PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The Scripture portion for this week may at first seem tough to teach, but after a closer inspection you will find that it is a very appropriate discussion to have with this age group. As well, it is very easy to personalize and have each student really understand the meaning.

The lesson takes us to the end of Moses’ life and his final words to the Israelites. It is almost depressing in its nature, seeing that God is so disappointed in His people. However, the declaration that Moses gives to Joshua in verse 47 is a powerful admonishment for all of us to take to heart. Young people will certainly understand the direct tone the author uses for his student who is about to take the reins of leadership.

The stage is set with a God who is angry at His chosen people. The reading in Prophets and Kings shows us that God is not just upset that they are worshiping idols; He is also angry that they have chosen not to become a blessing to the surrounding nations by showing His character on this earth. He is sorely upset that they have shirked the calling He has charged them with and the opportunity He has given them to join Him in blessing the world.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand why God was upset at the Israelites. (Know)
• Feel that they can probably use the words as a warning to them as well. (Feel)
• Seek to do what God is calling them to do in response to His charge of being a blessing to the world. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• The church*
• God (existence of a personal)
• God (existence of a sovereign)
• Knowing 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.

Invite the students to share what they think the greatest gift they could get for a major milestone birthday might be. Make a list on the board so they can see their answers. Chances are there are many that will be the same. At the end, ask them what they think the value is of a relationship with Christ. You can obviously put no monetary value on this. However, you can impress on them that the greatest gift they can give anyone is an understanding of the grace and assurance of salvation that comes from living in relationship with Jesus Christ.
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Charles Dickens tells the story of a man who was just not very nice. He had the opportunity to be nice and caring over and over again until it became clear that he was just a crabby old man with no friends. One night in a dream, he had a series of visitors who helped him understand the responsibility we have to become blessings in this world to those around us.

Of course the story is A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens. And it is obviously a fictional allegory. But isn’t what God is saying to the Israelites much the same as what those three “visitors” say to the protagonist in the Dickens tale? “You must be a blessing!”

Because we believe in God we know that the charge is much more sincere and carries with it much more weight. We must show the grace of Christ to the world because we have experienced it and our lives have become a reaction to the grace God gives to us each day we are blessed to live in this world.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to be a blessing when you have the opportunity. Sometimes it is inconvenient to be the blessing. Sometimes it is awkward to change a tough situation into something glorious, but that is what God called the Israelites to do, and that is what He continually calls us to do as well. What a wonderful opportunity we have to show the world what God is like!

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 everything God mentions that they are doing wrong.
• Does God seem personally offended? Explain.
• Circle Moses’ command to Joshua.
• Create a list of things we can do to be the blessing God wants us to be.

Use the following as another teachable passage that relates to today’s story: 2 Samuel 22:50.

Sharing Context and Background

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

These texts take place at the end of the life of Moses. He has done all that he will be allowed to do, and apparently he wants to leave the children of Israel with just a few words of rebuke and encouragement in order for them to continue in, or even go back to, the ways of God. His rebuke is because the children of Israel were having some trouble with idolatry as they were making their way through the nations of that region. Moses desperately wanted them to understand that God’s way was certainly better than what they were searching.

His charge to the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:47 is so powerful it needs to be mentioned. The concept that we must take these words seriously because they are truly the words that give us life is very important. It is another indication of the grace God continually gives us in order to be able to live out our lives much better here on earth.

The question of how many people actually left Egypt to go to the Promised Land is an interesting one. There have been estimates of as little as 3,000 to as many as 3 million people. How can this be? It has to do with the translation of a particular word in the Hebrew language. What sort of impact does this have on the story? Well, if you think about it, the handling of 3 million people vastly differs from the handling of 3,000. It would make the difference between a group that could move quickly and a group that would literally take days to move. It also raises the question of how they could easily integrate into the other cultures they were running into. With a smaller group it would be easier to be insular; with a large group it would be much harder to keep to themselves, as assimilation of those around would take place much easier and growth or loss of people would be harder to see and manage.

Regardless of their numbers, it is plain to see that they were continually doubting God and His sovereignty over their lives. This might seem strange in conjunction with the fact that there were miracles daily for these people. However, it proves that faith is not built on miracles, but on relationships. Regardless of what they were seeing God doing, they were still following idols. God sought to be in relationship with them so that He might be able to bless them!
III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have the students write a list of four to six ways they were blessed by people in the last week or two. Have them be specific. Let them share these blessings with one another in a corporate setting. It will be good for them to hear the great ways God is blessing them all through the people in their lives. As well, it may give them ideas about how they can become better blessings in the lives of those around them.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Israel had simply forgotten their calling from God. They thought He was there for them, not the other way around. They became selfish and unwilling to partner with God for the blessing of the nations around them. God was understandably upset with this and told them in no uncertain terms. That makes up the major portion of the Scripture this week. It's OK to understand that God desires something from us. He desires our partnership with Him in order to let the world know what God is like. We must be His hands and His feet on this earth (play the song “Hands and Feet” by Audio Adrenaline if you have the time). As we understand God's call on our lives we begin to understand that we have a job, a blessing really, given to us by the Creator of the world. How can we possibly bless the nations? Well, maybe we need to start by understanding the blessings that we can bring to one another in a very small way each day.

*Fundamental Belief No. 12.

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

• Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Prophets and Kings, Introduction.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.
“Through the chosen nation, God had purposed to bring blessing to all mankind. . . . They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. . . . Christ was their instructor. . . . In the tabernacle and the temple His glory dwelt in the holy Shekinah above the mercy seat. In their behalf He constantly manifested the riches of His love and patience” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 17, 18).
What would be the best thing you could think of for a gift for your 18th birthday?

- A new car
- A computer
- Clothes
- Video games
- A recreational vehicle
- A cell phone
- Something else __________________

There has always been a difference of opinion about how many Israelites came out of Egypt. The confusion comes from the way you translate one of the Hebrew letters! (We know this could be boring to you, so we won’t go into all the language discussion here.) Why is this important? The children of Israel had been told to take possession of the Promised Land. The only problem with this was that they were not the only people living there! So the question of how many people came out of Israel becomes important since they had to fight their way through the Promised Land that was already occupied by others. They could have been as few as 3,000 to 5,000 people or perhaps as many as a million or so. Regardless of how many people there were supposed to be, they were expected to be the Lord’s gift to the nations. How could they have done that in the midst of trying to conquer a territory? They could have accomplished it by continually following the Word of God, much the same as we are called to do.

“The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him.

“He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields.

“He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag. . . .

“The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters.

“I will hide my face from them,’ he said, ‘and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.

“They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols.

“I will make them envious by those who are not a

people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.’ . . .

“Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, ‘Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.’

“On that same day the Lord told Moses, ‘Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.’

(Deuteronomy 32:12, 13, 19-21, 44-52, NIV)
For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, O Sovereign Lord, brought our fathers out of Egypt” (1 Kings 8:53, NIV).

“Therefore I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing praises to your name” (2 Samuel 22:50, NIV).

“O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you” (2 Chronicles 20:6, NIV).

“In that day you will say: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted’” (Isaiah 12:4, NIV).

“Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession” (Psalm 2:8, NIV).

“And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign Lord” (Ezekiel 16:14, NIV).

“The greatest gift is a portion of thyself.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 19th-century U.S. poet, lecturer, essayist.

“Love. What is love? No word can define it, it’s something so great, only God could design it. Yes, love is beyond, what man can define, for love is immortal, and God’s gift is divine.”—Unknown.

“Love’s gift cannot be given, it waits to be accepted.”—Rabindranath Tagore, 20th-century Indian poet, playwright, essayist; won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.
Sabbath

After having completed the activity in the "What Do You Think?" section at the beginning of this lesson, you must have some thoughts about gifts. In our biblical passage for this week, we realize that God meant for Israel to be the salvation of the nations. But they thought only of themselves as receiving the gift of a homeland from God. They did not understand the gift they were to be to the rest of the world. They were to exemplify God’s character on the earth for the world to see. Unfortunately, they were continually trying to be like the world rather than an example to it. Have you ever made that mistake? How can you better reflect God’s character to those around you?

Sunday

Most of Deuteronomy 32 is a type of song or poem for the children of Israel to understand what God is thinking about them at that particular time. However, in verses 46 and 47 it states: “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

Moses placed great importance on those words for Joshua and the children of Israel. If someone gave you those same words, how could you apply them to your life? How would you be different than the children of Israel? What would cause you to take to heart the words in this text as if they were meant for you?

Monday

Read this week’s Key Text, Deuteronomy 32:9. What do you think it means? Could it mean that God blesses the world through His people? Could it mean that the only way the world will really get to know God is through the inheritance (or legacy) God gives to those who choose to follow Him? If that is the case, what does that mean for you? Are you God’s inheritance? Are you the one who is supposed to bless the world for God? How might you go about doing that?

Tuesday

In the Flashlight section we see that Israel had a responsibility to be the character of God for the nations surrounding Israel. Could God say the same thing to you? Would you be comfortable with that responsibility? Could you be the face that has to show the world who Jesus Christ is? Do you look different or the same as the world around you? Does anyone know you are a Christian? How would they know? What does being a blessing to those around you really mean?

Wednesday

In the Punch Lines section of the lesson we see many different texts all alluding to the same thing, that Israel was to be a blessing to the nations. This text sums it up best: “Therefore I will praise you, O Lord, among the nations; I will sing praises to your name” (2 Samuel 22:50, NIV). This is the theme of all the Scriptures quoted. It seems that this is spoken of a great deal in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament we call this “evangelism.” Write down all the things you think of when you hear the word “evangelism.”

How can you see yourself “evangelizing”?

Thursday

Being a blessing to those around you takes a serious bit of intent and intentionality. What are you doing today and every day that brings you closer to being that blessing to those in your life?

Make a list of five things that you can do to be a blessing to those in your sphere of influence:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.

Friday

Much of Deuteronomy is a serious rebuke of the Israelites by the God they were to love. Take the pronouns used for them (him, them, sometimes you) and change them to be directed to yourself (you). How much more meaningful is the text when you look at it as if it is a note written directly to you? Pretty powerful stuff! If you were going to write a response to the person (or God) who wrote this note to you, what would you say? Write that note out and keep it in your Bible as a bookmark in Deuteronomy 32.

Prophets and Kings, Introduction.

* A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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

United we stand—but divided we fall.

Around 800 years passed from when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to when Nebuchadnezzar dragged them off to Babylon. We usually think of them as a united people all those years, but the century of monarchy ruled by Saul, David, and Solomon was about as good as it got. Before Saul the Benjamite was anointed and crowned, civil war nearly wiped out his tribe. Even the legendary rule of David was marked by restless dissenters challenging his grip on the throne, first from members of other tribes and Saul loyalists, then within his own family.

Solomon’s reign is remarkable not only for Israel’s peace with its neighbors, but for its peace within. Before losing his mule and life in battle, big brother Absalom “stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Samuel 15:6, NIV) with his good looks and charisma, but for young Solomon it would take more than looks or luck. Having to get by on wits alone no doubt contributed to his asking for wisdom above everything else.

When Solomon solved a custody dispute by suggesting a baby boy be sliced in two (prompting the true parent to give up the child while the faker spitefully agreed to the split), “all Israel . . . held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice” (1 Kings 3:28, NIV). Perhaps today we should be awed that he held a country together for so long, for at his death it was torn, and no king’s horses or men ever put it together again.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Know that God desires to bless their talents if they will give Him their lives.
- Feel the call to live for God.
- Respond by dedicating themselves to God’s work.

III. EXPLORE

- Priorities
- Wisdom/counsel
- Decision-making
- Humility

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Everybody lives by one philosophy or another. “He who dies with the most toys wins.” “Eat, drink, and be merry.” “Greed is good.” “All we need is love.” “Just trust God.” But whether one’s personal philosophy is pessimistic or optimistic, rooted in guilt or in gratitude, the question still lingers: What is wisdom? What does it mean to be wise?

Have your students read the following texts in as
Solomon’s story may seem far removed from us (most people don’t find themselves ruler of God’s own theocracy, offered anything we desire), but the book of Proverbs makes clear that wisdom is for everybody. Proverbs 30 brings us the wisdom of one Agur, son of Jakeh, with a prayer that any longtime Christian will find familiar:

“Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:7-9, NIV).

How do those verses sum up a Christian perspective on life?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

What's your biggest priority in life? To find true love? To be the greatest at your art, sport, or business? To find yourself?

Solomon’s story may seem far removed from us (most people don’t find themselves ruler of God’s own theocracy, offered anything we desire), but the book of Proverbs makes clear that wisdom is for everybody. Proverbs 30 brings us the wisdom of one Agur, son of Jakeh, with a prayer that any longtime Christian will find familiar:

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How do those verses sum up a Christian perspective on life?

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- How did Solomon win his people’s approval despite so much intertribal conflict?
- What mistakes do you see Solomon making that will later come back to haunt him?
- The people were happy and prosperous under Solomon. What spiritual dangers does prosperity bring that can result in poverty?
- How would you describe God’s offer to Solomon?
- Underline what's new to you in the story.
- Circle the words or phrases that best capture the story’s various emotions.
- What questions does this story prompt in your thinking?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: James 1:5; Proverbs 2:1-5; 3:13-18; Philippians 1:9.

Sharing Context and Background

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

In Proverbs, wisdom is next to godliness. Proverbs’ themes have been summarized in five major points:

1. Actions have consequences. In God’s world good deeds lead to blessing and bad deeds result in negative consequences or punishment.
God is passionate about justice.
2. How we treat others and relate to God is as important as the technical things we know.
3. God gives everyone freedom of choice. In contrast to much of Greek philosophy and fear, we are not ruled by fate. The ideal of wisdom is that when people know the good, they will do it.
4. In everything we do we either follow the road of righteousness or the highway of folly, with sure results.
5. Proverbs contrasts the opposite types—the wise and the foolish, the slothful and the studious, the rich and the poor.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” It’s a familiar text to most Christians, but while archaeologists find parallels between many of the Bible’s proverbs and other “wise sayings” in ancient Middle Eastern manuscripts, only the Bible describes wisdom as beginning with worship. Gerald Wheeler writes: “A major difference between nonbiblical wisdom and that of Scripture is that the other wisdom documents taught that one could have success by what one did. The Bible teaches that true success comes from whom one worships. . . .” ‘The fear of the Lord/God’ is a fundamental and widespread image. It combines awe, reverence, faith, and obedience—the whole life of the believers as they relate to God. As His followers live out a concrete expression of their loyalty and faithfulness, they respond to the leading of God, who alone can provide atonement. A truly godly life can only come through God Himself” (Wisdom: Timeless

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

More Improvisation

Laugh and learn with some Bible improv. Proverbs’ contrasts and vivid imagery provide endless possibilities for improvisational fun. Have one student narrate while others act out some of the “wise vs. fool” descriptions from Proverbs. The lighthearted humor, visual reinforcement, and whole-body learning will cement the principles in their minds like nothing else. For example:

- “The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin” (10:8, NIV).
- “The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down” (14:1, NIV).
- “Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue” (17:28, NIV).
- “In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has” (21:20, NIV).
- “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control” (29:11, NIV).

See also Proverbs 6:6-11; 12:27; and other verses throughout the book.

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 Prophets and Kings. 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.
Proverbs focuses primarily on external behavior, for Bible writers believed that what we do reflects who we are. We see this in Proverbs 6:16-19, NIV: “There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.”

Violence of words and deeds is equally condemned in Proverbs, “For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife” (30:33, NIV).

III. CLOSING

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

Have your students rewrite specific proverbs, in groups, to apply to their own situations—at school, with parents and siblings, with friends—and in their own words. For example, Proverbs 30:32, 33; Proverbs 28:1, 6-8; Proverbs 13:20-22; Proverbs 11:4-6; Proverbs 11:22-27.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Proverbs are timeless. “Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion” (11:22, NIV). You don’t have to live in 900 B.C. to come up with an instant association for those words—just look at the nearest tabloid newspaper. “He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise” (11:29, NIV). Remind you of anyone you know?

“He who winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool comes to ruin” (10:10, NIV). “An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips” (24:26, NIV). “The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion” (28:1, NIV). Each one is still as true as it’s ever been.

Proverbs is one of the most underrated books of the Bible, but it’s packed with power for anyone who wants to glorify God and live an outstanding life. James 1:5 says: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (NIV). In Proverbs, God gives us some words to live by.
The language used by Solomon while praying to God before the ancient altar at Gibeon reveals his humility and his strong desire to honor God. He realized that without divine aid he was as helpless as a little child to fulfill the responsibilities resting on him. He knew that he lacked discernment, and it was a sense of his great need that led him to seek God for wisdom. In his heart there was no selfish aspiration for a knowledge that would exalt him above others. . . . Solomon was never so rich or so wise or so truly great as when he confessed, ‘I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in’ (Prophets and Kings, p. 30).

“...I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.”

(1 Kings 3:12, 13, NIV)
Which of the following proverbs do you think people struggle with more? Which ones might you struggle with?

1. “Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways” (Proverbs 3:31, NIV).
2. “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).
3. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1, NIV).
4. “Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue” (Proverbs 17:28, NIV).

While archaeological discoveries have confirmed the existence of such later kings as Ahab and Hezekiah, little archaeological evidence of Solomon’s reign has been discovered (though areas such as the likely site of Solomon’s Temple have not been thoroughly excavated).

Solomon’s story includes about the only biblical reference to any seafaring on the part of Israel. The book of Kings credits Solomon with some 3,000 proverbs, though only a few are preserved in the Bible, and many of the Bible’s proverbs are credited to others, such as the mother of King Lemuel, an otherwise unknown ruler. The Proverbs are grouped into sayings such as “Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelmst the mouth of the wicked” (10:6) and advice such as “Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint” (23:4).
OUT OF THE STORY

Solomon asked God for wisdom, and what he hadn’t asked for—riches and glory—were added as well. What do you think might have happened if he’d asked God for material things instead of wisdom?

God blessed Solomon’s reign with wealth, yet many of his proverbs warn against the dangers of riches. Are financial blessings necessarily a sign of God’s favor for His followers today? How should we relate to money as Christians?

Solomon was fascinated by all kinds of science and natural things. What can the natural world tell us about God? (See Psalm 33:5 for one idea.)

After Solomon returned to Jerusalem, he threw a party for his people! What does this say to you about the role of celebration in the Christian life?

How would you define “wisdom”? How is it a “tree of life” as Proverbs describes?

other eyes

“Patience is the companion of wisdom.”—Augustine of Hippo, 4th-5th-century Christian theologian.

“Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life.”—Immanuel Kant, 18th-century German philosopher.

“The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century British author and theologian.

punch lines

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (Proverbs 1:7, NIV).

“For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6, NIV).

“Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:6, 7, NIV).

“The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor” (Proverbs 15:33, NIV).

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33, NIV).

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5, NIV).
Sabbath
This week’s What Do You Think? looks at some words of wisdom from Proverbs. Read Proverbs 15:33: “The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.” How does devotion to God develop wisdom? What’s the relationship between humility and wisdom?

Sunday
The book of 1 Kings describes Solomon as both wise and intelligent, curious about everything around him. Though God doesn’t guarantee us material wealth if we follow Him, life usually works better, and we can spare ourselves much pain when we follow God’s principles.

Read this week’s Out of the Story: What are some ways we can become more wise? How do we tell the difference between wisdom and foolishness? In what situations is wisdom particularly necessary?

Monday
This week’s Key Text is God’s promise to Solomon after he asked for wisdom above anything else God could offer. If someone looked at your priorities, what would they think is most important to you? Do your actions live up to what you believe in? If “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” how can you make following God more central in your life?

Tuesday
This week’s Flashlight quotation addresses the idea of true greatness. Today, as throughout history, people think greatness means possessions, power, or personality. We imagine greatness to mean the clothes we wear, the car we drive, the home we live in, the money we make, the influence we wield, or the attention we command. Solomon’s story reminds us, however, that true greatness is rooted in selflessness.

Solomon’s number one goal was to serve his people. Looking back at how Israel’s two previous kings had tripped over their own importance, forgetting their obligations to God and citizens, Solomon knew that ruling a troubled nation was too great to handle on his own. With such a humble heart, Solomon became the greatest of earthly kings. It was only as he forgot his commitment to God that things began to fall apart.

Jesus came to show us how to serve others, telling us that whatever kindness we do for someone in need, we’re doing for Him. Everything we do should be for God’s glory—but that requires humility. Read Matthew 23:11, 12. How can we keep this perspective in our everyday lives?

Wednesday
Read this week’s Punch Lines, particularly James 1:5. Have you ever faced a situation through which you knew you couldn’t make it without God’s help? If so, how did God make the difference for you?

Read Proverbs 2:6-8. How does this picture of God make you feel? When you look at the tragedies in the world around you, affecting even faithful Christians, do you feel as if God is as trustworthy as these verses describe? How can you reconcile such a Bible promise with the reality that God allows bad things to happen to some of the best people?

Thursday
Solomon described himself as like “a small child” as he faced the enormous challenge of becoming king. Is it possible to be too humble? What role does self-confidence play in a successful life? How does someone balance self-confidence and humility? In what ways is it important for us to be self-confident? In what ways is it important for us to be humble?

Read Luke 14:7-14. How might true humility affect our career and social standing?

Friday
Think of someone you know whom you would describe as wise. Why do you think they are? What situations have they handled particularly wisely? What can you learn from their life that can help you to make wise decisions?

* A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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

This week's lesson captures the spiritual highpoint of King Solomon's life. He lived many years, but his greatest achievement occurred early in his reign. That accomplishment was the building and dedication of a permanent place where God's presence could dwell with His people.

Solomon spared no expense in the construction of the Temple, conscripted as much manual labor as needed, and then found artisans from Egypt who could do the special work of the Temple. This latter act foreshadowed his penchant for depending on other nations for that which he should have trusted God.

Nonetheless, the righteous desire of Solomon to build a house for God should be the same desire that drives us to build a place for God in our lives. The care Solomon demonstrates in the building of the Temple can be likened to that which we should exhibit in the development of a Christian character. We should use no shoddy materials in this process, so that we may render to God the best that we have to give.

Solomon also understood the sanctity of God's holy law kept in the ark. The law, transcript of God's character, was very much at the heart of the ceremony. Today, it should be written on our hearts as we seek to love, worship, and obey God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that we were created to worship God. (Know)
- Feel the necessity to give God their best in all areas of life. (Feel)
- Respond by selecting a place where they can meet with God each day. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Worship
- Prayer

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Ask students to share the “form” their worship takes in their selected spot for communication with God. Share aspects from your own life that are closely tied to worshipping God.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) was present at the Vienna Music Hall, where his oratorio The Creation was being performed, the story goes. Weakened by age, the great composer was confined to a wheelchair. As the majestic work moved along, the audience was caught up with tremendous emotion. When the pas-
sage “And there was light!” was reached, the chorus and orchestra burst forth in such power that the crowd could no longer restrain its enthusiasm.

The vast assembly rose in spontaneous applause. Haydn struggled to stand and motioned for silence. With his hand pointed toward heaven, he said, “No, no, not from me, but from thence comes all!” Having given the glory and praise to the Creator, he fell back into his chair exhausted (see Our Daily Bread, September 20, 1992).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Something truly special happens when praise and honor are directed toward the One who alone deserves it. That’s what Haydn understood, and it’s also what King Solomon understood. The ingenuity used to build the magnificent Temple he had just constructed for God did not come from Solomon. The materials were not of his making. Solomon did the only thing that any human can do at such an awesome moment; he directed all glory to God.

Worship is the heartbeat of the Christian’s life, and we are at our best when we are praising and worshiping God.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- Mark each place where the ark of the covenant is mentioned. What is its significance in this passage?
- Solomon is the nation’s political leader. Does the passage reveal him to be its spiritual leader also?
- Underline the places where there is a major change in the tone of the ceremony.
- What contribution does music make to the service? What is the significance of the song that is sung and why does the writer highlight the oneness of the musicians and singers?
- Circle the spots in the text where you see God.
- Those involved in the worship service dressed in a certain way, even the musicians. How do we reconcile this with the “come as you are” idea of worship?
- Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Isaiah 6:1-8; Romans 12:1-5; Isaiah 55; Habakuk 2:20; Ecclesiastes 5.

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. As wise and great as Solomon was, it is evident that his father, David, had a tremendous impact on him. This is seen in the way in which Solomon orchestrated the dedication ceremony for the building of the Temple.

   In 1 Chronicles 15:11-16 David summons the tribal leaders and the leaders of the nation to go with him to bring the ark to Jerusalem. When the ark gets to Jerusalem an elaborate ceremony is executed, complete with music, sacrifices, and a special psalm written and performed by none other than David himself (1 Chronicles 16). David’s psalm of praise carries much of the sentiment of Solomon’s dedicatory prayer. There is no doubt that David greatly influenced his son, but nowhere is it seen more clearly than in the way Solomon carried out the dedication of the Temple.

2. Some moments are years in the making. The story of the building of God’s Temple and its special ceremony was a moment that was centuries in the making. Consider that after God’s people were delivered from the hand of Pharaoh, among His first commands to Moses was this: “Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8, NIV). Moses went on to construct the traveling wilderness sanctuary that housed the ark as the Israelites wandered through the desert. All the Israelites dreamed of the day when they would have a permanent place for God, one that didn’t need to be broken down and hauled everywhere. Countless died never seeing that day. When Solomon completed the Temple, he had brought to fruition the dream of numerous Israelites. This dedication was no insignificant occurrence.

3. The spot on which the Temple was constructed held special significance to all the Israelites. Ellen G. White writes: “It was here that Abraham, the father of the faithful, had revealed his willingness to sacrifice his only son in obedi-
ence to the command of Jehovah. Here God had renewed with Abraham the covenant of blessing, which included the glorious Messianic promise to the human race of deliverance through the sacrifice of the Son of the Most High” (Prophets and Kings, p. 37).

This spot was a place of mercy, a place where sins were forgiven, a place of healing.

4. It was evident from God’s presence that day that He approved of the worship rendered to Him at the dedication of the Temple. But it was not until several years later that God spoke to Solomon directly to let him know just how much He appreciated the seven-year effort that led to the building of the Temple: “When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, the Lord appeared to him at night and said, ‘I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. . . . 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 7:11, 12, 14, NIV).

Some things are worth the wait.

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Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Visual Learning

Some students are auditory learners and take in the spoken word to maximum benefit. Some are kinesthetic (sensory) learners, needing experiences that involve movement and the senses. But still others are primarily visual learners.

Consider bringing to class a picture of the Lord’s Temple built by Solomon. Several of these are available in Jewish history books. Better yet, give the students a living, breathing image of the Temple and its worship.

Christian Book Distributors offers a very good DVD titled Solomon’s Temple. This DVD details the Temple’s “design, construction, meaning for Israel, and what went on there and why.” The video runs about 30 minutes, so you’ll no doubt want to select a portion of it to show your students.

Most young people today struggle to see and understand the meaning of the Temple in biblical times and its connection with them today. This is one way of making this week’s subject more real.

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

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

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

Activity

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

Before class, make copies of a seven-day calendar. Each day of the week should have enough space for the students to make notations. Distribute the one-week calendar. Ask the students to choose a time each day when they will spend time in worship to God. Then ask each to come up with a way to make each day’s worship special. (They may choose to listen to a favorite song after completing their lesson, morning devotional, or Bible reading, for example.) Close with a prayer asking God to reveal Himself to the students this week.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:
The worship of God requires our best efforts. To honor God as He deserves requires a preparation of heart that many neglect. It would have been easy for Solomon to grow weary during the building process. We sometimes forget that Solomon built the Temple of the Lord before he constructed a palace for himself. He could have easily decided on second-rate materials when the best proved difficult to get. He could have chosen to cut corners when logistical nightmares occurred during the building process. Perhaps a lesser person would have folded under the pressure, but Solomon was motivated by a vision of God, motivated to put the worship of God at the center of the nation’s life. How he could later in his life fall away from so noble a beginning is beyond comprehension.

Solomon had made a request of God for wisdom to rule the people, and God had answered him and given him more than he could ever dream. Fresh from his special revelation from God, he had a burning desire to please God. While he fell during his later life, his early desire to please God calls us to a higher standard of service and worship to God.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Prophets and Kings, chapter 2.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.
**flashlight**

“In bringing to the temple the sacred ark containing the two tables of stone on which were written by the finger of God the precepts of the Decalogue, Solomon had followed the example of his father David. Every six paces he sacrificed. With singing and with music and with great ceremony, ‘the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place’” (Prophets and Kings, p. 38).

**keytext**

“The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: ‘He is good; his love endures forever.’ Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud.”

*(2 Chronicles 5:13, NIV)*
Which of the following places would you choose as your spot, your special place to meet and talk with God?
1. Your room
2. Beside a lake
3. A park
4. On a bench downtown in the city
5. In the woods
6. In your church sanctuary

Share what place you chose and why. What’s special about your spot with God?

__________________________________________________________

INTO THE STORY

“The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang:

“‘He is good; his love endures forever.’

Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.”

(2 Chronicles 5:2-14, NIV)
“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’ (Revelation 14:6, 7, NIV).

“I love the house where you live, O Lord, the place where your glory dwells” (Psalm 26:8, NIV).

“Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only”’” (Matthew 4:10, NIV).

“Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 26:1, NIV).

“My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble mind.”—Albert Einstein, 19th-20th-century U.S. (German-born) physicist.

“A man can no more diminish God’s glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word ‘darkness’ on the walls of his cell.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century British scholar and novelist.
Sabbath
In the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson you were asked to choose a place from the list provided where you and God could meet together. Now that you’ve selected a place, read 2 Chronicles 5:2-6. Besides the obvious physical differences between the Temple that Solomon built for God and dedicated with an elaborate ceremony and the place you have set aside to talk with God, what similarities do you see between the two places? What differences?

Similarities: __________________________________________
Differences: __________________________________________

What do you think made the Temple Solomon constructed special? How can you make your place of worship to God special?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Sunday
Read carefully the Into the Story passage selected. Now complete the Out of the Story questions given. One of the questions referred to the role that music plays in worship.

In today’s lesson passage, who did the singing during the ceremony?

__________________________________________________________

What instruments were played?

__________________________________________________________

Think about the music that accompanies the worship in your church. Do you feel that it enhances or detracts from the worship experience? Explain.

__________________________________________________________

The song sung at the Temple dedication was fairly simple by today’s standards. What happened when these simple words were sung?

__________________________________________________________

Monday
This week’s Key Text is one of the most powerful in all of Scripture. It tells us that the glory of God filled the Temple, so much so that the priests could not enter it. There are services throughout Scripture that are holy and exalted, yet God never made His glory visible in them.

Why did God choose to make His presence visible during the dedication of Solomon’s Temple? What do you think moved Him to do so?

__________________________________________________________

What can you do to attract God’s presence to your life?

__________________________________________________________

Tuesday
This week’s Flashlight shines on an often overlooked part of the dedication ceremony for the Jerusalem Temple: the ark of God.

The ark held the two tables of stone given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. On them were written the Ten Commandments.

What do you think was the purpose of stopping every six paces to offer sacrifices to God before the ark? What was Solomon trying to say to God through this practice?

__________________________________________________________

Wednesday
Read this week’s Punch Lines, paying close attention to Psalm 26:8. King David expresses his love for God’s house in a fit of raw emotion. This is no doubt where Solomon developed his passion for worshipping God.

If you love God’s house—your church—what can you do to make it better? How might you improve it?

__________________________________________________________

Thursday
Worship to God is both a personal experience and a corporate experience. There is something special about worshipping God with people who share a love for God and a desire to live for Him.

How can you help people who are sick and cannot get to church experience the joy of corporate worship? Why not gather some friends together and plan a worship service at the home of a sick member?

Friday
Believe it or not, God wants His glory to be seen in your life, just as it was seen during Solomon’s special dedication of the Temple. What can you do to build a place in your life for God? What would you have to give up? What music sacrifices would you offer?

__________________________________________________________


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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
No Bible character had a better start in life than Solomon. Raised the son of a wealthy, respected king, he stood to inherit riches beyond his wildest dreams, not to mention a good name. His father was not perfect, but when shown his wrongs, he righted them.

Solomon at first felt the weight of his responsibility as king. That explains his request to God for wisdom, his careful construction of the Lord’s Temple, and the awesome prayer that highlighted the dedication of that Temple. But something happened to Solomon after these accomplishments.

Solomon’s tremendous wealth, international prestige, and relative national peace meant that he had time to indulge in unwholesome interests. He did. He formed alliances with surrounding nations against God’s will, and sealed each of them with a marriage. Almost imperceptibly Solomon’s heart began to leave God. He worshipped the gods of his wives and concubines, and forsook the God of the universe.

The rise and fall of Solomon teaches several lessons, but none more important than the dangers of unfettered prosperity and wealth. Solomon believed that his immense learning and wisdom could overcome the pull of beautiful women, foreign gods, and unmatched wealth. He was sadly mistaken. He had forgotten that the source of his blessing was God. Whether in times of famine or plenty, God’s people must always put Him first in their lives.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Know that God’s blessings are always given for His glory and not our own. (Know)
- Experience the peace that comes through obedience to God’s commands. (Feel)
- Commit to never allow anything or anyone to occupy God’s place in their lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Self-discipline
- Idolatry
- Humility

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

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

Ask them to discuss their answers. Point out to them the things in life that they feel they “must have.” Bring this discussion around to what they might “sell out” in order to keep that thing in their lives.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
“Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of
how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is quite grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sin.

“First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood.

“Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more—until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!”

“It is a fearful thing that people can be ‘consumed by their own lusts.’ Only God’s grace keeps us from the wolf’s fate.”—Chris T. Zwingelberg at www.bible.org.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, but he was also one of the weakest because of his inability to rule his own passions. He was a person with an outsized desire for opulence and grandeur, and this desire engulfed his life much as the taste of fresh blood leads to the wolf’s death. It didn’t have to be that way for Solomon, and it certainly does not have to be that way for us.

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.

- If you were to summarize the main thrust of this passage for a friend, what would you say?
- Place a checkmark by each turning point in the story.
- Underline each place in the passage where you see the grace of God.
- Circle the minor characters in the story and note the role that each plays in relationship to Solomon.
- What picture of God do we see from this passage? What one word would you use to describe God, as He is seen in this passage?
- What is different in this passage between God’s anger and that of humanity?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Daniel 4:28-32; Mark 10:17-31; Matthew 6:20; John 15:1-6.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. We can learn much from the gods whose worship Solomon introduced to Israel. One of the gods to which he built a temple was Chemosh, the war god of the Moabites. Wikipedia states that the name Chemosh means destroyer, subduer, or fish-god. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Chemosh was an “ancient West Semitic deity, revered by the Moabites as their supreme god. Little is known about Chemosh; although King Solomon of Israel built a sanctuary to him east of Jerusalem (1 Kings 11:7), the shrine was later demolished by King Josiah (2 Kings 23:13).” The temple to Chemosh remained in place for more than 300 years before Josiah destroyed it.

2. Another god that Solomon introduced to the people is Ashtoreth, the moon goddess of the Phoenicians. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, the worship of this goddess did not just occur among the Hebrews. The Greeks called her Hera, the Romans referred to her as Juno, and the ancient Egyptians called her Isis. She was referred to as the Queen of Heaven by those who worshipped her.

3. By far the most detestable god worshipped in Israel during the reign of Solomon was Molech. Human sacrifices were offered to him, mainly firstborn children. The god possessed hollow metal arms that were outstretched. The arms were heated from the inside. Firstborn children were placed on the heated arms of this god and slowly burned to death. Molech was also worshipped in ancient Carthage, where at one time about 200 little boys were sacrificed in hopes of...
saving that city from a siege. Young King Josiah destroyed this temple and its worship (see Smith’s Bible Dictionary, p. 205; Encyclopedia of Gods, p. 168).

4. The apostasy that Solomon’s reign ushered into the life of Israel can be summed up by 1 Kings 11:5, 6: “He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammorites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done” (NIV). As is often the case, apostasy rarely gets better with time and indulgence, and that is as true today as it was during biblical times.

III. CLOSING

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

Divide the class into groups of three or four. Ask each group to come up with three ways that Solomon could have impacted Israel and the surrounding world had he not sinned.

Close by making the point that just as one person’s sin has the power to corrupt many, acts of righteousness also have the power to lead many to God. Jesus proved this truth.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
King Solomon’s life was the stuff of dreams. He had an adoring public, beautiful women constantly around him, the best clothing money could buy, important friends and well-wishers. He had it all. Yet none of it was enough to satisfy Solomon.

Foreign alliances led to national spiritual ruin, love

Teaching From . . .
Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

• Flashlight
Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Prophets and Kings. 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.
of opulence left the citizens of Israel in financial ruin due to the heavy taxes he levied on them to support his lifestyle, and his indulgence of lust left him spiritually bankrupt.

