and Hebrews 12:3-11).

How does the knowledge that God loves you too much to allow you to continue to do wrong and harm your relationship with Him, others, and yourself give you hope as you face life’s difficulties?

Scan through the genealogies (Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38) and underline all the names you have heard of.

Circle all the people who have stories with which you are familiar.

Star the names of the people whose story you know very well.

Both Matthew 1 and Luke 3 contain genealogies of Jesus. Read through each one and note how the two lists are similar and how they are different. For example, when the genealogies arrive at David, they split with David’s sons: “Nathan,” who is on Mary’s side, and “Solomon,” who is on Joseph’s side.

Similarities:

Differences:

Why do you suppose they are different?

“The Jews knew the Messiah must be of the seed of Abraham and a Son of David. Did you know there is only one Jew able to make such a claim? In A.D. 70, when the Romans sacked Jerusalem, all of the genealogical records of the Jewish people were destroyed. Thus, there is no Jew today who can claim with certainty and authority to be a Son of Abraham and a Son of David except Jesus. His genealogy recorded in this first chapter of Matthew is the only preserved genealogy that fits both requirements.” — Jon Courson’s Application Commentary for Matthew 1 (quoted at http://forums.jewsforjesus.org/showthread.php?tid=257&pid=19980).
**Sunday**

Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus would have sent shock waves through the community because of his inclusion of women. In the ancient world women did not establish bloodlines. They had no legal rights. They were treated as property—much like one might own a horse or cow today. What was most explosive, however, had to do with which women Matthew included.

Read the following stories of the women that Matthew includes and jot down a few of the scandalous details.

- **Tamar** (Matthew 1:3; Genesis 38)
- **Rahab** (Matthew 1:5; Joshua 2 and 6:22, 23; see also Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25)
- **Ruth** (Matthew 1:5; see also Genesis 19:37 and Deuteronomy 23:3 for background regarding Ruth’s ancestors, the Moabites)

**Monday**

Read the Key Text and explain why Luke said “so it was thought” that Jesus was the son of Joseph and David. Does the inclusion of this statement cast doubt on the divine origin of Jesus? Why or why not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Text</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luke 3:23</td>
<td>Jesus was thought to be the Son of David and Joseph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tuesday**

After reading the Flashlight section reflect on the question that Jesus put to the Pharisees: “What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?” Compare this question to the question that Jesus asked His disciples in Matthew 16:13—“Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

Is this the same question? Explain.

Consider what the following verses say about the identity of Christ and then complete the sentence:

Matthew 16:16—Jesus is ________________
John 3:16, 17—Jesus is ________________
John 10:30—Jesus is ________________
Colossians 1:13-23—Jesus is ________________

**Wednesday**

Read the three texts included in the Punch Lines section. How do Matthew 1:18-20 and Isaiah 53:5, 6 answer the question that Jesus poses in Luke 20:41?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Text</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 1:18-20</td>
<td>Jesus is the Son of Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 53:5, 6</td>
<td>Jesus is the Lamb of God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Thursday**

Reflecting on Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus, Martin Luther once said, “It is as though God intended for people to hear this genealogy and say to themselves, ‘Oh, Christ is the kind of person who is not ashamed of sinners. See, he even puts them in his family tree.’”

Have you ever felt like Jesus was ashamed of you? The next time you feel that you have disappointed Jesus, read Matthew 1 and remember that there is no sin that would cause Jesus to love you less. His love knows no boundaries. His family tree is loaded with bad apples like you and me—and that’s precisely why He came!

**Friday**

It is in the Gospel of Matthew where we are told that the soldiers put a scarlet robe on Jesus’ body. Scarlet is a symbol of scandal. Toward the end of Jesus’ life Matthew is saying, “Now you see the scarlet thread in the One who took on all of our sins. It is a sign of salvation, a symbol of grace, weaving all the way to a bloodstained cross. There’s room in the family for you. Will you accept Jesus’ invitation to join His family?”


*This week’s reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapter 70. The Desire of Ages, chapters 1–4.

