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

• **Making it Real**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. **Begin here if you are studying this lesson on your own prior to, or after, studying it in a Sabbath School class.** Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God apply to you personally.

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

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

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

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

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

Welcome to Cornerstone Connections.

—The Editors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. In each lesson students are provided with a reference to the volume from the Conflict of the Ages Series by Ellen White that corresponds with the week’s story. Students who choose to will be able to read the entire series in four years by following the reading plan.
1. A Gift to the Nations Scripture Story: Deuteronomy 32.
2. Chosen Son Scripture Story: 1 Kings 3; 4; 10.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 1.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 2.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 3, 4.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 5.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 7.
8. Royal Devotion Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 14–16.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 8.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 9; 10 first part.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 10 last part; 11.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 12, 13.
13. Life Sentence Scripture Story: 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 15.

Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 16.
2. Focus on Prophets Scripture Story: 1 Kings 19:15–1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 2.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 17, 18.
3. The Miracle Worker Scripture Story: 2 Kings 4.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 19.
4. Seven Dirty Ducks Scripture Story: 2 Kings 5.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 20, 21.
5. Pride and Prejudice Scripture Story: Jonah.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 22.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 25.
8. Hope for the World Scripture Story: Isaiah 11; 12; 44.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 27.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapters 28, 29.
11. Not Like Other Gods Scripture Story: 2 Chronicles 32; 2 Kings 19.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 30.
12. Manamojo Scripture Story: 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 32.
13. Cleaning House Scripture Story: 2 Kings 23; 2 Chronicles 34.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 33.
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July

7—Who, Me? [p. 11]
God called Jeremiah to the task of warning God's people that His patience was running out. Jeremiah wasn't sure he was prepared for this daunting task. But God had begun preparing him before he was born. Just like He has us.

14—Storm Warning [p. 19]
The warning message became stronger: Disaster is coming. Repent. The king of Judah should have been the spiritual leader of his people. However, he didn't want to hear a message of warning. Are we ready to hear one?

21—Israel Takes Its Medicine [p. 27]
Discipline, like medicine, is hard to swallow but necessary for healing. However, the stubborn resistance of the human heart makes God's life-shaping discipline so hard to stomach.

28—Be Swayed and Besieged [p. 35]
A king's lack of moral courage to act on his convictions causes disastrous consequences for his family and his people.

August

4—Obedience Is Not a Bad Word! [p. 43]
Four young men are taken from their homeland to help rule a foreign country. But can they fulfill their obligations without disobeying their God?

11—God Even Gave the Dream [p. 51]
It's one thing to interpret a dream; it's another to have to do so without even knowing what the dream is. That's where Daniel discovers how strong his faith really is.

18—Choose Your Kingdom [p. 59]
The consequences of striving to live in the kingdom of God while living in a kingdom with an earthly ruler can be fierce—and deadly. Daniel and his friends chose to take them, no matter what the cost.

25—Humility Check [p. 67]
Although the glory of his empire and the success of his rule caused pride in Nebuchadnezzar's heart, he experienced a "humility check" from God and ultimately submitted his life to the God who would not give up on him.

September

1—This Party's Over [p. 75]
Belshazzar learned nothing from his father Nebuchadnezzar's run-in with God. He disregarded God's warnings, and his life of pleasure seeking ended in destruction.

8—Deliverance [p. 83]
To remain faithful to God in spite of dire consequences doesn't happen overnight. It takes time—and prayer.

15—Troubling Dream [p. 91]
Most of us would love the opportunity to stand in God's throne room, peer into the future, and see how the world will end. Daniel had that chance.

22—God Is in Control [p. 99]
When the world reveals trouble, tragedy, and rebellion, the certainty from God's Word that He is still in control can bring comfort.

29—A Man, Some Kings, and the End! [p. 107]
Earthly kings may rise and fall, but in the end God's kingdom will prevail, and He will rescue His people.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
God called Jeremiah to a special task—and not an easy one. Jeremiah’s role as a prophet would be to warn the people of Judah that God’s patience had finally run out. Like the northern kingdom of Israel just a few generations earlier, Judah would be overtaken by a foreign power and her people forced into exile. For too long the people of Judah had ignored God’s calls to repentance, and now they were going to reap the consequences.