Perhaps it was an act of mercy that God pronounced judgment on Solomon while he had an opportunity to change his life. Had God not told him that the kingdom would be taken from him, Solomon might never have changed. So even in God’s justice there is love and mercy.

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 Prophets and Kings, chapters 3, 4.

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**the wise fool**

*flashlight*

“Had Solomon continued in humility of mind to turn the attention of men from himself to the One who had given him wisdom and riches and honor, what a history might have been his! But while the pen of inspiration records his virtues, it also bears faithful witness to his downfall. Raised to a pinnacle of greatness and surrounded with the gifts of fortune, Solomon became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell” *(Prophets and Kings, p. 68).*

**keytext**

“The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord’s command.”

*(1 Kings 11:9, 10, NIV)*
Imagine that your parents are going to take one of the following items away from you. On a scale from 1 (“Gotta have it”) to 8 (“No sweat without it”), rank the items in order of importance to you.

- Money
- Favorite jeans
- Cell phone
- Internet access
- Car
- Freedom to hang out with friends
- Television
- iPod

**what do you think?**

**did you know?**

Did you know that Solomon built temples for the worship of heathen gods in addition to the Temple he built for the true God? What’s more, he didn’t just build them in some obscure place, safely out of sight; He built them on a hillside opposite Mount Moriah, the exact spot where he had built a magnificent Temple for God (see Prophets and Kings, p. 57).

**INTO THE STORY**

“King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, ‘You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.’ Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ash-toreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as his father David had done.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

“The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord’s command. So the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.’”

(1 Kings 11:1-13, NIV)
“Keep your servants also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression” (Psalm 19:13, NIV).

“O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens” (Ezra 9:6, NIV).

“The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: ‘Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your fathers to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets’” (2 Kings 17:13, NIV).

“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3, NIV).

“Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways” (Psalm 25:8, NIV).

“Prosperity is only an instrument to be used, not a deity to be worshipped.”—Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933), 30th president of the U.S.

“Swallow a loss and learn a lesson.”—Chinese proverb.

“As favor and riches forsake a man, we discover in him the foolishness they concealed, and which no one perceived before.”—Jean de La Bruyère, 17th-century French moralist.
Sabbath

Complete the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. What item would you most hate for your parents to take from you? Now, think of all the different things that Solomon stood to lose as a result of disobeying God. What would you say is the thing he most hated to lose:

What judgment did God pronounce upon Solomon? (Read 1 Kings 11:11.) If you were Solomon, how would you have reacted to such an awesome statement from God?

Sunday

Read this week’s Into the Story. Pay close attention to verse 2. God gave His people what specific command?

What would happen to the people of God if they did not obey this command?

What did Solomon do? How far did he go in breaking God’s command?

As the most important earthly figure in all of Israel, how do you think his example impacted the nation?

Monday

On careful thought, I am quite sure the wise person would not want to have God angry at them. After all, He is the all-powerful Creator, and we are created beings. He is the source of our breath, our very life. And yet, according to the Key Text, wise King Solomon did the very things that called out God’s righteous anger.

Read the Key Text closely. Why did God become angry with Solomon? The Bible says that Solomon’s heart “had turned away from the Lord.” In your own words, write what you think God was saying here:

Is it possible for your heart to be turned away from God, even though you are a Christian?

Tuesday

Read this week’s Flashlight. Ellen White says that Solomon became dizzy, lost his balance, and fell. Explain what you believe she means by these statements.

Solomon became dizzy:

Lost his balance:

Fell:

Wednesday

Check out the Punch Lines in this week’s lesson. Does the sorrow for sin catch your attention in Ezra 9:6? What about the promise of protection in 2 Thessalonians 3:3?

What do you think is the “great transgression” or sin that David was afraid of in Psalm 19:13? What do you think continued willful disobedience of God, rejecting the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit, leads us to? Read Matthew 12:31, 32.

Thursday

Most people who read the life of Solomon focus on the number of wives (700) and concubines (300) that he had. But the numbers are not of utmost importance. It is the impact that they had on his worship and allegiance to God that was most unfortunate.

What do you do each day to avoid putting anyone or anything before God?

Friday

We can be fairly certain that God did much to warn Solomon to change his behavior. Is God warning you to change something in your life before it’s too late? What might that be? Why not surrender it to God right now in prayer? Ask Him to make you willing to be made willing to have Him take it from you.


this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapters 3, 4.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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 is the final installment in the story of Solomon. This king offers a colorful case study in the futile quest to fulfill deep human hungers with cotton candy—stuff, smarts, sex, and so on. In the end, however, Solomon learns that only God can fulfill the deepest desires of the soul.

Ellen White’s insightful commentary on this intriguing man offers a great foundation for potentially life-transforming discussions. First, this lesson opens up opportunities to talk about the benefits of confessing sin. Solomon’s repentance offers a compelling picture of God’s unrelenting grace. Nevertheless, “the harm that his example of evil-doing had wrought could not be undone” (Prophets and Kings, p. 84). The brutal consequences of Solomon’s poor choices speak to the importance of choosing wisely in youth. This lesson offers an ideal opportunity to talk frankly with the young people about their choices (premarital sex, drinking, pursuit of wealth, fame, etc.) and the expensive price tags that could saddle such choices. Ellen White adds: “Among the many lessons taught by Solomon’s life, none is more strongly emphasized than the power of influence for good or for ill” (Prophets and Kings, p. 85).

There are several other points you could emphasize in this lesson. For example, you could explore Solomon’s pride and cleanly connect his undoing with an arrogant spirit that sought meaning in every place other than the only true source of ultimate fulfillment—God.

Given our world’s obsession with success, you may wish to focus this lesson on Solomon’s pursuit of success through possessions, power, pleasure, etc. And yet in the end he exclaims, “Everything is meaningless, . . . completely meaningless!” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, NLT). What a great example Solomon gives us in meeting our deepest needs only in a relationship with God.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand the benefits of finding our ultimate meaning in God alone. (Know)
• Sense the need to confess and repent. (Feel)
• Look to God for the answers to the deepest questions of the soul. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Success
• Pride
• 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.
Mallory was the first to break. With trembling lips and tear-filled eyes, she said, “Laura did it.” Laura passionately denied it. Then there was silence, for the longest time. No one said a word. I knew the children wouldn’t, for they had never seen their mother so upset. I knew they wouldn’t, because they knew that if they did, they would spend eternity in the time-out chair.

I knew they wouldn’t, because I was the one who had put the red jelly stain on the mauve sofa, and I knew I wasn’t saying anything.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Use the following questions to connect the introductory story with the lesson:

- Can you relate to John’s reticence to confess?
- What are the common “stains” that young people today try to hide? Why is confession an important component of spiritual life? How do we imperil the quality of our relationship with God and others when we are dishonest about our sins?

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 Solomon reflected in his journal near the end of his life he clearly had a lot of regrets. Identify some of these regrets. What are some regrets that you hope to never have? How do you need to live each day to ensure that you will not have these regrets?
- What do you think Solomon meant when he wrote the following observations? How might heeding these observations help us to live wisely?
  - “Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones” (Ecclesiastes 10:6, NIV).
  - “One sinner destroys much good” (Ecclesiastes 9:18, NIV).
  - “Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 4:6, NIV).
- Ecclesiastes 12:13 is a fitting summary of what the wisest man who has ever lived had to say at the end of his storied life. The sum total of all
his wisdom is captured in this verse. Find as many different translations of that verse as you can. Have each student read a different version of the text out loud until all the translations have been read. Next, have a volunteer read the following texts and then discuss how each text relates to Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Philippians 2:12, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 John 3:16; Mark 12:28-31; 1 Peter 2:21

Sharing Context and Background
The following themes seem to emerge naturally from Solomon’s story. Depending on the theme(s) that you choose, share this broader biblical background in your own words.

1. Confession—If using this lesson to talk about confession, it’s important to share what confession is, and what it is not. Listen to James’s appeal for confession: “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail” (James 4:8, 9, NIV).

Truth be told, there’s plenty to confess in all of us. James’s appeal to double-minded sinners to purify their hearts is a key to enjoying life with God. In so doing we come near to God and He comes near to us. We counter conflict and foster community. It works like aloe vera on a sunburned soul.

Confession is not burping our sins in public so everyone can wince. It is the purifying process through which God allows us to experience His grace (see also James 5:16). Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person.”

2. Success—The Bible is brimming with success stories of young people who modeled time-tested morals. For example, Isaac refused to rebel against his dad—even though it meant climbing onto an altar to be killed. Joseph refused to compromise his employer’s trust in him—even though his choice put him in the prison. David refused to take Goliath’s taunts—even though it meant facing a giant with only a slingshot. Throughout the Bible we find stories of young people who refused to compromise their principles—no matter the cost.

Invite the students to brainstorm about other Bible characters who illustrate what true success looks like.

3. Pride—Review the origin of sin. Consider Satan’s haughty claims: “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

A quick tour through Scripture reminds us that God has zero tolerance for pride. “The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full” (Psalm 31:23, NIV). “Whoever has haughty

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 Prophets and Kings. 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.
eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure” (Psalm 101:5, NIV). “The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished” (Proverbs 16:5, NIV). “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6, NIV).

Why is pride so disdainful to God? How can we nurture a humble spirit?

III. CLOSING

Activity

A fun way to wrap up the lesson is with this improvisational activity.

Role-play a scene from a pastor’s office where an actor playing a teenage Solomon comes and confesses his sins. Then have the actor come again as the old Solomon to confess sins that spanned a long life. Encourage the students to be as true to the biblical account of Solomon as they can. In other words, Solomon should confess sins that he really did struggle to overcome. Finally, have the student playing Solomon remain in character and share with the class what he learned in his life. Again, encourage the actor to be as factual as possible.

Summary

A well-worn children’s story makes a fitting conclusion to this lesson:

Once there was a spider that dropped a single strand down from the rafter of an old barn and began to weave his web. Day by day the spider stretched his web until it spanned an expansive fly zone. Daily the web snagged a buffet of bugs, making the spider the envy of all spiders.

One day the spider was cruising along his elaborately woven web and noticed the single strand disappearing into the rafters. Hmmm, the spider wondered, of what value is that strand? It’s not going to catch me my dinner. With that thought the spider climbed up . . . and severed the single strand. Of course, the entire web swallowed the spider as he floated to his demise. Like the spider, Solomon learned the hard way what happens when you sever the strand that connects you to God. In the end, he confesses that life has no meaning apart from God.

2 As quoted in Bible Illustrator by Parsons Technology.
3 Adapted from Max Lucado, Turn #1 Toward God’s Glory (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Publishers, 2005).
**confessions of a foolish wise man**

**flashlight**

“By his own bitter experience, Solomon learned the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good. . . . Yet the Lord forsook him not. By messages of reproof and by severe judgments, He sought to arouse the king to a realization of the sinfulness of his course” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 76, 77).

“Solomon’s repentance was sincere; but the harm that his example of evil-doing had wrought could not be undone. . . . Though the king confessed his sin and wrote out for the benefit of after generations a record of his folly and repentance, he could never hope entirely to destroy the baleful influence of his wrong deeds” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 84, 85).

**keytext**

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them.’”

(Ecclesiastes 12:1, NIV)
what do you think?

Number from 1 (meaning it’s the most important reason) to 10 (the least important reason) why you think people find confession and repentance difficult to do.

____ They don’t believe they’ll be able to stop committing the sin.
____ They’re afraid of what others might think.
____ They feel guilty for what they did.
____ They don’t want to feel humiliated.
____ They fear being viewed as hypocrites.
____ They’re afraid of punishment.
____ They don’t feel the Bible teaches that confession and repentance are all that important.
____ They don’t want to stop doing what they’re doing.

Which of the following individuals do you think is the most prideful? Why?

____ Josh is constantly showing off his latest electronic toys.
____ Lawrence ignores his friends when a cute girl walks by.
____ Your pastor doesn’t listen to feedback from his church members.
____ Rebecca keeps reminding you that she has a 4.0 grade point average.
____ Benito constantly bullies other students in the dorm.

INTO THE STORY

“God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:29, 30, NIV).

“I thought in my heart, ‘Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.’ But that also proved to be meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 2:1, NIV).

“King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon” (1 Kings 10:23, 24, NIV).

“Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good” (Ecclesiastes 9:18, NIV).

“Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.”

“Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Everything is meaningless!”

“Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

(Ecclesiastes 12:1-8, 13, NIV)

did you know?

In 1842 the first bathtub was denounced as a “luxurious and democratic vanity.” Boston made it unlawful to bathe, except on doctor’s prescription. In 1843 Philadelphia made bathing illegal between November 1 and March 15.

And yet, how many Christians have adopted a similar schedule of spiritual cleansing? Many of us would rather endure the stench of our unconfessed sins than come clean before God!
How is it that the wisest man in the world could make such foolish choices in life?

If Hollywood were to produce a movie based on the life of Solomon, what would you suggest to use as a title?

What does Solomon's repentance teach us about God?

Is it possible to be as successful as Solomon and remain fully humble and dependant on God? Explain.

In your opinion what is the most important lesson we can learn from Solomon's story?

Read through a random selection of the Proverbs; then write a few proverbs of your own.

“Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them” (Psalm 62:10, NIV).

“The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him” (Proverbs 20:7, NIV).

“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26, NIV).

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24, 25, NIV).

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud” (Proverbs 16:18, 19, NIV).

“In confession . . . we open our lives to healing, reconciling, restoring, uplifting grace of him who loves us in spite of what we are.” —Louis Cas-sels (1922-1974), religion editor of United Press International.

“God will never plant the seed of His life upon the soil of a hard, unbroken spirit. He will only plant that seed where the conviction of his Spirit has brought broken-ness, where the soil has been watered with the tears of repentance as well as the tears of joy.” —Alan Redpath, 20th-century British evangelist, pastor, author.
Sabbath

Read through the What Do You Think? section and then reflect on the following questions:

- Which is easier—to confess or conceal wrongdoing? Why?
- What does God think about the practice of confession?
- How can confession bring a person closer to God?
- Why do people try to hide wrongdoing?
- What are the dangers of failing to confess sins?

Compare your answers in the What Do You Think? section with that of your friends and discuss:

- What is the most common number 1 ranking for failure to confess sin?
- What reasons, besides the ones listed, might people give for not practicing confession?
- Explain any connection you see between pride and the unwillingness to confess and repent of sin.

Sunday

Review the Bible verses that describe Solomon’s quest for meaning by pursuing wisdom, pleasure, and wealth. Why do you think these pursuits failed to quiet the innermost longings of his soul?

What public figures do you think most closely resemble Solomon today?

Monday

Review the Key Text for this lesson. What does it mean for you to “remember your Creator”? Solomon urges you to do this before you get old. He goes on in Ecclesiastes 12 to give some very vivid and colorful illustrations of getting old. Draw lines below to match the words of Solomon to the aging ailment that he is describing. Check your answers with the key below.

Answer key: 1-D; 2-A; 3-B; 4-C; 5-G; 6-E; 7-F

Tuesday

The quote in the Flashlight section highlights the hard lesson that Solomon learned about “the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good.” Pray about how material things influence you. Ask a mature Christian about strategies to keep from getting out of balance in seeking after possessions. Identify ways in which the gospel of materialism sneaks into us (e.g., billboards, television, friends, etc.).

Read Matthew 6:24. What master are you serving?

Wednesday

Carefully read the Punch Lines. Contained in these verses you will find profound principles for enjoying a better life. Read the texts over and over until you have them deeply entrenched in your mind. Then apply the verses and use them today as an experiment in humbly walking with God.

Thursday

Review the life of Solomon, then ask yourself: From what aspect of Solomon’s story do I need to learn the most?

Friday

Ellen White offers this commentary on Solomon’s life: “Not only to the youth, but to those of mature years, . . . the life of Solomon is full of warning. We see and hear of unsteadiness in youth, the young wavering between right and wrong, and the current of evil passions proving too strong for them. In those of maturer years, we do not look for this unsteadiness and unfaithfulness; we expect the character to be established, the principles firmly rooted. But this is not always so . . . .

“From such examples we should learn that in watchfulness and prayer is the only safety for both young and old. . . . One may for many years have enjoyed a genuine Christian experience, but he is still exposed to Satan’s attacks. In the battle with inward sin and outward temptation, even the wise and powerful Solomon was vanquished. His failure teaches us that, whatever a man’s intellectual qualities may be, and however faithfully he may have served God in the past, he can never with safety trust in his own wisdom and integrity” (Prophets and Kings, p. 82).

Questions to consider:
- What is the state of my character?
- Am I watchful and prayerful each day?
- How can I trust in God rather than in my own wisdom and integrity?


this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 5.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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

One of the most popular television shows in recent years is American Idol. It has garnered a cult-like following of millions of Americans who tune in to hear wannabe stars sing their way to success. Each week Americans vote for the singers they like best while others with the least number of votes get eliminated. The winners at the end of the season cruise into stardom with a practical guarantee of big contracts and instant fame. But what does that word “idol” mean? Is it some word that can be flippantly used on a TV show or does it carry a deeper, spiritual meaning?

The story of Rehoboam is a sobering reminder that idolatry—in any form—will not be tolerated by God. Simply put, an idol is anything that comes before God. Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21, NIV). In this statement Jesus identifies the heart of idol worship—people’s hearts belong to whatever they value most. This lesson challenges students to reflect on their priorities as they learn how God dealt with Rehoboam’s idolatrous ways.

There are many other teaching opportunities in this lesson. For example, the story has a lot to teach us on the topic of leadership. At times, Rehoboam modeled stellar leadership, but he always seemed to relapse into seasons of dreadful failure. Ellen White points out that his failure in leadership had devastating results for a whole nation.

Another area you could explore in this lesson has to do with communication. This story offers many examples (e.g., Rehoboam listening to his young counselors, the tragic stoning of Adoram, the message of Shemaiah, etc.) that provide insights into the value of honest communication.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• See that idolatry is rampant in our world today. (Know)
• Understand that putting anything above God will produce disastrous results. (Feel)
• Be challenged to sell out to God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Idolatry
• Leadership
• Communication

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 why they ranked the items in the way they did.

Ask the students to consider the list again and reflect on each item, asking themselves if it is primarily a high value according to the kingdom of earth or the kingdom of heaven. Circle the items that are important

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in our worldly culture; underline the items that are highly prized in the kingdom of God.