*A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
**PREPARING TO TEACH**

I. SYNOPSIS

Love. Murder. Action. Passion. The story begins with Amnon, King David’s firstborn son (of his wife Ahinoam), lustfully obsessed with his half-sister Tamar (by Maacah, daughter of the king of Geshur). When Amnon shattered and shamed Tamar by raping her, David was furious, but, remembering his own seduction of Bathsheba, failed to punish his beloved first-born son for this crime. Tamar’s brother Absalom said nothing but secretly vowed revenge. Two years later, he had Amnon murdered. The death of his firstborn left David heartbroken, while Absalom fled to his maternal grandfather in Geshur.

Now David thought surely some punishment was in order, so he forbade Absalom to return despite longing to see him. Alas, this only made matters worse, for in the two years he was gone Absalom had plenty of time to sulk—and scheme to take his father’s throne.

After four years of winning the masses to his side, convincing them he’d fix their problems because he knew what it was like to be wronged, Absalom declared himself king and rallied the people to his side. King David and his crew fled Jerusalem. A battle loomed. David’s men defeated Absalom’s army, and though David had begged them to spare Absalom’s life, Joab stabbed him to death as he hung helplessly from a tree.

Having won a legendary string of military victories throughout his life, David was tempted to think too highly of himself—so Satan convinced him to make a census of the people for purposes of expanding the army. God’s anger over this prideful denial of His watch-care was as great as it had been for David’s adultery, and God asked David to pick his poison—three years of famine, three months of pursuit by his enemies, or three days of plague. David trusted God more than any man and begged, “Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men” (2 Samuel 24:14, NIV).

As a plague swept the nation, God grieved for His chosen people and told His angel, “Enough! Withdraw your hand” (verse 16, NIV). When David saw the angel standing over Jerusalem at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he prayed for the plague to end, and bought the land where the angel stood, building an altar there. The threshing floor became the site of Solomon’s Temple.

Numerous themes emerge from these action-packed, issues-rich stories. These include:
- God offers forgiveness and redemption, but sin still has major consequences.
- The importance of discipline and judgment for sin.
- The value of wise counsel and the importance of seeking God’s will first.
- The perils of power and pride, the need to trust in God.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand the consequences of sin. (Know)
- Feel the need to depend on God.
- Commit to depend on God for guidance. (Respond)
III. EXPLORE
- Family dynamics
- Resentment/retaliation
- Parents (relating to)
- Rebellion

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.

Public opinion. If any Bible story hinges on public opinion, it’s the rebellion of Absalom. With sex, royal politics, religion, and family all in the mix, everybody’s got a perspective. How would the various people relate to the story? Distribute index cards to your students, and have them consider, either as individuals or groups, how they’d relate to the unfolding drama of Amnon’s rape of Tamar, Absalom’s murder of Amnon and subsequent exile, Absalom’s scheme to steal his father’s crown, and the battle for the throne. Have them share their answers and ideas with the larger group.

The cast are:
- Tamar. Used and abused by her half brother, who discards her after raping her. She becomes a “desolate woman” living in her brother Absalom’s house.
- Absalom. Sent into exile for avenging his sister’s rape, then never allowed to see his father the king when he returns to Jerusalem; his resentment spurs him to plot to overthrow his emotionally frozen father.
- Joab. David’s nephew and captain of David’s army, who tries to get David to see the consequences of his actions—and to snap out of his depression so he can keep the people’s allegiance.
- The wise woman of Tekoa, called upon by Joab to weave a fictional tale of woe to convince David to bring Absalom out of exile.
- King David. A broken man after acknowledging the depths of his sin with Bathsheba, and watching helplessly as his sons take after his sins and his people reap the tragic results. He is paralyzed by misguided love for his sons and guilt over his own sins, and so does not provide the discipline they deserve or the caring they need.

The people of Israel, watching a king who has lost much of his grip on governing. His ambitious son Absalom has the dashing good looks and charisma David used to charm the people with—is it time for a fresh face under the crown?

Ittai the Gittite. The leader of a group of Philistines who make up David’s personal bodyguards, he’s left everything he knew to side with an Israelite king and has vowed to defend David to the death.

Solomon. The kid brother in the palace, watching as his dysfunctional royal family falls apart and threatens to take the nation with it.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Don loved college—the social side, at least. Boarding academy had been great fun hanging out 24/7 with some of his best friends, but college meant freedom, too, with no parents or anyone constantly hanging over his shoulder.

Unfortunately, with no one to prod him or remind him of his priorities, Don started spending more and more of his valuable time with his friends playing strategy games on the Internet. Soon Don was going all night, all weekend in marathon game sessions, not stopping to go to the cafeteria for a bite to eat, to the gym for some exercise, or even to hang out with his new girlfriend. He barely studied for his classes, rarely took time to talk with God, and his girlfriend scarcely remembered she was dating anybody. Soon Don was failing most of his quizzes and tests—which was almost OK, since he wasn’t really awake for them as it was.

Don finally realized he needed to get his act together, but he had no idea where to begin. English? History? Chemistry? It was all too much to think about at once. He felt overwhelmed. He felt paralyzed. The semester was almost over, and after checking out of reality for so long, he was flunking out of everything—and he just didn’t know how to get back on track.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In this week’s lesson everybody’s got a story or a message to share—and some are more truthful than
others. Joab convinces David to bring Absalom back through yet another proxy tale, this one from a supposedly grieving widow whose parental experience suspiciously parallels David’s own. Mephibosheth’s steward Ziba slanders his boss to David. Hushai gives bad advice purposely to Absalom. And everyone’s reluctant to tell David what really happened to his rebellious son.

Meanwhile everybody’s got an opinion. Absalom thinks Amnon deserves death—and he’s the deliverer. Joab thinks David needs to get with the program and buck up, lest he win the battle but lose the people. And what about God’s opinion? With all the back and forth between people, Yahweh’s the odd God out. In the story of Absalom’s rebellion, people seek counsel from each other, but God is consulted all too infrequently. And thus events spiral worse and worse, until, facing God’s wrath over his census, David realizes God’s the only one he can truly 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.

1. What parts of the story are key? (Underline them.)
2. What aspects or details of the story are new to you?
3. What words or phrases best capture the various emotions of this story? (Circle them.)
4. What emerges as the central lesson of this story?

Refer to the rest of the Scripture story besides the Into the Story section (2 Samuel 13–19; 24; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 21; 28; 29).

5. In the story of Absalom, how many missed opportunities do you see? What actions or inaction only made things worse?
6. Why was God so upset by David wanting to expand his army?
7. Why did David ask to “fall into the hands of the Lord,” and not those of men?
8. What have you learned from these stories?

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

Read 2 Samuel 16:5-14. What does David’s response to Shimei tell you about his character? About how he felt at that time? Was Shimei right in that David was being punished for being a man of blood, or was he too prejudiced by his own allegiance to Saul? (God didn’t let David build the Temple because he’d been such a violent man, and while David had treated Saul’s grandson Mephibosheth kindly, David permitted the Gibeonites to execute two of Saul’s sons as vengeance for Saul’s murders of their family members.) Why did David, on his deathbed, advise Solomon to execute Shimei as he solidified his kingdom?

Sharing Context and Background

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

The book of Judges ends with a horrific story of a
raped and murdered concubine whose death led to civil war. The rape of Tamar, with its ensuing civil war, has numerous parallels to the concubine’s, including the words “Don’t do this wicked thing [nebalah]” (2 Samuel 13:12, NIV; cf. Judges 19:23). Judges’ last words are “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (NIV). A monarchy turned out to be no better—if not worse.

The earlier-written Samuel warns about the consequences of idolatry. Its readers seem to have gotten the message, because Chronicles is written to reassure a people who may be tempted to give up in light of the high cost they’ve paid for idolatry.

In The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Samuel (Pacific Press, 2005), Alden Thompson reflects on the spiritual implications of Absalom’s tragedy: “For a Christian, David’s anguished cry, ‘My son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you’ (18:33), immediately calls to mind the picture of One who did die in the place of His wayward children. . . . What does it mean for God to clothe Himself in human flesh so that the Father dies in the Son—and thus God dies on our behalf and in our place?"

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,” declared Jesus (John 14:9). And the Father He revealed to us is not one who angrily demands the death of sinners. Sin itself has already taken care of that. Our God has provided a sacrifice so that sinners might live. The inexorable law of sin, reflected in that vivid Old Testament dictum, ‘Your blood be upon your own head,’ is as true now as it was then and equally deadly. Sin punishes itself. That message is clear enough in the life of David and his family.

III. CLOSING

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

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Problem-solving
Challenge your students to find a solution to Don’s problem in the opening illustration. How could the damage be minimized? What could he do to get back on track emotionally, spiritually, socially, and academically? How can he keep himself from getting in the same situation in the future? Write your students’ ideas on a marker board.