An alternate activity would be to play a game of Pictionary using the following words:

- Report card, Television, Clothes, Sports car, iPod, Sports, Friends, Starbucks, Video games, a muscular body, Celebrities, Family

Keep a list of the words as they guess them. Next, explain that an idol is anything that we place above God. Then discuss how any of these things can become an idol. Have each student think of another modern-day “idol” not on the list and have them draw it for the whole group to guess.

**Illustration**

Share one or both of the following illustrations in your own words:

Pastor John Ortberg tells the delightful story of a CEO at a huge corporation who showed a spirit of self-sufficiency. One time, he was coming out of a service station only to notice his wife involved in an animated discussion with the attendant pumping their gas. Back on the road again, the CEO’s wife explained how she knew the attendant. “In fact,” she said, “we dated for a couple of years.”

After a long pause, the husband quipped, “I’ll bet I know what you’re thinking. I’ll bet you’re thinking that you’re pretty lucky that you married me, the CEO of a great corporation, and not a lowly gas station attendant.”

“No,” the wife replied, “actually I was thinking if I had married him and not you, he’d be the CEO of a great corporation, and you’d be pumping gas.”

Another fun story that reminds of us of the foolishness of pride remembers Richard Daley, the eccentric mayor who served in Chicago for 21 years. He had the reputation of being a bulldog boss. Once a speech writer approached him and requested a raise. Daley’s response was, “I’m not going to give you any more money. You’re getting paid more than enough. It should be enough for you to work for a great American hero like myself.”

Two weeks later, Daley gave a speech to honor veterans on Veterans Day. Famous for not reading his speeches in advance, there he stood before a packed house of veterans and media personnel. He spoke eloquently of the forgotten soldiers. He shared how the world had discarded this important group of people. The audience sat spellbound.

“But I care. And today, I am proposing a 17-point program—national, state, and citywide—to take care of the veterans of this country.”

By this time all the people wanted to know what the mayor would say next. (Daley was pretty interested to find out himself!) Turning the page, Daley read: “You’re on your own now, you great American hero.”

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

There’s a delusion inside of everyone of us: “I am great and I made myself who I am.” This is the “I” disease that ransacked Lucifer in heaven. This obsession with self explains how sin began. Listen to Satan’s haughty claims: “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

This is the same attitude we find in King Rehoboam. When responding to the pleadings of his people to lessen the tax burdens that had been imposed by his father, King Solomon, Rehoboam foolishly replied, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:14, NIV).

This is the same attitude we find in King Rehoboam. When responding to the pleadings of his people to lessen the tax burdens that had been imposed by his father, King Solomon, Rehoboam foolishly replied, “My father made your yoke heavy; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

Because Rehoboam refused to worship the true God but chose instead to put his own interests above God’s, Rehoboam was humbled and the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

**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.

- Before Rehoboam responded to the request of the Israelites for lower taxes, he sought counsel. The old men advised him to lead with kindness and lessen the burdens. The young men advised him to exercise supreme authority and raise taxes. Ellen White writes: “Flattered by the prospect of exercising supreme authority, Rehoboam determined to disregard the counsel of the older men of his realm, and to make the younger men his advisers” (Prophets and Kings, 52).
The result was devastating. Ten tribes of Israel rebelled, and Rehoboam reigned over only two tribes of Israel. What does this story teach us about peer pressure? How might the history of Israel have been radically different had Rehoboam followed the godly counsel of the older men?

- How might Rehoboam’s choices have been different had he followed the counsel of Exodus 20:3, 4 and Matthew 6:19-21? Which parts of these verses stand out to you the most and why?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Psalm 135:15-18; Colossians 3:5-11; 1 John 4:1-3.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Herbert Lockyer offers this insightful commentary on Rehoboam’s story:
   
   What a different history of the Jews would have been written had Rehoboam not followed the advice of reckless counselors. When he went to Shechem to be formally crowned as king in succession to Solomon, the people were willing to accept Rehoboam on one condition, namely that he should lighten the burdens imposed upon them by Solomon. This reasonable request... should have been acceded to without any hesitation. But Rehoboam lost a golden opportunity of healing the sores of fears and of preserving the unity of God’s ancient people. At first pious (2 Chron. 12:1), Rehoboam fell into such iniquity that an Egyptian scourge came upon the king and the two tribes he ruled. Brief penitence stayed vengeance, but the rot had set in (2 Chron. 12:5, 8). So we leave Rehoboam, who went astray in a threefold direction, ruining himself and the people he sought to govern. He lost the best part of his kingdom and reduced Israel as a whole to a subordinate rank among nations.*

   When facing important decisions, to whom do you go for advice? How do you decide when you get conflicting counsel? Had Rehoboam known the consequences of his decisions, how do you suppose his legacy would have been different?

2. When “Rehoboam went to Shechem” (2 Chronicles 10:1, NIV), this city, which was 30 miles north of Jerusalem, was a center for the northern tribes. As prophesied by Ahijah (1 Kings 11:31, 32), Jeroboam had already been anointed for kingship over the 10 tribes of

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

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

   Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
the north (1 Kings 11:26-40). Only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty (2 Chronicles 11:3, 12; cf. 1 Chronicles 4:24-43). These two tribes were henceforth known as the nation of Judah.

3. According to the Life Application Bible, the key verse in Rehoboam’s story is 2 Chronicles 12:1, which says: “After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the Lord” (NIV). This triggered Shishak’s invasion (verse 2). This campaign of Shishak, energetic founder of the Twenty-second Dynasty of Egypt, has been confirmed by his list of conquered Palestinian cities, engraved on the walls of the temple of Amon at Karnak. This list shows that he plundered northern Israel (as far north as the Sea of Galilee) as well as Judah.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask the students to write out a detailed schedule of a typical day. Have some of them share their schedules. Discuss what takes up most of their days. Then ask them to what activities they wish to give priority. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most important) how would they prioritize the activities? Is there time for God in the schedule? If so, where? When? Gently remind them that any of these activities and priorities can become idols. Idols are, after all, anything that pulls our attention away from God.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Rehoboam made some painfully stupid choices in his life. The consequences of his decisions tarnished his legacy and scarred the nation of Israel for all succeeding generations.

At the heart of Rehoboam’s problem was his sin of idolatry. Worshipping an idol is the last thing most people figure they would ever do. But idols come in a variety of forms. Sleeker, shinier, and more sophisticated idols have replaced the primitive statues; but the result is the same—a divided allegiance between the sacred and the secular.

This lesson offers an opportunity to have a frank discussion with the young people about how they can stay on the right track with God, despite all the idols that clamor for our attention. Take advantage of this chance to challenge them toward uncompromised devotion to God.

idol threats

flashlight

“The twelve tribes of Israel were divided, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin composing the lower or southern kingdom of Judah, under the rulership of Rehoboam; while the ten northern tribes formed and maintained a separate government, known as the kingdom of Israel, with Jeroboam as their ruler. Thus was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet concerning the rending of the kingdom. ‘The cause was from the Lord’” (Prophets and Kings, p. 91).

“But as time passed, the king put his trust in the power of position and in the strongholds he had fortified. Little by little he gave way to inherited weakness, until he threw his influence wholly on the side of idolatry” (Prophets and Kings, p. 93).

keytext

“After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the Lord.”

(2 Chronicles 12:1, NIV)
Rank the following items below in order of importance to the average teenager (1 is most important, 10 is least important).

- A sizable bank account
- Good looks
- Good grades
- Musical abilities
- A strong relationship with God
- A loving family
- A hot boy/girlfriend
- Good health
- Low stress
- Good looks
- A sizable bank account
- A loving family
- A hot boy/girlfriend
- Good health
- Low stress
- Good looks
- A sizable bank account
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- Good looks
- A sizable bank account
- A loving family
- A hot boy/girlfriend
- Good health
- Low stress
- Good looks

**did you know?**

Rehoboam’s mother was Naamah, an Ammonite. Her name means “pleasant” or “sweetness,” but her actions against the true God of Israel were abominable. She was one of Solomon’s many wives who influenced Solomon toward idolatry. Because she was the first lady of the kingdom, Solomon erected in her honor a statue to her god, Moloch.

Moloch was a god to whom children were often sacrificed. The law given to Moses prohibited the Jews from sacrificing children to Moloch; nevertheless, King Solomon introduced Moloch into Israel. Moloch’s shrine was located at a site outside Jerusalem named Gehenna.

Gehenna (first mentioned in the Bible in Joshua 15:8), in Jewish eschatology, is a fiery place where the wicked are punished on judgment day. Originally it referred to a garbage dump in a deep, narrow valley right outside the walls of Jerusalem where fires were kept burning to consume the refuse and keep down the stench. It is also the location where bodies of executed criminals, or individuals denied a proper burial, would be dumped. Gehenna is sometimes translated as “hell.”

**what do you think?**

Father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.”

“Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all the Israelites had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you. . . .’”

“Three days later Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, ‘Come back to me in three days.’ The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, ‘My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”

“So all the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.”

“King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.”

“King Rehoboam established himself firmly in Jerusalem and continued as king. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name. His mother’s name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord.”

(1 Kings 12:1-4, 12-14; 2 Chronicles 10:16-19; 11:1-4, 12:12-14, NIV)
“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24, NIV).

“Why do the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them” (Psalm 115:2-8, NIV).

“The person who does not seek the kingdom first does not seek it at all. Worthy as all other concerns may be, the moment they become the focus of our efforts they become idolatry.” —Richard J. Foster, 20th-century Christian theologian and author in the Quaker tradition.

“The man who tries to walk two roads will split his pants.” —West African proverb.

“Idolatry is worshiping anything that ought to be used, or using anything that is meant to be worshiped.” —Augustine of Hippo, 4th-5th-century church leader.
This week’s reading
Prophets and Kings, chapter 6.

* A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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
The story of Jeroboam is a classic case study of what happens when someone refuses to follow God’s leading. Through the prophet Ahijah, God called Jeroboam to be the king of the 10 tribes of Israel. Rather than trusting God, however, Jeroboam felt compelled to take matters into his own hands. As Ellen White puts it: “Jeroboam’s greatest fear was that at some future time the hearts of his subjects might be won over by the ruler occupying the throne of David. He reasoned that if the ten tribes should be permitted to visit often the ancient seat of the Jewish monarchy, where the services of the temple were still conducted as in the years of Solomon’s reign, many might feel inclined to renew their allegiance to the government centering at Jerusalem” (Prophets and Kings, p. 99). This prompted Jeroboam to establish centers of idol worship in Bethel and Dan. This spiritually derailed Israel and led them down a path that resulted in great pain and destruction.

Such is the inevitable story of sin. Disobedience and compromise will always yield unwanted consequences. The Bible warns: “You may be sure that your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23, NIV). Sin would have few takers if the destructive consequences came immediately. Instead, as we see in the story of Jeroboam, sin woos and coddles us before it rapes us of joy and life.

Fortunately, no sin is beyond the boundary of God’s grace. While we cannot escape the unsavory consequences of sinful choices, we can rejoice in the infinite mercy of Jesus. Because of the cross, we can be absolutely secure in our salvation! “The Lord did not give Israel up without first doing all that could be done to lead them back to their allegiance to Him” (Prophets and Kings, p. 108). God is no more inclined to abandon His relentless pursuit of every person still today.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Learn about the inevitable brokenness that comes from sin. (Know)
• Sense the unwillingness of God to give up on His children. (Feel)
• Receive the forgiveness for sin that comes from Calvary. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• God (loving, unfailing, personal)
• Responsibility
• Sin/evil/devil
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.
An alternative activity would be to bring a backpack filled with large rocks. Tape a sin on each rock such as cheating, murder, sleeping around, looking at pornography, etc. Ask for volunteers to carry the backpack around the room as they share adjectives that describe how they’re feeling about carrying it. Keep a master list of all these words. Then reveal the contents of the backpack by sharing each sin that is taped on the rocks. Discuss how these sins, if not confessed and repented of, cause an unnecessary burden and lead us to experience those things on the master list.

**Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

The 13-foot snake was the embodiment of evil. He had a scar over his left eye that prevented healthy shedding. Consequently, at least two times a year zookeepers would get the dreaded phone call from a manager in the reptile house, “The cobra shed his skin last week, but the eye cap didn’t come off.”

According to Gary Richmond, one of the zookeepers, the task of shedding the skin required a team of five people: two keepers, a curator, a vet, and Richmond—whose job was to furnish the scalpel and sponge to the vet. The cobra slithered toward the team, spread its cape, and lifted itself up to full stature. The curator grasped it behind the venom glands. “Let’s get this over with,” the vet said. On the Web site of The Community Church of Virginia Water the scene is described:

The curator asked if Richmond had any cuts on his hands, to which he replied, “No.” He told him to wad up paper towels and stuff them in the cobra’s mouth. “OK,” Richmond answered. The cobra bit and chewed until the towels were yellow and dripping with venom. “Every year several full-grown elephants die from king cobra bites,” the curator explained. A man could never survive a bite with a full load of venom.

According to Richmond, the trickiest part of any snake-handling procedure is in the release. He explained that more people are bitten while trying to let go of snakes than when grabbing or handling them. For you see, when it comes to snakes, they are easy to grab but hard to let go of.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

Sound familiar? Any snake in your life that was easy to grab but hard to let go of?

Let’s face it, snakes slither everywhere in our culture. Grab a beer here and a wine cooler there, and soon you’re caught in the poisonous jaws of a snake that is not so easy to lick. Or surf an adult Web site now and glance through a Playboy later and before you know it you can’t seem to let go. Cheat on the chemistry quiz today then fudge on your time card at work tomorrow and in short order you are entangled by a snake of compromise that will destroy your character. All of these habits are easy to form but difficult to break.

So spare yourself the brutal task of breaking potentially fatal habits by steering clear of the snakes. It’s just no fun to get bit. Jeroboam’s story reminds us of this spiritual truth.

**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 all of the mistakes that people made.
- Who are the main actors in the story? Who are some of the actors in the Bible story that are not included in the Into the Story section?
- What aspects of the story are new to you?
- What part of the story do you relate to the most? Why?
- What lessons can we learn from Jeroboam?
- Circle the words or phrases that capture the essence of the story.
- If Jeroboam were alive today and attended your school, what kind of person do you think he would be?
- What were the strengths of Jeroboam? What were his weaknesses?
- What does the story of Jeroboam teach us about making decisions?
- What picture of God emerges from this story?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Timothy 6:18, 19; Ephesians 4:17-32; Ezekiel 33:10, 11; and Galatians 5:16-21.
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. Second Kings 17:22, 23 (NIV) gives this sobering picture of Jeroboam's legacy: “The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the Lord removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.” Herbert Lockyer, in his commentary All the Men of the Bible, points out that the next 18 kings who followed Jeroboam continued to worship the golden calves. Of 15 of them the Bible says that they departed not from the sins of Jeroboam. Indeed Jeroboam’s name lives on with an ugly blight against it, for it means “He made Israel to sin.” What does this teach us about the long-term impact of the choices we make?

2. First Kings 13:2 (NIV) records this prophecy: “He cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord: ‘O altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: “A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.”’” Three hundred years later this prophecy was fulfilled when Josiah killed the pagan priests on their own altars. Read about it in 2 Kings 23:1-20. How do biblical prophecies such as this one affirm your faith? How can we understand such prophecies in light of our free will?

3. Jeroboam selected the cities of Dan and Bethel to be the alternate places of worship rather than Jerusalem. In the south he selected Bethel because of its sanctity in the history of Israel (see Judges 20:26-28; 1 Samuel 7:16). In the northern part of Palestine he selected Dan, which did not have the same sacred character as Bethel but was still regarded by many Israelites as a holy place. The result of Jeroboam’s choice to establish holy cities besides Jerusalem proved to be disastrous.

The unnamed man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13 trumpets a stern warning against Jeroboam for disobeying God. Ironically, the prophet had received orders from God not to eat or drink while on this mission (13:9). He died because he listened to a man who claimed to have a message from God, rather than listening to God Himself. Both the story of Jeroboam and the unnamed prophet underscore the point that we must trust in God’s Word explicitly; we dare not listen to our own premonitions or to the interpretations of others.

Challenge the students to live uncompromisingly...

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

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

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

Activity

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

A nice way to tie up this lesson is to return to the backpack of rocks that you may have used as an introduction. Remind the students that when we ask God to forgive us of our sins, God dumps the rocks into the deepest part of the ocean. He buries them there and will never drudge them up again. God is anxious to hear our confessions of sin. After all, God knows all of our faults better than we do. So close this lesson by encouraging the young people to ask God for forgiveness. God is faithful to always forgive and forget!

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The story of Jeroboam is a treasure that teaches us that great lives can be destroyed by small decisions. We are reminded in the story that God will not be mocked. When He says that He will allow no other gods besides Himself, God means business! To choose otherwise is to put your soul in great peril.

The story of the prophet from Judah underscores this important point that God is serious about our full devotion. To follow any voice other than God’s is to invite hardship and heartache. God has our best interests at heart and we can fully trust Him.

Sin destroys. Obedience to God results in life—true, abundant life! Invite your young people to experience this rich and rewarding life with God.

1 As quoted from www.christchurch-virginiawater.co.uk/sermons/matthew18pdl.htm.

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 Prophets and Kings, chapter 7.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Modes of Learning

“God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well” (Romans 12:6, NLT). Keep this text in mind when you’re teaching the lesson. There are many ways to learn, and everyone learns in different ways. We each have some stronger and some weaker learning styles. The temptation of teachers is to assume students all learn best in the style in which they themselves do. These modes of learning or types of intelligence are not mutually exclusive, but keeping in mind certain categories can help you see ways that personalities differ. The following chart offers a brief overview of some of the styles to keep in mind when teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th>Learns by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic</td>
<td>Reciting, hearing, and reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical-mathematic</td>
<td>Patterns, numbers, right and wrong answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical</td>
<td>Sounds, rhythms, singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual-spatial</td>
<td>Drawing, visualizing, designing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactile-kinesthetic</td>
<td>Handling, touching, moving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to God’s Word. Discuss the story of the unnamed prophet. Does God seem to come down on him too harshly? Was God too lenient with Jeroboam when He quickly healed the king’s shriveled hand? How are we to understand God’s actions in this story?
“Placed on the throne by the ten tribes of Israel who had rebelled against the house of David, Jeroboam, the former servant of Solomon, was in a position to bring about wise reforms in both civil and religious affairs. Under the rulership of Solomon he had shown aptitude and sound judgment; and the knowledge he had gained during years of faithful service fitted him to rule with discretion. But Jeroboam failed to make God his trust” (Prophets and Kings, p. 99).

“Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.” (1 Kings 13:33, 34, NIV)
Mark each statement T (true) or F (false).

- What may be a sin for you may or may not be a sin for me.  
- There is no such thing as an unpardonable sin.  
- Sin is nothing more than a bad choice.  
- Some sins are worse than others.  
- There are always bad consequences to sin.  
- If we ask forgiveness for our sins, God forgets them forever.  
- If my sin doesn’t harm anyone, it’s not really a sin.  
- God despises sin, but always loves the sinner.  
- Sin is separation from God.  
- Sin is too often ignored in churches today.

What do you think?

INTO THE STORY

“Jeroboam thought to himself, ‘The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam, king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.’

“After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’ One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people went even as far as Dan to worship the one there.”

“By the word of the Lord a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. . . . That same day the man of God gave a sign: ‘This is the sign the Lord has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.’

“When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, ‘Seize him!’ But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the Lord.

“Then the king said to the man of God, ‘Intercede with the Lord your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored.’ So the man of God interceded with the Lord, and the king’s hand was restored.

“Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. Their father asked them, ‘Which way did he go?’ And his sons showed him. . . . He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, ‘Are you the man of God who came from Judah?’

‘I am,’ he replied.

“So the prophet said to him, ‘Come home with me and eat.’

“The man of God said, ‘I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. I have been told by the word of the Lord: “You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.”’

“The old prophet answered, ‘I too am a prophet. . . .’ (But he was lying to him.) So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.

“While they were sitting first Kings 13:33 records: “Anyone who wanted to become a priest [Jeroboam] consecrated for the high places.” This was a grave sin before God. Under penalty of death, God had forbidden anyone outside of the tribe of Levi to be a priest (see Numbers 3:10). Levites were guaranteed a salary from the tithe. This allowed them to focus completely on their duties as priests, without having to moonlight in order to survive. In the case of Jeroboam’s priests, they were paid by the king. Thus they had to mix priestly and secular duties; before long they were corrupted by bribes and sold out to the political interests of the king.
OUT OF THE STORY

Ellen White refers to three stories in her chapter entitled “Jeroboam.” She writes: “In the rent altar, in the palsied arm, and in the terrible fate of the one who dared disobey an express command of Jehovah, Jeroboam should have discerned the swift displeasure of an offended God, and these judgments should have warned him not to persist in wrongdoing” (Prophets and Kings, p. 107).

Consider these three stories and write the primary lesson we learn from each one.

1. The rent altar

2. The palsied arm

3. The unnamed prophet who disobeyed God and ate with the false prophet

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7, 8, NIV).

“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19, NIV).

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7, NIV).

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins” (James 4:17).

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34, NIV).

“Freedom is only part of the story and half the truth. . . . That is why I recommend that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast.”—Viktor Frankl, M.D., Ph.D., (1905-1997), 20th-century Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist, Holocaust survivor, and author of Man’s Search for Meaning.

“The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.”—John Stott, British preacher, evangelist, and teacher of Scripture.
Sunday
Review the section Into the Story and reflect on the following questions.

- Read 1 Kings 12:26-30. Jeroboam had been assured by the prophet Ahijah that God was going to make him king of the ten tribes of Israel. Still, Jeroboam was very insecure about his kingdom. Thus he set up centers of worship in Bethel and Dan to discourage his people from visiting Jerusalem in the southern kingdom of Judah. Do you think Jeroboam’s legacy would be different had he freely allowed his people to visit Jerusalem? In what way? In what area of your life are you tempted to feel spiritually insecure?

- Read 1 Kings 13:1-6. What does this story of the shriveled hand tell us about the character of God? Think about the courage of the unnamed prophet. What does his story teach us about speaking truth to power? In what area of your life is God calling you to uncompromising commitment?

- Read 1 Kings 13:11-22. How might this story apply to our lives today? Do you feel any sympathy toward the prophet from Judah? Why or why not? How would you respond to someone who claims this story exposes a very harsh and unreasonable side of God?

Monday
Wayne E. Oates observes: “Marketplace thought about the presence of God is one of sentimental familiarity. Country-western songs speak of ’having a little talk with Jesus’ almost as if the Lord were a chum with whom one has a chitchat. . . . In stark contrast, however, is the persistent biblical wisdom that God’s presence comes to us when we know it not. At the least, our awareness of the presence is an afterthought.” How does this statement sync with this week’s Key Text? Might Jeroboam’s chummy, “sentimental familiarity” with God have influenced his disastrous choice to allow anyone to serve as a priest? What does this teach about reverence for our holy God today?

Tuesday
Meditate on Ellen White’s statement: “[Jeroboam] was in a position to bring about wise reforms in both civil and religious affairs. . . . But Jeroboam failed to make God his trust” (Prophets and Kings, p. 99).

Read Psalm 91. Next write your own psalm that expresses the need and desire to put your trust in God. (You can use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.)

Wednesday
One of the Punch Lines offers this promise from God: “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19, NIV). Compare this promise to that of Ezekiel 36:26 where God says: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (NIV).

Read Psalm 51 as a prayer to God, asking Him to give you a new, undivided heart.

Thursday
What is God trying to teach me through the story of Jeroboam?

Friday
Prayerfully consider the comments of Ellen White as she concludes her chapter on Jeroboam.

“How does this lesson inform the way I’m called to live this week?”

“What are the specific benefits to me when I sell out to God?”

“Yet the Lord did not give Israel up without first doing all that could be done to lead them back to their allegiance to Him. Through long, dark years when ruler after ruler stood up in bold defiance of Heaven and led Israel deeper and still deeper into idolatry, God sent message after message to His backslidden people. Through His prophets He gave them every opportunity to stay the tide of apostasy and to return to Him. . . . Even in the darkest hours some would remain true to their divine Ruler and in the midst of idolatry would live blameless in the sight of a holy God. These faithful ones were numbered among the goodly remnant through whom the eternal purpose of Jehovah was finally to be fulfilled” (Prophets and Kings, p. 108).

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* A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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

Again and again in the Bible we find this description of an Israelite king: “He did evil in the eyes of the Lord” (1 Kings 22:52; 2 Kings 8:18; 15:18, etc., NIV). Therefore it’s refreshing to find that rare exception when a king such as Asa is remembered as one who “did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God” (2 Chronicles 14:2, NIV). In ancient Israel, full devotion to God was a rare virtue.

Full devotion is still a rare virtue today. In many respects ours is a culture of compromise. Nevertheless, Jesus still calls us to be sold out, signed up, and fully committed to building the kingdom of God on earth. Ellen White spoke of the need for fully devoted men (and no doubt, women are called to this high ideal as well) when she wrote: “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall” (Education, p. 57).

In many respects Asa was a committed follower of God. He obeyed God during the first 10 years of his reign. He abolished much of the idolatry in Judah. He deposed Maacah, his idolatrous grandmother. And by fully relinquishing the battle to God, he scored a great victory in crushing Cush’s army. In comparison to the evil exploits of Ahab and Jezebel, Asa offers some redemptive qualities to focus on in this lesson.

Asa’s legacy, however, is not free from failure. He made alliances with foreign nations and evil people. Then he responded with rage when Hanani confronted him with his sin. In spite of such blunders, he is still remembered in a positive way. Second Chronicles 15:17 offers this summary: “Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life” (NIV).

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Learn about some of the lesser-known characters in Israel’s history. (Know)
- Discover the rich lessons to be learned from God’s people in the past. (Feel)
- Be challenged to fully commit to Jesus Christ. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Secularism/worldliness
- Violence
- Reverence

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. You can build on this exercise by doing the following activity.
Our battles with temptation work the same way. In our own strength, the flesh always wins. But when we live in the presence of our heavenly Father, we are then positioned to allow God to fight the battle for us.

Thomas Kelly put it this way: “Don’t grit your teeth and clench your fists and say, ‘I will! I will!’ Relax. Take hands off. Submit yourself to God. Learn to live in the passive voice . . . and let life be willed through you.”

King Asa discovered this spiritual principle when he won an epic battle against the formidable Cushites. Rather than fighting in his strength, however, he "called to the Lord his God and said, 'Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you'" (2 Chronicles 14:11, NIV). In doing this, Asa discovered that “the battle is not yours, but God’s” (2 Chronicles 20:15, NIV).

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

- Who are the main actors in the story?
- Underline the parts of the story that are key to understanding it.
- What new thing about God do you learn through the story of Asa? Ahab? Jezebel?
- Chart the spiritual ups and downs of Asa’s life. Why do you think Asa wandered from God after such a promising start as king? What safeguards can we put into our lives so that we don’t repeat Asa’s mistakes?
- Compare the stories of Asa, Ahab, and Jezebel. What lessons can we learn from each?
- Which of the disciples most reminds you of Asa? Why? Which of the disciples most reminds you of Ahab? Why?
- How does Asa’s story inform our approach to a secular culture today?
- How are we to reconcile the violent wars in Israel’s history with “holy wars” that are being fought today?
- What can we learn about reverence from this lesson?
- How does Asa’s life illustrate the following spiritual principles?

Have the students write out temptations that teenagers face on a regular basis. Then collect the pieces of paper.

Ask the students to role-play the situations surrounding these temptations. For each sketch, get three volunteers—a devil, a good angel, and a person battling the temptation. Ask the student being tempted to sit in a chair with the devil on one side, the angel on the other. Randomly select one of the pieces of paper and read it out loud. Instruct the angel and the devil to try and influence the tempted one’s decision. Rotate participants with different situations to get everyone involved. Debrief by having the students share their feelings when playing the different roles.

**Illustration**

You may want to bring a birthday cake with the candles that re-light and share this illustration in your own words:

Many people approach spiritual life like an assignment to keep blowing out birthday candles that are designed to reignite and keep burning. Some people think, If I can just blow out pride and gluttony and lust and so on, then maybe I’ll at least look like a Christian. That’s a sure recipe for failure. Soon you will feel defeated and exhausted.

So what’s the answer? The key is not to blow harder; rather, it is to remain in the presence of Jesus. For sin and Jesus cannot coexist in the same heart. Your battle is to always remain in the presence of God in order to let His life be willed through you.

It’s like the father who tells of watching his 3-year-old daughter fight the temptation of the cookie jar. The girl doesn’t notice that her father is watching from a distance. So she climbs a shelf in the pantry and stretches to snatch a snack. Now she knows the cookie jar is off-limits. Her spirit wants to resist temptation but her flesh craves a sugar hit. Just as she grabs a cookie, Dad clears his throat. Instantly she drops the cookie and scoots away.

Think about it: one moment the kid could not resist temptation but in an instant she models the resolution of a saint. What made the difference? Simple—it was the presence of her father.
—God will not only reinforce good, but confront evil.
—Full commitment to God will yield favorable results.
—How well a plan works is not necessarily an indication of God’s approval.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Joshua 24:15; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Timothy 1:8; Matthew 16:24-26; Mark 8:34-38; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 1:6, 7.

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. During Asa’s reign in Judah, there was no real peace between Judah and Israel. Second Chronicles 14:1 does record that “Asa his son succeeded him as king, and in his days the country was at peace for ten years” (NIV). This decade of peace is not mentioned in 1 Kings 15:16. On the contrary, it says “there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns” (NIV). This does not mean that there was continual combat and fighting throughout Asa’s reign of 41 years (see 2 Chronicles 16:13 and 1 Kings 15:10); rather, there was continual tension between the 10 tribes of Israel in the north, and the two tribes in Asa’s kingdom in the south.

2. Who were the Cushites that God defeated through Asa? Cush (from the Hebrew word meaning “unknown”) was a son of Ham and the ancestor of five primary people groups: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca (Genesis 10:6-8; 1 Chronicles 1:8). The land of the Cushites was known to the ancients as Ethiopia and referred to the land south of Egypt. Later, it was called Nubia, now referred to as Sudan.

3. Chapters 14 and 15 of 2 Chronicles really need to be read together, as they show the two aspects of Asa’s reform in Judah. First, in chapter 14, we find the outward prosperity of Asa’s reforms. In chapter 15 we find the inward and religious account of Asa’s reforms.

“There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa’s reign” (2 Chronicles 15:17-19, NIV). 4. Second Chronicles 15:16 records that Asa deposed his grandmother, the queen mother, “because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole” (NIV). Wikipedia.com offers this background on Asherah poles:

—An Asherah is a secret tree or pole . . . to honor the Ugaritic mother-goddess Asherah.
—Asherah poles are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, the Books of Kings, the second Book of Chronicles, and the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah. . . .

The Hebrew Bible suggests that the poles were made of wood. In the sixth chapter of 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 Prophets and Kings. 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**

**History as Story**

“Don’t know much about history,” the old song goes. Indeed, for some students history can be a seen as a sure cure for insomnia.

If you’re finding that your students’ eyes are glazing over as you slog through these lessons that cover the history of the ancient kings of Israel, don’t despair. Although history can be a difficult subject to teach, it helps if you present these lessons in the form of a story. For example, perhaps you (or a volunteer actor) can dress up as King Asa and come tell the story as a first-person narrative. Maybe you can invite a rabbi from the local Jewish synagogue to come and share the history of the Jewish people in story form. Another option is to find a movie that depicts life in ancient Israel during the time of these kings. The point is, students should be much more receptive to learning these lessons from history if they are shared as interesting stories, rather than historical facts to be memorized.

Book of Judges, God [told] Gideon to cut down an Asherah pole that was next to an altar to Baal. The wood was to be used for a burnt offering.

The Hebrew Bible states that God hated Asherah poles (Deuteronomy 16:21, NIV).

**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

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

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Prophets and Kings, chapter 8.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.

On a poster board, compile a list of what your students say are their priorities. Have them call out everything that comes to mind. They may suggest things such as school, money, friends, church, food, and so on. Write them down. Then discuss how faith fits in. If someone’s highest priority was to be a fully committed follower of Christ, how would the priorities listed on the board be affected? If a person’s desire was to leave Asa’s legacy (“Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life” [2 Chronicles 15:17, NIV]), what would that life look like on a day-to-day basis in the world today? How would this desire impact a person’s priorities?

Faith is not about trying harder to be good; rather it is about living in the presence of Jesus. In this personal friendship with Jesus, full commitment to Him flourishes. Close with time for prayer, giving your group time with God in silent prayer.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Asa was a man of God. One commentary describes him like this: “Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days. The first ten years of his life were occupied in abolishing idolatry and in religious reforms. Acknowledging God in all his ways, Asa was divinely directed.”

Asa was not perfect. But he called upon the Lord for help, and God raced to his rescue. Consequently, like David, Asa is remembered as a great king with a heart for God.

We, too, can do extraordinary things by God’s power. All it takes is a personal relationship with Jesus and the courage to trust in His providence.

flashlight

“Alas, how had the glory of Israel departed! Never before had the chosen people of God fallen so low in apostasy. Of ‘the prophets of Baal’ there were ‘four hundred and fifty,’ besides four hundred ‘prophets of the groves.’ 1 Kings 18:19. Nothing short of the miracle-working power of God could preserve the nation from utter destruction. Israel had voluntarily separated herself from Jehovah, yet the Lord in compassion still yearned after those who had been led into sin, and He was about to send to them one of the mightiest of His prophets, through whom many were to be led back to allegiance to the God of their fathers” (Prophets and Kings, p. 116).

keytext

“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.”

(2 Chronicles 16:9, NIV)
Rank the following spiritual battles from the easiest (1) to the hardest (10):

- Keeping pure thoughts
- Refraining from gossip
- Being honest in schoolwork
- Speaking only words of kindness
- Managing anger
- Spending adequate time with God
- Refraining from drinking alcohol
- Helping the undeserving
- Managing time wisely
- Believing in God through hard times

INTO THE STORY

"Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. . . . He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to obey his laws and commands."

"The Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. He went out to meet Asa and said to him, ‘Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law. But in their distress they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them.’"

"Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the Lord’s temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. ‘Let there be a treaty between me and you,’ he said, ‘as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me.’"

"Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. . . . When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work. . . ."

"At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: ‘Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. . . . For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.’"

"Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people."

"Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him."

"There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife."

(2 Chronicles 14:2, 4; 15:1-4; 16:2-7, 9-10; 1 Kings 16:30; 21:25, NIV)
punch lines

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’” (Matthew 16:24, NIV).

“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:8, NIV).

“With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation’” (Acts 2:40, NIV).

“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good” (Psalm 14:1, NIV).

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8, NIV).

If you were to teach the story of Asa to kindergartners, what would you tell them is the main lesson we can learn from it?

What does the story of Asa teach us about being fully devoted to God?

What do the examples of Ahab and Jezebel teach us about secularism and worldliness?

Asa made some big mistakes in his life and yet the Bible says: “Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa’s heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life” (2 Chronicles 15:17, NIV). How do you explain this verse? If Asa allowed some idol worship to continue, and then he was involved in a shady deal with Ben-Hadad, how is it that he was “fully committed to the Lord all his life”? What comparisons might you make between King David and Asa? Are there any other characters in the Bible whose stories are similar to Asa’s?

“Christ is not valued at all, unless he be valued above all.”—Augustine of Hippo, 4th-5th-century church leader.

“Because I am a Christian, therefore, every day in which I do not penetrate more deeply into the knowledge of God’s Word in Holy Scripture is a lost day for me. I can only move forward with certainty upon the firm ground of the Word of God.”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), German Lutheran pastor and participant in the German resistance movement against Nazism, for which he was imprisoned and eventually hanged.
In what specific ways does God “strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him”?

What does it mean for me to commit my heart fully to God?

What were the consequences for Asa because he had done foolish things? What are some of the consequences I have experienced because of my foolish decisions?

How might Asa’s legacy be different had he humbly received Hanani’s reproof? What can you learn from Asa’s reaction to criticism?

What would it mean for me to totally sell out to God?

What is God’s dream for my life that can be realized only by radical commitment?

The story of King Asa reminds us that God is still looking for followers who are “fully committed” (2 Chronicles 15:17, NIV).

How do you receive constructive criticism? Do you appreciate it when God sends a word of reproof to you through a friend or family member? Why or why not?
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The story of Elijah’s ministry starts with his confrontation of King Ahab. Elijah suddenly appears in the Bible, makes a speech, and then disappears from sight, while Ahab is left to think on the rainless years ahead of him. Perhaps this startling beginning is what makes him one of the most well-known prophets in the Bible. Or perhaps it is the fact that he was taken up to heaven at the end of his ministry among the people of Israel without ever having to face death.

However, the story of Elijah is incredible, not just in that God provided for him in so many wonderful ways, but that Elijah obeyed God even when it might have cost him his life. At only one point in his life did Elijah give way to the fears inside and run away from the work that God had given him.