Once everyone is well acquainted with the story, assign small groups of two or three or more to act out different portions from the Bible. Then debrief:
• Who are your students’ favorite and least favorite characters?
• What overall theme might the story have?
• Is there anything encouraging in this story?

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
What you sow, you will reap.
If any story demonstrates this tragic truth, it’s the final years of King David. Few in history have started so humbly and risen so high, only to fall so low. Consumed with guilt and having lost much credibility with his people, David was never sure what to do, even when crimes hit home and demanded resolute responses.

David became weary in his kingship, but Christians are promised a greater kingdom if we endure to the end.
The history of David affords one of the most impressive testimonies ever given to the dangers that threaten the soul from power and riches and worldly honor—those things that are most eagerly desired among men. Few have ever passed through an experience better adapted to prepare them for enduring such a test. . . . David had enjoyed precious experiences of the love of God, and had been richly endowed with His Spirit; in the history of Saul he had seen the utter worthless of mere human wisdom. And yet worldly success and honor so weakened the character of David that he was repeatedly overcome by the tempter" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 746).
what do you think?

“All we need is love.” Rock stars sing it, and there’s a certain truth to it. But what is love? “God is love”—but love, when distorted by sin, can be an idol that destroys us. How well do the following examples from this week’s lesson demonstrate true love? What makes the difference between “true” love and distorted love?

• Amnon’s love for his half sister Tamar.
• David’s love for his firstborn son, Amnon, which kept him from punishing him.
• Absalom’s love for his sister Tamar, avenging her rape by murdering Amnon.
• The Philistine Ittai the Gittite’s devotion to King David.
• Shimei’s love for King Saul that inspired him to denounce David for the deaths of Saul’s family.
• David’s grief when Absalom died, wishing he could have died instead of his son.

The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were composed after the Israelites’ return from exile in Babylon to encourage readers not to lose hope despite all the bad things that had happened. In contrast to Samuel’s “warts and all” recording of history, Chronicles presents an abridged, “good news” version of David’s story, skipping the stories of Bathsheba, Absalom, and Adonijah entirely.

• The New Revised Standard Version adds a line to 2 Samuel 13:21, found in the Dead Sea scrolls, that other translations omit: “When King David heard of all these things, he became very angry, but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn.”

“Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom. . . . Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.

“Now Amnon had a friend. . . . He asked Amnon, ‘Why do you, the king’s son, look so haggard?’ . . . ”

“Amnon said to him, ‘I’m in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.’

“Go to bed and pretend to be ill,” Jonadab said. “When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat.’ . . . ”

“So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. . . . ”

“Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her brother Amnon. . . . He grabbed her and said, ‘Come to bed with me, my sister.’

“‘Don’t, my brother!’ she said to him. ‘Don’t force me. . . . Where could I get rid of my disgrace?’ . . . But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

“Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. . . . And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman. . . . ”

“Two years later . . . Absalom ordered his men . . . ‘Strike Amnon down, then kill him.’ . . . ”

“In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him.” “Absalom would [say], ‘If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice.’ . . . and so he stole the hearts of the men of Israel. . . . ”

“Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the tribes of Israel to say, ‘As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpets, then say, “Absalom is king in Hebron.”’ . . .

“Then David said to all his officials who were with him in Jerusalem, ‘Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom.’ . . . ”

“There the army of Israel was defeated by David’s men, and the casualties that day were great—twenty thousand men. . . . Now Absalom. . . . was riding his mule, and as the mule went under the thick branches of a large oak, Absalom’s head got caught in the tree. He was left hanging in midair. . . . [Joab] took three
**punch lines**

“To the Lord I cry aloud, and he answers me from his holy hill. Selah. I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side” (Psalm 3:4-6, NIV).

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7, NIV).

“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in” (Proverbs 3:11, 12, NIV).

“Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in abundance of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14, ESV).

“So he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty’” (Zechariah 4:6, NIV).

“Love ceases to be a demon only when it ceases to be a god.” —M. Denis de Rougemont, 20th-century Swiss writer.

“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.” —Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th president of the U.S. (1861-1865).

“Ultimately, the only power to which man should aspire is that which he exercises over himself.” —Elie Weisel, Romanian-born U.S. writer, Nobel Prize for Peace in 1986.

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**OUT OF THE STORY**

David’s son Amnon, obsessed over his half sister Tamar, lusted after her until the day he raped her. Then he despised her even more than he’d lusted after her. Why do you think that was?

What parallels do you see between the trouble that resulted from Jacob’s polygamy and the conflicts between David’s children from multiple marriages?

When spiritual or political leaders commit sexual sins, people often refer to David’s adultery. David’s desire to increase his nation’s army received an even greater punishment than his sexual sin did, yet that story is largely forgotten today. Why do you think so few Christians apply this story to modern-day situations? What relevance does this story have to us today when we no longer live in a God-directed theocracy?

David chose not to punish his son Amnon. Do you think that was the most “loving” thing to do? Explain your answer.

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javelins in his hand and plunged them into Absalom’s heart.”

“The king was shaken. He . . . wept. . . . ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!’”

(2 Samuel 13:1-28; 14:25; 15:4-14; 18:7-14, 33, NIV. You can find a lot more of the details of this sad story in the Scripture Story passages listed at the beginning of the lesson.)
Sabbath

Look at this week’s *What Do You Think?* and reflect on how much our emotions shape our lives. In this week’s stories King David becomes an increasingly heartbroken man, his reputation and influence shattered by poor choices. If not for wise counsel from friends and confidants, his situation would have been even worse. How can we make sure our actions are based on godly principles?

Look through all the passages listed at the beginning of this lesson, and make a list of incidents in which David makes a choice based on emotions, but wise advice sets him straight again. (Use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.)

Sunday

Read the full story of Absalom in 2 Samuel 13–18. In what ways are the events in this story a fulfillment of the prophet Nathan’s words to David after his sin with Bathsheba? “Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the Lord says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give the one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel!” (2 Samuel 12:10-12, NIV).

Was this prophecy fulfilled because God made it happen, or as a natural outgrowth of David’s sins? What effect do you think David’s adultery with Bathsheba had on his children? On his relationships with friends and family? On the nation of Israel?

Monday

David wept—and wept, and wept. This week’s *Key Text* is one of the saddest in the Bible. David’s emotions about Absalom had been conflicted, but he never stopped loving him. David knew that Absalom’s death was largely a result of his own actions, for his sin with Bathsheba had started a chain of tragedies. David’s grief is also an example of how deeply God loves us and longs for us to be safe and saved.

How does it make you feel to know that you are so loved no matter how much you may betray God? Write a song or draw a picture that reflects your response to God’s unstoppable love.

Tuesday

Ellen White has said this about how God handles unpunished sin: “When parents or rulers neglect the duty of punishing iniquity, God Himself will take the case in hand. His restraining power will be in a measure removed from the agencies of evil, so that a train of circumstances will arise which will punish sin with sin” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 728).

Ellen White and President Abraham Lincoln both described the American Civil War as a punishment for slavery—to the South for practicing it, and to the North for encouraging it and making money off it. Is it “just” of God to allow evil to occur as a response to sin that hasn’t been dealt with? How can Christians balance the need for grace with the need for justice?

Wednesday

David wrote Psalm 3 while running from Absalom, pouring his heart out to God for deliverance. Read the whole psalm. David’s relationship with God sometimes seems like a seesaw. He’s faithful and true to God at one point, and then tries to manage things on his own again, forgetting that he’s nothing without God.

Is it easier to trust in God at some points in our lives than in others? Do we sometimes trust the world’s methods for solving problems while still congratulating ourselves on being good Christians? What happens as a result?

Thursday

Is advice easier to give or to take? Nathan and Joab used fictional stories of injustice to help David see the consequences of his actions. Why is it so much easier to see our own faults in somebody else? How can we be more honest and transparent with ourselves and others?

Friday

In 2 Samuel 7:10, 11 God describes how He hopes to bless Israel through David’s reign, yet David’s sins caused much turmoil and destruction, and ultimately contributed to his country breaking apart. If the sins of one person can make such a difference, can another person’s faithfulness have a similar ripple effect on the world? What kinds of actions change the world for the better? What can you do to show Jesus to the world?

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*This week’s reading*

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 72 and 73.

* *A special adaptation of Patriarchs and Prophets has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*