Elijah was a normal human being with the same nature that we have (see James 5:17), but he chose to go against the flow of the idol-worshipping people around him and stand up for what he believed in. People often wonder why God chooses to protect some people and yet allows others to be harmed. In a way, this lesson brings up this discussion once again. It isn’t always this way. Sometimes the people who were working to spread God’s message were killed, as were the other prophets in the time of Elijah (see 1 Kings 19:10), but Elijah was protected.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand that while bad things happen, God will never leave them. (Know)
• Experience the freedom that a life with full trust in God gives. (Feel)
• Recommit themselves to God’s safe care. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Courage
• Conviction
• Gift of Prophecy

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.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
During the terrible days of the Blitz, a father, holding his small son by the hand, ran from a building that had been struck by a bomb. In the front yard was a shell hole. Seeking shelter as quickly as possible, the father jumped into the hole and held up his arms for

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his son to follow. Terrified, yet hearing his father’s voice telling him to jump, the boy replied, “I can’t see you!”

The father, looking up against the sky tinted red by the burning buildings, called to the silhouette of his son, “But I can see you. Jump!” The boy jumped, because he trusted his father. The Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

There are times in your life when you have a glitch that comes, you don’t know where to turn, and the only ways out don’t seem that easy. So it was with Elijah, over and over again, but he trusted in God to get him out of the situation, relying on His way out. Even when God tells us to “jump,” and it seems easier to do it our own way, His idea to step out in faith for Him is better in the end.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- Have there been times in your life when you felt that God was really protecting you?
- What are some times when God helped you, but it wasn’t your idea of a way out? What did you do?
- If you feel comfortable enough, share with the rest of the class your own experience(s) of a time when God has really looked out for you.
- Why do you think Elijah was taken to heaven? Explain.
- Elijah is one of the most well-known prophets in the Bible. Throughout the ministry of John the Baptist and later in Jesus’ ministry as well, people questioned whether or not one of them was Elijah. Why do you think this is so?

With the students, explore the different times of Elijah’s life and ministry, discussing the possible differences in emotions in each situation. Think of the incredible awe and happiness he must have felt on Mount Carmel (read the story in 1 Kings 18), and the terror he felt when King Ahab pursued him. Make Elijah real to the students, highlighting his high and low moments, the moments that stay in people’s memories when they think of him. Then ask the students the following questions in your own words:

What strikes you most about the story of Elijah? Is it his obedience? God’s watch care over him? How can you relate his story to your life now?

Do miraculous things (e.g., the resurrection of the widow of Zarapheth’s son [read 1 Kings 17:17-24], the ravens feeding Elijah, or the fire that came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice) happen nowadays? Or is it something that is just reserved to the Bible times?

Sharing Context and Background

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

- Elijah’s ministry is set in Israel during the Omride dynasty (ninth century B.C.), a period marked by relative peace and prosperity. Elijah is presented as the powerful champion of Yahweh against the royal house’s worship of Baal.
- The face of the historical Elijah himself, however, lies hidden behind a veil of miraculous moments. Even the prophet’s name (“Yahweh is my God”) has been seen by some as a name that is reflective of his zeal. He is regularly called “the Tishbite,” but the word is of uncertain meaning.
- Elijah displays many of the traits characteristic of prophetic figures throughout Israel’s history. He is a miracle worker whose word of power can produce weal or woe (1 Kings 17:1, 16; 2 Kings 1:10, 12; 2:8). He is a powerful intercessor for individuals or the whole people (1 Kings 17:20-22; 18:42-45). He confronts the king with condemnation for religious infidelity and for social injustice (1 Kings 17:1; 18:18; 21:20-22; 2 Kings 1:16).
- Allusions to the stories of the Exodus pervade 1 Kings 17–19 and establish a parallel between the ministries of Elijah and Moses. The geographical framework of the three chapters recalls Moses’ wanderings: each prophet begins his journey with a flight eastward to escape a king’s wrath; each finds safety with a family. Each returns to his country to face and

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challenge the king, and to awaken faith among the Israelites. Each leaves the country again on a journey to Sinai/Horeb, where he experiences a meeting with God. Each then departs for Israel via Transjordan.

- Elijah’s mysterious assumption to heaven in a whirlwind occurs once the Jordan has been crossed. In 1 Kings 19, Elijah had made an earlier, solitary pilgrimage to Horeb, whence he returned with new tasks including the commissioning of his successor. This time the journey is Elisha’s. He accompanies his master on the outward road to the place of power where Elijah is translated. This is the moment of supernatural encounter from which Elisha returns transformed and empowered.

III. CLOSING

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

Divide the students into groups of two or four and ask them to discuss together the possible reasoning behind God’s choice to take Enoch and Elijah to heaven. Have each group pick a person to discuss and give them the following Bible verses for helpful tips on the matter. Then discuss with the whole class the ideas that the students came up with.

Enoch: (Genesis 5:18-24; Hebrews 11:5)
Elijah: (2 Kings 2)

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Just because God doesn’t necessarily provide for you in the same miraculous ways as He did for Elijah,
doesn’t mean that God isn’t with you. Turning your life over to Him means that He will never leave you; your life is in His hands. Bad things happen in life, sometimes things go wrong, but trusting in God will get you out on the right end.

In giving God his life, and in obeying Him even if the situation was dangerous, Elijah was entrusting himself to God’s care. He did doubt, at one point in his life, whether God was really going to protect him, even asking for God Himself to kill him. But God showed Elijah that even then, when Elijah’s faith failed him, He would not leave him.

Turning our lives over to God so that He may use us as tools to spread His message as Elijah did may be dangerous and frightening at times, but as long as we stay close to Him, we can know that He will never, ever leave us.

1 Fundamental Belief No. 18.

Reminder 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 Prophets and Kings, chapters 9; 10 first part.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.
Never alone

Flashlight

“The word of faith and power was upon his [Elijah’s] lips, and his whole life was devoted to the work of reform. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to rebuke sin and press back the tide of evil. And while he came to the people as a reprover of sin, his message offered the balm of Gilead to the sin-sick souls of all who desired to be healed” (Prophets and Kings, p. 119).

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 17:1-16.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 9; 10 first part.
God sometimes refers to Himself as a father, or a mother, and Jesus even refers to Himself as a brother. If you were in a hard, difficult, or even life-threatening situation in your life, who would you want to be there with you? Rank them in order of importance from 1 being the highest to 5 being the lowest.

1. Mother
2. Father
3. Sister
4. Brother
5. Best friend

The Old Testament is not the only place where we see Elijah. In fact, he appears to Peter and John at the Transfiguration on the Mount of Olives, talking with Jesus. Elijah was not alone, though; with him appeared Moses. Jesus told His two accompanying disciples not to tell anyone about the incident until after His death. This incident is told in three of the four Gospel accounts with very little variation in the retelling, showing that it was a very important incident in Jesus’ life and ministry. God obviously cared a lot about Elijah, and at the end of his ministry, God took Elijah away from this earth so that he could live with Him.

**God so refers to Him as a father, or a mother, and Jesus even refers to Him as a brother. If you were in a hard, difficult, or even life-threatening situation in your life, who would you want to be there with you? Rank them in order of importance from 1 being the highest to 5 being the lowest.**

Mother  
Father  
Sister  
Brother  
Best friend

**did you know?**

The Old Testament is not the only place where we see Elijah. In fact, he appears to Peter and John at the Transfiguration on the Mount of Olives, talking with Jesus. Elijah was not alone, though; with him appeared Moses. Jesus told His two accompanying disciples not to tell anyone about the incident until after His death. This incident is told in three of the four Gospel accounts with very little variation in the retelling, showing that it was a very important incident in Jesus’ life and ministry. God obviously cared a lot about Elijah, and at the end of his ministry, God took Elijah away from this earth so that he could live with Him.

**“Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.’** The word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.’

“Then Elijah said to her, ‘Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil become empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth.’’”

(1 Kings 17:1-16, NASB)
"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, and surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10, NASB).

"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me" (Psalm 139:7-10, NASB).

"Then the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth'" (1 Kings 17:24, NASB).

"It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17, NASB).

"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months" (James 5:17, NASB).

"God cares for the world He created, from the rising of a nation to the falling of the sparrow. Everything in the world lies under the watchful gaze of His providential eyes, from the numbering of the days of our lives to the numbering of the hairs on our head." —Ken Gire, current U.S. author and speaker.
Making It Real

Sabbath

When you are frightened or in a bad situation it is comforting to have a close person like a family member to offer a hug or a kind word. In the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson you thought about who you would really want to be there with you in a dangerous or scary situation.

Read Isaiah 41:10 in the Punch Lines section. How does it make you feel to know that God will never ever leave you, even if there is no one else there for you?

Sunday

All through Elijah’s life God provided for and looked out for him. Even when Elijah ran away from his work, God was still with him. At the end of his life, God decided to take Elijah to his real home: heaven. God cared for him so much that He wanted him to live with Him eternally in heaven, and not die here on earth. How would you feel about having that kind of relationship with God? Write your thoughts in a letter to God. (You can use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide if you need additional space.)

Tuesday

The Flashlight section for this week really shows what an incredible kind of person Elijah was. He had God’s message to tell, and he was going to tell it! Years later another prophet was compared to him. Some even thought that he was Elijah. John the Baptist preached in the wilderness, turning people back to God. He preached with such zeal and enthusiasm that people began wondering if he was Elijah. How do you think that kind of zeal and enthusiasm would be met today? Do you know anyone who exhibits that much passion for God and His kingdom?

Wednesday

Read Psalm 139:7-10 from the Punch Lines this week. Read the whole psalm in your Bible and get the background glimpse of what David is talking about. God takes care of people. He knows everything about us down to the last hair on our heads. Doesn’t it feel comforting to know that we have a God who loves us so much? Look through the Psalms and find other examples of God’s love and care for us.

Psalm 

Psalm 

Psalm 

Thursday

If there was one point in your lifetime when you were especially in need of help, when was it? Did someone come and give you the help you needed or were you left to fend for yourself? Being in a difficult situation that proves difficult and dealing with it alone is always hard. What did you do in that difficult situation? Did you call on God? Did He answer your call?

Friday

One of the most difficult things for people in their lives is the hard times where they have to completely rely on God for help. Naturally, as humans, we like to try to take things into our own hands and try to do it our way. God repeatedly told the children of Israel to put their faith in Him. Many times they did and were blessed, but often they tried to do things their own way and ended up in a lot of trouble. When are some times when God did come through for you? Was it in a way that you expected? Or was it in a way that worked out well but wasn’t exactly what you had in mind? Why do you think it happened that way?

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After years of famine, during which Elijah was miraculously cared for by the Lord, the time had come for a showdown. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest. At stake was the worship and loyalty of the nation of Israel. Elijah risked everything on his faith that God would bring fire from heaven to honor his sacrifice—and that the false god Baal would do nothing.

Elijah’s courage in this story seems extreme to the point of foolishness—taunting the pagan prophets, soaking the Lord’s sacrifice with water to emphasize his total dependence on God. Such extreme faith seems far removed from the everyday reality of most youth, yet day-to-day faith experiences with God now will lay the foundation for the kind of courageous faith young people will need to take a stand for what’s right in more difficult situations.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand that trusting God through hard times gave Elijah the strength to take a courageous step of faith. (Know)
• Believe that they can trust God to be there for them when they do what is right. (Feel)
• Commit to taking a stand for what they believe is right. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Peer pressure

Faith
• 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.

In groups of two or three, ask students to share an example of a time they faced a situation such as that described in What Do You Think?—a situation in which someone they knew was doing something wrong. If they have trouble thinking of situations, refer them to Wednesday’s section of the student lesson for ideas and ask if any of them has ever been in a similar situation.

When the groups have had a chance to share, ask each group to select one scenario they discussed and role-play for the others how a Christian teenager might respond in that situation.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In 1989 Chinese students staged a seven-week-long protest in Tiananmen Square that drew the world’s attention. As people around the world watched the story unfold on the news, one image, reprinted
What do his words convey?
• What do the prophets of Baal say? Why do you think the Bible writer doesn’t record any response from them to Elijah? Were they speechless? Why?
• What about the people of Israel? How did they respond to the fire from heaven? How do you think they would have responded if the prophets of Baal had somehow managed to make fire appear on their altar?
• Ask: How many jars of water had soaked the sacrifice by the time Elijah was finished? What was the point of doing this? Why does the Bible writer record that not only the sacrifice and the wood, but the altar stones and the water, were consumed? What point is this making about the God of heaven?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Ephesians 6:10-17; Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 11:1-6, 32-40

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

We all admire courage. We respect the person who takes a brave and difficult stand. But could we be that person? Most of us find it much easier to go along with the crowd than to take a difficult stand.

There are times in the Christian life when, in order to be true to God, we’ll have to say and do things that are unpopular. We’ll have to be willing to stand out, maybe even face hardship and persecution. The only way to get through that is by faith. The kind of faith that grows stronger as we build a loving, trusting relationship with God day by day.

That’s the kind of faith Elijah had. That’s the faith that gave him courage, that enabled him to stand alone on Mount Carmel facing all those prophets of Baal and say, “Come on! Let’s see whose God is the true God!”

Out of the Story for Teachers
Read the Into the Story section aloud with your students.

• Assign different students to read the words spoken by Elijah, the prophets of Baal, and the people. Read the narrative portions yourself. After reading through the passage in this way, ask: What does Elijah say to the prophets of Baal? Why do you think he speaks in this way?

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

Faith like Elijah’s doesn’t happen overnight. Sometimes we imagine standing up for our faith in a difficult situation, or facing persecution at the end of time, and think, “I could never do that! I don’t have the courage!”

Christian writer Corrie Ten Boom had that same fear as a child. She told her father she feared she wouldn’t be brave enough to face persecution if that time ever came. Her father asked her, “When we go on a train trip, when do I give you your ticket? Three weeks before?”

“No, Papa,” she replied, “you give it to me right before we get on the train.”

“That’s how it is with God,” he told her. “He gives us courage to face trials when we need it, not before.”

As an older woman Corrie found herself hiding Jews in her home during the Holocaust, eventually ending up in a German concentration camp. The courage she thought she would never have was there when she needed it.

Corrie Ten Boom, and the prophet Elijah, and many other people of faith throughout history have learned that putting your faith in God day by day builds love and trust for God.
the kind of trusting relationship that allows us to be courageous in the face of danger. Before he ever faced down the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah lived through three years of famine, trusting God to provide his food every day. By the end of that time, he had practice trusting God. He knew God would come through.

Sure, you may not have to face a firing squad for your faith today. But maybe you can have the courage and faith to be friendly to an unpopular new student at school, or to walk away when someone tells a racist joke instead of laughing along with the crowd. As we exercise our faith in small things, God gives us greater faith and courage.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Think back to the situations we discussed at the beginning of this week’s lesson—times when others are doing wrong and we need to take a stand for what’s right. On a note card, write the following sentence, filling in the blanks:

“I promise that when others are ________________, with God’s help I will ________________.” Fold the card and keep it in your Bible as a private commitment between you and the Lord. Remember, He doesn’t expect you to do it in your own strength—He gives you the faith and courage to do the right thing even when it’s difficult.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Elijah’s confrontation on Mount Carmel was dramatic, exciting, larger-than-life. Yet we face the same challenge in many smaller ways. Will we stand up for what’s right when others are doing wrong? Can we trust God to take care of us even if we risk rejection, misunderstanding, and danger?

Taking a small stand for the right today may lead to bigger things tomorrow. Someday you may have the opportunity to stand on your own “Mount Carmel” and declare your faith in God to the whole world. But it begins today with simple trust and faith in God. Trust
Him to help you do the right thing, to make the right choices and live with the consequences. Place your life in His hands, and He’ll give you all the courage you’ll ever need.

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 Prophets and Kings, chapters 10 last part; 11.

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“God cannot use men who, in time of peril, when the strength, courage, and influence of all are needed, are afraid to take a firm stand for the right. He calls for men who will do faithful battle against wrong, warring against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Prophets and Kings, p. 142).
When I see others in my life doing something I think is wrong, I usually

____ Ignore it.
____ Join in.
____ Tell them what they’re doing is wrong.
____ Keep quiet unless they ask me what I think, then say I think it’s wrong.

If I’m doing something wrong, I appreciate it when others in my life

____ Don’t bother me about it; mind their own business.
____ Quietly tell me they think I’m making a mistake.
____ Talk to others about it behind my back.

The name “Baal” means “lord.” It is used to refer to a number of different pagan gods that were worshipped by the Israelites and the people who lived around them. King Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, made the worship of Baal popular among the Israelites.

Pagan gods were believed to control such things as weather, crops, etc. By declaring that the God of heaven had stopped the rain for three years, Elijah was challenging the belief that Baal would bring rain and good crops. His “showdown” on Mount Carmel demonstrated that God alone controlled every aspect of life and that He alone was worthy of Israel’s worship.

Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, ‘Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.’ So they took the bull given them and prepared it.

Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. ‘O Baal, answer us!’ they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

At noon Elijah began to taunt them. ‘Shout louder!’ he said. ‘Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.’ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

Then Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come here to me.’ They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which was in ruins. Elijah took twelve stones... With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it... He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, ‘Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.’

‘Do it again,’ he said, and they did it again.

‘Do it a third time,’ he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: ‘O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.’

Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, ‘The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!’

(1 Kings 18:25-39, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Elijah thought of the idea of staging a challenge between Baal and the true God?

What did he hope to accomplish by doing this?

Why do you think Elijah made fun of the prophets of Baal? How might they have responded when he did this?

What was the point of soaking the sacrifice with water?

How did Elijah have enough faith to trust that the sacrifice would burn?

What was God’s purpose in offering this spectacular display of His power?

How do you think the people watching felt when they saw the sacrifice consumed? How do you think the prophets of Baal felt?

other eyes

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”—Martin Luther King, Jr., 20th-century American civil rights leader.

“Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith.”—Henry Ward Beecher, 19th-century American clergyman and writer.

“Faith is mighty, but action with faith is mightier.”—Thomas Robert Gaines, 20th-century author.

punch lines

“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6, NIV).

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:10-12, NIV).

“I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20, NIV).

“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17, NIV).
Sabbath

Elijah had the courage to speak out when he believed the people of Israel were doing wrong. God gave Elijah a job to do, and Elijah had the courage and faith to follow through with it.

Read Hebrews 11:6 (NIV). What does it mean to you to say that “without faith it is impossible to please God”? If you felt you had to speak out against something you thought was wrong, would it take a lot of faith to do that? Would you trust God to come through for you as He did for Elijah in this story?

Think about a situation in your life in which you believe God is calling you to trust Him. How do you react when others are doing things you believe are wrong?

Sunday

Imagine yourself watching in the crowd on Mount Carmel as Elijah faces off against the prophets of Baal. As an ordinary Israelite, you may be torn between Baal worship and faith in the true God. After three years of drought and famine, you’re prepared to worship any god who can bring rain.

All the odds seem to be stacked in Baal’s favor. Yet after hours of noisy worship, the priests of Baal have accomplished nothing. Your attention swings to the lone prophet of God, Elijah. His sacrifice is soaked with water, making it abundantly clear that he can’t light it himself. He relies completely on the invisible God of your fathers.

Write three words that describe what you might feel at that moment:

________________________

Monday

According to the Key Text, what did Elijah hope the demonstration on Mount Carmel would prove? ____________

Was this goal accomplished? ____________ Find a text in the Into the Story section that supports your answer. ____________

Tuesday

What do you think it means to “take a firm stand for the right” as the passage from Prophets and Kings says that Christians should do?

Sometimes we face situations in which others are doing wrong and we need to have the courage and faith to speak out. In which of the following situations would you feel that, as a Christian, you should point out that what’s happening is wrong?

___ Your classmates are making fun of a disabled student behind his back.
___ You are shopping with your friend when you notice she quietly shoplifts a small item.
___ You are at a friend’s house with no adults around when someone brings in a case of beer and several of your friends start to drink.
___ A friend passes on a juicy but slightly embarrassing piece of gossip about another friend.
___ You notice someone cheating off your paper during a test.

How likely would you be to speak out in these situations? What different ways are there of handling these situations?

Wednesday

The Bible verses in the Punch Lines section talk about what it means to be a person of courage and faith, to take a stand for what is right. Elijah was such a powerful biblical example of this kind of faith and courage that centuries later, in the time of Jesus, people still looked to him as the ideal man of courageous faith. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, was said to have come “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (NIV), and some people even believed that Jesus Himself was Elijah reborn! That’s the kind of impact a person of courage and faith can make on the world.

As you look around you today, who do you see setting an example of courageous faith?

Thursday

Look back at the situations presented in Tuesday’s lesson. Are any of them similar to situations you have faced? How do you react when others are doing things you believe are wrong?

What’s one situation you’re facing now in which you feel God is calling you to stand up for what is right? ____________

What could you do to stand up for God in this situation? ____________

Friday

Elijah’s faith was strong on Mount Carmel because he had a lifetime of experience in trusting God. He had just lived through three years of famine, depending totally on God’s power to provide even the most basic, everyday needs for him. Sometimes we read stories like that of Elijah on Mount Carmel and think, I could never have that kind of faith! But faith is like muscle—it gets stronger by being used.

In your prayer time today talk to God about the things you’re worried about. Place them trustingly in His hands and ask Him to help your faith grow so that you will be ready when bigger tests come.


this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapters 10 last part; 11.

* A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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

After Elijah’s stunning victory for the Lord on Mount Carmel, the wicked Queen Jezebel threatened his life. Facing down the prophets of Baal didn’t daunt Elijah, but running for his life seemed to plunge him into despair. Elijah, believing he was the only true worshipper of God left in Israel, became so discouraged he wished he could die. God sent an angel to minister to him, then spoke to Elijah with His own “still, small voice” to assure Elijah that he was not alone.

This story about Elijah emphasizes the fact that all God’s followers will face times of discouragement and despair as well as “mountaintop” experiences such as the triumph on Mount Carmel. When the angel steps in and guides Elijah to take care of his physical needs of rest and food, it reveals how the physical and emotional aspects of our lives affect each other.

God’s Word gives a great deal of helpful guidance to help believers get through the “down” times that are a part of the Christian experience. Young Christians need to know that times of discouragement are not proof that their faith is false or that they are “bad Christians,” but rather opportunities to grow spiritually.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that lows as well as highs are part of the Christian life. (Know)
- Believe that God still cares and is helping them even when they are feeling down. (Feel)
- Develop strategies to help strengthen their faith during times of discouragement. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Fatigue
- Depression
- Emotions

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.

Ask students about their strategies for dealing with discouragement. List positive suggestions on a flip chart or whiteboard at the front of the room, starting with the ones in the lesson and adding others the group suggests.

In another column list negative strategies people use to deal with bad feelings—such as drugs, alcohol, overeating, violence toward others, negative talk, self-harm, etc.

Ask: Have you used any of these strategies when you’ve been feeling bad? Did you think of them as “strategies” at the time?

Say: We react in lots of ways when we’re feeling
bad, but we don’t always think about how we react. Which list of strategies is easier to do when we’re feeling bad (often, it will be the negative ones). Which list do you think is actually more effective in helping you feel better?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Do you like riding on roller coasters? Some people love the thrill, while others hate the terror and stay as far away from roller coasters as they can.

The climb up to the top of a roller coaster is nerve-wracking but exciting. The car teeters for a moment at the top, then begins the long plunge downward. That’s when the screaming starts. Some riders might scream in excitement and others in fear, but very few people stay calm and quiet when a roller coaster is hurtling to the bottom of the ride.

Many people describe the ups and downs of emotions as a roller coaster ride. The highs and lows are steeper for some people than for others, but everyone experiences both—ups and downs. Unlike a roller coaster, few people scream with excitement as they begin the downward plunge into discouragement and despair. Yet that downward ride is one everyone has to take at some point. The question is: How will you handle it?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Everyone experiences down times and bad feelings—even Christians. Some people suggest that the Christian life is all happiness and sunshine without any problems, but all mature Christians know that’s not true. Even a faithful prophet such as Elijah knew discouragement so seriously he even considered suicide! Discouragement is not the mark of an unsuccessful Christian—it’s the mark of a growing one. As we grow in faith, we have to learn to trust God through the valleys as well as on the mountaintops.

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.

Looking back at Elijah’s experiences in this story and over the last few weeks, try drawing a “life map” of Elijah’s faith journey. Draw it on the whiteboard or flip chart in front of your room using students’ suggestions. The “map” can be a simple timeline of Elijah’s experiences, but instead of drawing a straight horizontal line, draw high points and low points along the line (like a roller coaster) to indicate the ups and downs in Elijah’s spiritual journey (see “Rabbi 101” below for more on creating life maps). Use pictures, symbols, or Bible references to indicate specific points in Elijah’s life.

Then invite students to draw their own life maps, indicating high and low points in their lives, especially as they relate to their spiritual experience. High points might include things such as giving their heart to Jesus, baptism, attending summer camp or a youth rally, sharing Jesus with a friend, having a prayer answered, while the low points will indicate experiences that led to doubt, discouragement, and sadness. Assure students they can keep their maps private. As they finish, use some of the Bible verses from the Punch Lines section of the student lesson to remind them that God is with them in every stage of their life journey—in the low points as well as the high points.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 11:28-30; Isaiah 43:1, 2; John 16:33.

Sharing Context and Background

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

This lesson focuses on the ups and downs that are a natural part of the Christian experience. Young people need to learn that faith is not based on feelings; holding on to their faith even when they feel sad and discouraged is an important part of growing in Jesus.

In discussing this topic, it’s important not to ignore the very real subtopic of clinical depression. Sad feelings and discouragement are part of everyone’s life, but in some people these can become extreme, leading to a serious depression. Many teenagers suffer from depression, which may be triggered by life events such as loss of a loved one, violence or abuse, family breakup, etc. Depression can also occur even when there’s no apparent life cause, probably as a result of a chemical imbalance in the brain.

This week’s lesson suggests a number of strate-
gie strategies that are useful for dealing with spiritual lows and discouragement: prayer, faith, relying on God’s promises, exercise, rest, keeping a positive attitude, serving others, etc. While these strategies may also be useful to a person suffering from serious depression, they are usually not enough. Professional help in the form of counseling or therapy, and in some cases medication, may be part of God’s plan for helping young people with depression. Just telling someone who is clinically depressed to “cheer up and trust God!” is not helpful.

To help make this distinction clear in the minds of your students, it might be helpful to review some of the warning signs that distinguish depression from a bad mood or “down” feelings. Young people who experience several of these signs for more than two weeks at a time should seek help for depression:

- Feeling sad or discouraged most of the time, especially for “no reason”
- Lack of energy or feeling tired all the time
- Inability to enjoy activities they usually enjoy
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Irritability and anxiety
- Inability to concentrate
- Significant weight gain or loss
- Change in sleep patterns
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Aches and pains with no physical cause
- Pessimism; indifference toward the future
- Thoughts of death or suicide

III. CLOSING

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

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Prophets and Kings. 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

Drawing a Life Map

Drawing a life map is a good way to explore the life of a historical or biblical character; it’s also a good way for students to reflect on their own spiritual journey. It’s similar to drawing a timeline of events, but instead of a straight line moving forward through time, you can use a life map to illustrate ups and downs, twists and turning points. Visual symbols can be used to illustrate important events. For tips and examples, check out the links below or Google the phrase “life map.”

The following site has good tips, though no visual images. It suggests using only pictures, never words, on a life map, but this is just a guideline and need not be followed rigidly; adapt the idea to your own needs: www.education-world.com/a_tsl/archives/05-1/lesson023.shtml.

This one contains links to some sample life maps to give you an idea of how it looks: www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=74.
Pass out index cards and pencils. Say: “When Elijah was most discouraged, God spoke to him with a ‘still, small voice’ or a ‘gentle voice.’ As you think about the things we’ve discussed and the Bible texts we’ve read today, imagine what God’s gentle voice might be saying to you right now. It could be a Bible verse or just a sentence of encouragement. Write down what you believe God’s message to you is when you are discouraged and need help. Keep it in your Bible to read when you need it most.”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Elijah was on the mountaintop when God sent fire down from heaven. He was uplifted and filled with the Holy Spirit, just like a Christian who has recently been baptized or given their heart to Jesus. But soon Elijah had to face fear and danger, and he experienced such a severe discouragement that he wanted to die.

Maybe you’ve felt like that at times. Maybe you’ve been down, discouraged, or even depressed. Ups and downs are part of every life, even the Christian life. Especially the Christian life. God wants our faith to grow as we learn to trust Him through bad times as well as good. We can trust God to send “fire from heaven” when we need it on the mountaintop. We can also trust Him to speak to us with the “still small voice” of hope and faith when we need encouragement. When you are down, trust God to lift you up.

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 Prophets and Kings, chapters 12, 13.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.
**doubt in the valley**

"For the disheartened there is a sure remedy—faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day. Are you tempted to give way to feelings of anxious foreboding or utter despondency? In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. . . . Never will He change the covenant He has made with those who love Him" (Prophets and Kings, pp. 164, 165).

**keytext**

"The Lord said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’"

(1 Kings 19:11, NIV)
**what do you think?**

Which of the following things help you when you're feeling down or discouraged?

- ___ Talking to a friend
- ___ Spending time alone
- ___ Listening to music
- ___ Prayer
- ___ Watching TV or movies
- ___ Talking to a parent, counselor, pastor, or other caring adult
- ___ Exercise
- ___ Doing something for someone else
- ___ Other: ____________________

**did you know?**

Spiritual highs are often followed by spiritual lows. Just ask anyone who has ever returned from the excitement of a youth retreat or rally to deal with the problems of everyday life. When you’re surrounded by other Christians, singing and praising the Lord, it’s easy to feel happy, excited, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Three weeks later when you’re coping with parents, homework, and peer pressure you may find yourself crashing into discouragement or despair.

The Bible doesn’t promise that God’s people will never know unhappiness or discouragement. After his triumphant showdown against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah collapsed into discouragement and despair. But God didn’t abandon him—and He won’t abandon you when times get tough.

**INTO THE STORY**

“Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, ‘May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.’

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.’ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

“All at once an angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’ He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

“The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.’ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. . . .

“And the word of the Lord came to him: ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’

“He replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’

“The Lord said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.”

(1 Kings 19:1-13, NIV)
punch lines

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV).

“Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord” (Psalm 31:24, NIV).

“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:30, 31, NIV).

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you” (Isaiah 43:1, 2, NIV).

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

OUT OF THE STORY

Elijah had just won a stunning victory for God. What happened right afterwards to make him feel discouraged?

Do you think Elijah was sincere in wishing he could die? Why or why not?

What was the angel’s advice to Elijah immediately after he said he wanted to die? Why do you think this was good advice?

Carefully read Elijah’s reply to the Lord’s question: “What are you doing here?” What do Elijah’s words tell you about how he was feeling at that point?

Why didn’t Elijah hear God’s voice in the whirlwind, the earthquake, or the fire? What is the significance of God’s voice being a “gentle whisper” at this point in Elijah’s story?

How can you best hear God’s voice speaking to you?

other eyes

“Now it may surprise you to learn that in His efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, [God] relies on the troughs even more than the peaks; some of His special favourites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else. . . . He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century British writer, in The Screwtape Letters.
When we experience “down” times in the Christian life, what are some ways we can stand in God’s presence again? List some things that help you to hear God’s “still, small voice.”

**Tuesday**

In the *Flashlight* section, Ellen White has some specific suggestions for Christians who are discouraged: faith, prayer, and work.

Faith involves trusting God and knowing that He is still with us, even when we don’t feel like it. Our faith is not based on our emotions, but on the Bible’s promises that God is faithful and cares for us no matter what.

Prayer is our contact with God. Just as God spoke to Elijah through a gentle voice, He speaks to us in times of prayer. Prayer isn’t just talking to God; it involves listening to Him, too.

Work takes us outside of our own problems and helps us focus on the needs of others. Doing something kind for someone else can help lift our spirits when we’re down. Can you think of something you can do for someone else that might help you to feel better, too?

**Wednesday**

The promises in God’s Word can be great for encouraging us when we get discouraged. Look through the texts in the *Punch Lines* and find the one that’s most encouraging to you. Copy it on a card or a piece of poster paper. You can even decorate it with pictures or designs. Then put it somewhere it will catch your eye and encourage you next time you’re feeling discouraged.

**Thursday**

It’s time to put together some of the things we’ve learned this week into a “prescription” you can use when discouragement hits. Fill in the blanks to write your unique prescription below.

Next time I feel discouraged, I will talk to __________________________. I will listen to __________________________.

I will think about and repeat this Bible verse: __________________________.

I will pray, asking God for __________________________.

I will do three things that I enjoy and that are good for me __________________________.

I will do the following for someone else: __________________________.

**Friday**

Ups and downs are natural in the Christian life. But sometimes we can figure out what triggers the down times and start looking to God for encouragement before we get too far “down.”

Elijah’s discouragement was triggered by fear of Queen Jezebel and her threats against his life. Fear is one emotion that can often send us spiraling into negative feelings. Others include anger, envy, loneliness, and grief.

What kinds of situations trigger you to start feeling down and discouraged? Try applying some of those remedies you made in yesterday’s lesson as soon as negative feelings start. God has the power to get you through the hard times and bring you back to the “mountaintop” again!

*This week’s reading*

*Prophets and Kings*, chapters 12, 13.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more information at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*
who’s counting?

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Elijah’s life often seems like a roller-coaster ride through supernatural victory to human despair. As a prophet acting as the mouthpiece for heaven, Elijah had moments of unmistakable fame and power mixed with seasons of loneliness and uncertainty. This week’s lesson is about how Elijah negotiated through the emotional ups and downs and came to understand the value of remaining loyal to God’s cause and faithful to His Word. Through Elijah’s faithfulness it appeared to him that he was alone in his allegiance to God. This theme is repeated throughout the story and continues to recur in the lives of young people today. Taking a stand for Christ is often a challenge to live so differently from their peers that they distinctly stand out. But as difficult as it is to make that choice, it is equally daunting to remain confident in their relationships with God when they feel isolated and alone. Elijah’s story portrays how God attends to us during times of depression and ultimately finds a way to speak hope and clarity into our lives.

There are many angles from which this lesson can be helpful to youth. One approach is to invite the students to describe the ways that they identify with Elijah’s journey, as well as ways they do not. Many have yet to experience a moment such as Mount Carmel but have experienced the insight that came to Elijah in the cave. Another track that might be helpful is to discuss the way God always has people who are allied with His kingdom and live as lights to a dark world. Another approach to this lesson is to focus on the way Elijah’s story warns us about counting or trying to determine who is faithful to God by outward appearances. Given that we see so little of what is really happening in the hearts of people, we might be surprised at how many people are faithful to God.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Discover how to negotiate through despair and uncertainty by faithfulness to God’s will. (Know)
• Embrace the truth that even though they might feel lonely at times, those who are faithful are not alone. (Feel)
• Decide to listen for God’s voice in His Word when they feel alone or discouraged. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• The Remnant*
• Depression
• Conviction

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.

Have each student give a defense, from the Bible
if possible, for the position they chose on each of the issues.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

Some people have a hard time understanding how it could be that the majority could be misled. Surely, when you put more heads together the outcome should be greater clarity. Right?

An interesting thing happened several years ago at a college sporting event. During the NCAA Cross Country Championship Race the runners came across a dilemma. At one point they had to make a choice about which direction to run. They came to a stage in the race where the way was not marked well and they had to choose to continue down one street or take another way. Both directions looked reasonable.

The crowded pack of runners followed those who were running out in front. The front-runners made their choice and everyone followed them, all except Mike Delcavo and a handful of others. Mike knew the other runners had taken the wrong road and urged the rest to follow him. Many of them laughed and scorned, but a few followed him. Mike finished the race with the four others. Out of 128 runners 123 of them took the wrong way (from Defining Moments, by Daniel Schaeffer).

What life lessons do you see in this story?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

It is true that at times in our lives loneliness will feel like emptiness and standing firm and faithful to God will seem inconceivable, even absurd. But as Mike Delcavo and his running mates discovered, the majority is not always right and what most people think is not always the most informed opinion. Elijah’s life as a servant of God is marked by moments of tension between amazing acts of faith and seasons of distress and even despair. Take a look at a moment in his journey and see if you can relate!

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

• Read the story and note what insights are new to you.

• As you read through the story, what words, phrases, or themes are repeated?
• Underline what you think are the pivotal parts of this story.
• What do you think is the message God is trying to convey through this story?
• What emotions do you see displayed in Elijah’s experience?
• Is there a promise to claim?
• Is there a lesson to learn?
• Is there an action to take?
• Is there a decision to make?
• What are similarities between Elijah’s experience and our lives today?
• Some have suggested that the people who hear God’s voice often appear peculiar to the world they live in. What are some other biblical characters who were clearly listening to a different voice from the one the world was listening to? (Examples: Noah, Moses, Esther, David—taking on a giant, Daniel and his three friends, etc.)

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 7:13, 14; Jeremiah 23:3; Daniel 1; 3; and 6.

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

When we read this story it is difficult to recapture the intensity and the danger that surrounded Elijah. He was a wanted man, and the courage and faith so brilliantly displayed on Mount Carmel stands in stark contrast to the cowardly response to Jezebel’s threat. Clearly, prophets—mighty though they may be—are human. Consider a few touch points that might benefit your study:

What does Israel’s “no answer” to Elijah’s appeal mean? (1 Kings 18:21)

The word “halt” or “waver” actually means “to limp” or “hobble” as though you had a broken leg. One leg of their faith was healthy (they worshipped the God Jehovah), but the other leg was broken (they also worshipped Baal). This is what led to the showdown at Mount Carmel—it is one or the other—not both! God is clear: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3, NIV). Is it possible that one of the reasons we feel like our walk with God limps is because
we are trying to be loyal to more than just Him?

Why did Elijah feel alone? (1 Kings 18:22; 19:10, 14)

After a do-or-die, stand-or-fall, appeal to Israel to choose God or Baal, their answer is: no answer, which in fact is an answer of sorts. What other moments in the Bible can you think of in which one or a few might have felt alone in their faithfulness to God? We often think Elijah’s mantra, “I am the only one,” is a petulant whine. But leadership is often a lonely experience, initially. When a volunteer is needed, it is common for people to look around the room and see if anyone is responding. You might ask the class if they have ever had to stand up first and alone. Did others follow?

How is it possible that people who experience such sensational events of God’s power (fire from heaven—fed by birds) can slip so quickly into doubt and depression?

Contrast the silence of Baal on Mount Carmel with the silence of God in the cave. It is because God spoke so mightily that Elijah did not expect events to turn the way they did. This is what confused Elijah. So what do we do when God’s voice is not so profound? It is notable that God’s voice, though not explosive, is audible and real, unlike the silence of Baal on Mount Carmel. Or perhaps another question to ask is: “What do we do when God speaks unmistakably on one day and seems nonexistent the next?”

Finally, draw the students’ attention to this week’s Flashlight quote: “Among earth’s inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. . . . Then let no man attempt to number Israel today, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 188, 189).

How does this quote affect our approach to 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 Prophets and Kings. 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

Metaphors

If I were to say, “Be careful about working with Bob! He is a snake,” what images of Bob would you see? What qualities of a snake immediately come to mind? Sneaky. Subtle. Dangerous. Deceptive. Some might say “slimy,” but snakes are actually dry and scaly. Nevertheless, how powerful are metaphors to capture an idea? A metaphor is the use of a word or phrase to describe somebody or something that is not meant literally, but makes a vivid, pictorial, or experiential comparison. Try it with this week’s lesson: “If you had to describe Elijah’s experience with a type of weather, a car, or plant/tree of any sort, which would capture Elijah’s story? Why?”
people we see that may or may not seem faithful to God?

III. CLOSING

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

Have students, in groups of two or three, look up John 10:14-16 and Matthew 7:13, 14 and read them out loud. Ask them to discuss and prepare to report their response to the following questions: Do these two verses contradict each other? How would you reconcile the two ideas Jesus shares here with His disciples?

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:14-16, NIV).

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14, NIV).

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
It is difficult to imagine Elijah’s journey mirroring ours. It is possible that we may never experience Mount Carmel or the feeling of being completely alone. But if there is anything to take from Elijah’s roller-coaster ride of life it is that God calls us to listen for His voice, in the fire and in the silence. Also, as we seek and serve God we can be certain that we are not the only one, no matter what we face. Somewhere around the world, maybe even as close as the person sitting next to us or as far away as the young people sitting on the opposite side of the globe, someone is struggling with God in a similar way. Sometimes it seems unbearable to be the first person to stand up for what is right, volunteer to help, or be counted among God’s people. But we need Eliahs today who will be the first to take a stand. It may seem lonely at first, but the promise is sure that soon it will be clear that we are not alone, and furthermore, that we are not crazy for choosing to be on God’s side.

* Fundamental Belief No. 13

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 Prophets and Kings, chapter 14.

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who's counting?

flashlight

“Among earth’s inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. . . . Then let no man attempt to number Israel today, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 188, 189).

keytext

“[Elijah] replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant. . . . I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’ The Lord said to him, . . . ‘I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.’”

(1 Kings 19:14, 15, 18, NIV)
Either/Or
Think through the following questions and prepare to defend the side you take.
1. Since it is so hard to know a person’s heart, do you believe a majority of people will be saved, or a minority of people will be saved?
2. Do you think we will be surprised by who is saved (since man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart), or will we not be surprised by who is saved because our lifestyle tends to convey our deepest values (by their fruit you will know them)?
3. Do you think it is easier to be faithful (obedient) to God in adversity or is it easier to be faithful to God when positive things are happening?

into the story

“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’ But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, ‘I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.’”

“He went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’

“He replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’

“The Lord said to him, ‘Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.’”

“Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

“When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’

“He replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’

“The Lord said to him, ‘Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.’”

(1 Kings 18:21, 22; 19:9-18, NIV)
“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:14-16, NIV).

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14, NIV).

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Peter 1:8, NIV).

“Help, O Lord, for there is no longer anyone who is godly; the faithful have disappeared from humankind” (Psalm 12:1, NRSV).

“Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12, NRSV).

“Whatever you love more than God is your idol.”—D. L. Moody, 19th-century U.S. evangelist.

“Better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness.”—Chinese proverb.

“I’ll say this for adversity: people seem to be able to stand it, and that’s more than I can say for prosperity.”—Kin Hubbard (1868-1930), American humorist and journalist.
Sabbath

The What Do You Think? exercise invites you to take a side and explain your response. Jesus said, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it” (Matthew 7:13, NIV). Do you think this saying is hard to explain or easy to explain? Why?

List a few examples of what the easy road looks like in your everyday life as well as what the narrow way looks like.

Easy Road: ______________________________________________________

Narrow Road: __________________________________________________

Sunday

Read the Into the Story verses about Elijah’s struggle and answer the questions listed in the Out of the Story section. How would you explain Elijah’s state of mind? What are some other stories in Scripture that portray similar themes as the one in this week’s lesson?

Tuesday

As you read the Flashlight quote from Prophets and Kings, notice the simple reminder that when you think very few are even paying attention to God, many have given their undying allegiance to Him around the world. How might this encouragement inspire you and your church to renewed faithfulness?

The next time you hear numbers of people baptized or added to the church, remember the many who are not counted or even known.

Wednesday

Read through the Punch Lines carefully and underline or highlight the key phrases in each verse. How do these verses relate to the story of Elijah’s struggle?

As a young person in the church, which passage is the most helpful to you? If you were to choose one passage to apply to your life this week, which one would you choose? Why?

Thursday

In what area of your life do you need to make a decisive stand for God? Write out your commitment below:

Friday

Take time this week to listen for God to speak to you. It may be that He speaks in thunderous ways, but more likely you will hear His voice in the silence. Journal below what you have “heard” Him impress on your heart this week.

this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 14.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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 lesson focuses on the story of Jehoshaphat’s reign, a king who sought to do what was right in God’s eyes. During Jehoshaphat’s 25-year reign he continued to lead God’s people faithfully in the way his father, Asa, led. Jehoshaphat took over the throne during a time of war so his reformation began with reforming the military and fortifying the borders. He also started a religious reformation and stood firm against the idolatry that seemed to hamstring God’s people in every generation. Jehoshaphat started a traveling school headed up by 16 well-trained teachers who taught the law of God from place to place (2 Chronicles 17:7-9). The result of his leadership was internal peace and security (2 Chronicles 17:12; 20:30).

If Jehoshaphat had a weakness, it was connected to his struggle for diplomacy. He made a habit of forming alliances with people less devoted to God than he was. First, with Ahab, then with Ahab’s son, Ahaziah, and finally with Ahab’s other son Jehoram. In his zeal to do the right thing he sometimes misjudged the evil intents of others, and God firmly corrected this tendency over the years (1 Kings 22:44; 2 Chronicles 18:1). Most of what people remember about the kings of Israel are often summed up in a sentence. The Life Sentence that captures Jehoshaphat’s time on earth states: “In everything he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (1 Kings 22:43, NIV). History categorizes the kings of Israel into two groups, good and bad. Invite the students to consider what their life sentence will be as they study the story of a great king of Israel.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Survey the key stories of a great king’s life. (Know)
• Wrestle with the tension between strengths and weaknesses, success and failure. (Feel)
• Choose to live an uncompromising life. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Spiritual disciplines
• Temptation (dealing with)
• Learning from failure/mistakes

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 and explain their first choice and the item they chose last in the ranking exercise. Ask what elements they would add to this list to make it more comprehensive.
Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
Timothy is a successful businessman who always leaves the table a little bit hungry. He can afford to eat to the full, but an unexpected epiphany made such an impact on him that he was never the same. Walking home late in the evening from work, he happened upon a man sitting on his sidewalk rummaging through a pile of garbage. The beggar scraped off maggots from rotten pieces of food and shoved the pieces of garbage in his mouth with dirty hands. Timothy, shocked by the desperation of that man, vowed never to take food for granted. Timothy is not perfect, but he started a soup kitchen in his community and volunteers regularly to inspire others to contribute. Some people are driven by personal experiences that deeply affect them. Examine any great leader for the events and stories that make them so passionate. They are often stories that clearly mark what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad.

Consider one moment in Jehoshaphat’s experience that made an indelible impact on him as a leader. When his enemy in battle, the king of Moab, saw that he was losing the battle, he took his firstborn son, who would have become the next king, to the top of the city wall and offered him as a sacrifice as a last ditch attempt for victory (2 Kings 3:26, 27, NIV). Witnessing such an act must have made an everlasting impression on Jehoshaphat’s mind. Such immorality, he decided, could be met only with passionate, deliberate obedience to God’s word.

II. TEACHING THE STORY
Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
Do you ever wonder what is at the heart of great heroes of faith? What makes them brave? Passionate? Wise? Committed? Some of the good things Jehoshaphat did may have come from a keen experience of right, but perhaps many of his decisions were the result of knowing what was wrong. As you survey the life of Jehoshaphat, you may notice a moment of weakness or a chink in the armor of his character. But the overwhelming impact of his leadership was good, right, and true. Check out this story, but also scan through the various events of his reign and note the depth of his devotion to God.
2 Chronicles 20:16-29  Battle victory won through singing

2. This week’s story highlights Jehoshaphat’s leadership and his unwavering dependence on God. Notice the first step the faithful king takes is: “Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 20:3, NIV). What does the word “resolve” mean? To set your mind with unshakable focus. Another aspect of Jehoshaphat’s leadership is the way the people rallied around his example. Some have said, “If you want to know if you are a leader, see if anyone is following.” The Bible says: “Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him” (2 Chronicles 20:4, NIV).

Jehoshaphat is also a great leader because of his humility. The king admits to God, “We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you” (2 Chronicles 20:12, NIV). And finally, Jehoshaphat acts on his convictions and “appointed men to sing to the Lord” (2 Chronicles 20:21, NIV). This is just another war God wins by singing! As a result, the enemies, in their confusion, “destroy one another” (2 Chronicles 20:23, NIV). The victory is one of many moments in Scripture where God intervenes when human efforts could not prevail, and God’s involvement and glory are unmistakable.

3. Unfortunately, the faithful heritage of Asa and Jehoshaphat was only a brief season of brightness for God’s people. Jehoram chose not to follow the same path as his father and grandfather (2 Chronicles 21:12, 13).

III. CLOSING

Activity
Invite each student to respond to the following question:
If you were to become a leader of a country and you had to enforce five main rules, what would those rules be?

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Less Is More
One teaching strategy that really stirs up the brain is the activity of synthesis—the work of blending and unifying many ideas into one new thought. One way to get students to synthesize is to challenge them by limiting the amount of words they can use or by keeping their statements to one sentence. For example, “If you had to sum up your life story in one sentence, how would you characterize your life?” This activity calls for students to distill vast amounts of information into one meaningful statement. It often helps to give them time to write out their “life sentence” and share it with others.

Jehoshaphat was only a brief season of brightness for God’s people. Jehoram chose not to follow the same path as his father and grandfather (2 Chronicles 21:12, 13).

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rules say? Debrief by allowing the students to share their list of five rules. Jehoshaphat’s life had many ups and downs, but ultimately, the faithful king lived by a few basic principles/rules that he never compromised. What were they?

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Everyone has the chance to live in such a way that they can one day earn a positive “life sentence.” What is so impressive about Jehoshaphat is the way he remained devoted to God, even when his failures and mistakes were evident to all. And when things were going well, he continued to innovate and create new efforts to better life for Israel. His humility and courage form a brief statement of truth: “In everything he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (1 Kings 22:43, NIV). So, what are the nonnegotiable principles by which you will choose to live your life? About which values will you say today, “I will not compromise”? Take a moment to reflect and pray about your devotion to God.

Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Prophets and Kings, chapter 15.

*A special adaptation of Prophets and Kings 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.*
If the teachings of God’s Word were made the controlling influence in the life of every man and woman, if mind and heart were brought under its restraining power, the evils that now exist in national and in social life would find no place” (Prophets and Kings, p. 192).

In everything he walked in the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.”

(1 Kings 22:43, NIV)
Which do you think are characteristics of God's inspired leadership? Rank the following according to how crucial they are for good government—mark (1) for most crucial and (6) for least crucial.

1. Civil peace and security
2. Spiritual teaching and wisdom
3. Military strength and protection
4. Charismatic leadership
5. Clear sense of right and wrong
6. Abundance of wealth

Explain your reasons for ranking these the way you did.

It is believed by some current Christian leaders that members of Generation X (those born between 1962 and 1981) don’t seem in a hurry to step up to the plate to lead. However, members of this generation say that this is not true. Leadership is “dressed in different clothes,” states a 37-year-old Christian leader. “It’s less about personality and position and authority. Instead it’s more relational. It’s more vulnerable. It’s more about helping people take their next steps in a journey” (“Looking for Leaders,” Christianity Today, Spring 2006).

“After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to make war on Jehoshaphat. Some men came and told Jehoshaphat,

“A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Sea. It is already in Hazazon Tamar (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

“Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard and said: ‘O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ‘If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.’

“But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.’

“All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord.

“Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. He said: ‘Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.’”

(2 Chronicles 20:1-15, NIV)
OUT
OF THE
STORY

In verse 1 of 2 Chronicles 20 the Bible sets the stage for this week’s story of Jehoshaphat with “After this . . .” Survey the following snapshots of his reign and note the various aspects of Jehoshaphat’s leadership.

2 Chronicles 17:1-6 General summary
2 Chronicles 17:7-10 Jehoshaphat sends out teachers to instruct the people about God
2 Chronicles 17:11-19 Wealth and security
2 Chronicles 18:1-34 Debacle with Ahab against Ramoth Gilead
2 Chronicles 19:1-2 Jehu’s rebuke and affirmation
2 Chronicles 19:4-11 Organized judges for civil order
2 Chronicles 20:16-29 Battle victory through singing

What do you think is the key verse in this week’s story?

What other people in Scripture does Jehoshaphat remind you of? Why?

What leadership qualities do you see in Jehoshaphat that are most noble?

What might be one of Jehoshaphat’s weaknesses as a leader?

punch lines

“Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. You are my God; save your servant who trusts in you” (Psalm 86:2, NIV).

“Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him” (Psalm 32:10, NIV).

“Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1, NIV).

“You must distinguish between what is sacred and what is common, between what is ceremonially unclean and what is clean. And you must teach the Israelites all the decrees that the Lord has given them through Moses” (Leviticus 10:10, 11, NLT).

“And you will find happiness by worshiping him. God will answer your prayers, and you will keep the promises you made to him” (Job 22:26, 27, CEV).

“Leadership in the local church should be determined by spirituality, not notoriety.”—Tony Evans, American preacher.

“We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we already have done.”—Longfellow, 19th-century U.S. poet.

“The man who makes no mistakes does not usually make anything.”—William Connor Magee, 19th-century Irish clergyman.

other
eyes

55
### Sabbath
The ranking exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this lesson challenges you to identify the leadership qualities you think are most important as well as least important. We often think leaders always have a clear sense of what to do in times of crisis; but read 2 Chronicles 20:12 and note what Jehoshaphat said to God as the enemies of Israel were approaching. How would you describe this act as an attribute of a good leader?

### Monday
The *Key Text* for this week comes from 1 Kings 22:43 in which King Jehoshaphat’s great qualities are summed up in one sentence; in the following sentence the Bible admits a shortcoming that also marked his life. Read this passage in a few different translations, if available, and think about what close friends might say about you, in a sentence. In the space given below, write a sentence about the life of someone you admire:

### Tuesday
While there are many things that influence your outlook and your behavior, there are a few basic ideas that influence most of your decisions. Read the quote from *Prophets and Kings* about the controlling influences in your life. To what degree do you think the evil in the world would diminish if people allowed God’s will to become the “controlling influence” in their lives? What laws or principles of God’s way of life would make the most significant change for the better?

### Wednesday
Read the *Punch Lines* listed in this week’s lesson and identify the verse that speaks to you the most. In what way is this passage most relevant to your life today? Think of a friend or someone you know that has the ability to influence others but does not often seize those moments for good. Say a prayer today for that person and pray for an opportunity to encourage their leadership potential. Sometimes a little positive encouragement can awaken a more earnest desire to make a positive impact on the world around us. Sometimes affirming words can remind people of previous commitments they had made that need to be renewed.

### Thursday
It may be that the great things that are ultimately remembered about your life are built on the practical things you do from day to day. Make a list of three “great” things you want to do today that will have eternal significance. Perhaps it is an act of generosity or a secret deed of kindness. Maybe you could extend grace for those who are struggling or forgive someone who has wronged you. Make your list specific enough so that you can know that you have done a “great thing” today.

### Friday
Take time to reflect on Jehoshaphat’s storied journey of devotion, mistakes, and uncompromising faithfulness to God’s plan for Israel. His story holds up a high standard of loyalty to God and courageous leadership for Israel. But his life has mistakes and moments that exposed his flaws as well. Ruminate on how we can be great leaders and people of influence for God even though we are not always perfect. Write down a few thoughts you have on the tension between greatness and making mistakes, as it appears in your life. (You can use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.)

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**this week’s reading**
_Prophets and Kings_, chapter 15.

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