From Jeremiah’s perspective, it was a daunting call. God’s message would not make him popular or well liked. He would have to look forward to rejection and persecution. And as a very young man, Jeremiah didn’t feel able to do the task. He protested that he wasn’t able to carry the responsibility God was handing him.

God assured Jeremiah that he had been set aside for this task from before his own birth. It’s an awesome thought to realize that God knows us and has plans for us even before we’re born, but that was what God told Jeremiah. This week’s lesson asks students to consider what that knowledge means for their own lives. What is God calling them to do and to be?

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that God had a special plan for Jeremiah’s life. (Know)
• Believe that God also has a plan for their lives. (Feel)

III. EXPLORE
Choose to open themselves up to explore and follow God’s plan for their lives. (Respond)

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.

After discussing What Do You Think? write the following questions on the board:
• Should Christians be popular with others?
• If we are, is it a sign that we’re not standing up for what we believe?
• If we’re unpopular, is it because we’re being persecuted for our faith—or are we just behaving badly and turning people off?

Divide students into groups of two and three to discuss these questions for five minutes. Bring the group back together, draw everyone’s attention to the questions, and ask for responses.

As you process the discussion with your students, share the following ideas with them in their own words.
Jesus told His disciples to expect persecution, but He didn’t tell them to go out looking for it. Rather, He told them to live the way He lived. That will be very appealing to some people—and bring you into conflict with others.

Our goal as Christians shouldn’t be to upset people—although sometimes God’s messengers do that, as Jeremiah did. Nor should our goal be to get people to like us—though hopefully lots of people will. Instead, our most important goal should be to discover God’s will for our lives and follow it faithfully, without worrying too much about how others will react.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:

One of the best-known legends of all time is that of the famous (though probably fictional) King Arthur of Britain. There are many versions of this story, but in some versions, young Arthur, the son of a king, grows up away from the royal court, not knowing about his royal parentage. Only when the king dies and the land searches for the true heir, does Arthur learn his destiny. When he pulls from a stone a magical sword that can be released only by the true king, he discovers that he is, indeed, the man born to be king.

Though it’s only a legend, this story of the young King Arthur has parallels in many different cultures and times. For some reason we all respond to the story of a young boy or girl who grows up thinking they’re just an ordinary person, but then learns they have a special destiny. It could be royal blood, or magical powers, or the job of saving the world. Whatever the destiny, most people are fascinated with the story of an apparently ordinary person who turns out to be destined to do an extraordinary job.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

The fact is that the story of the ordinary person chosen for an extraordinary task is really the story of each one of us. While we may think we’re nobody special, each of us is a child of the King of the universe, and our heavenly Father has designed a special role for each of us to play in His work. As He told Jeremiah, He knows about us even before we are born, and He has a plan for us. While we are free to make our own choices, our lives will be so much more rewarding—and interesting!—if we choose to follow His plan 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.

Have two students from the class (asked in advance if necessary) read the roles of Jeremiah and the Lord in Jeremiah, chapter 1. You can join in by reading the narrative parts in between the dialogue.

Then ask students to look up Isaiah 6 and Exodus 3:1-14; 4:1-17. These are two other Bible stories in which God calls people to do a special task for Him. If time permits, read through them in the same fashion with one reader taking the part of God and the other the part of the person He is calling, reading the narrator’s part yourself. If you don’t have time for that, ask students to turn to each passage and read through the highlights of each scene quickly to ensure they are familiar with each story. After looking at all three stories, discuss the following questions:

- In these three stories, what do the people God is calling have in common? How are their responses to God similar?
- What tasks is God calling each person to do? How do you think they might feel about taking on these jobs?
- How do you feel about the idea of God having a plan for your life and job for you to do? Does it make you feel excited, scared, challenged, rebellious—or some other response? Can you relate to anything Jeremiah, Isaiah, or Moses said in these three passages?
- If God does have a plan for our lives, how do we discover it? How do we know that we are on track with His plan and not just following our own desires?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Psalm 139; Isaiah 6; Exodus 3; 4.

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

The Bible relates many stories of God calling peo-
people to serve Him. In many cases—as in the example of Jeremiah in this week’s lesson, or of Isaiah and Moses in the Out of the Story section above—those whom God called questioned the call at first. Moses said he was a poor speaker. Isaiah was a man of “unclean lips.” Jeremiah felt he was too young. Other biblical heroes, though their “call” stories may be less dramatic, felt themselves ill-fitted for the role they were called to play. David was the youngest and least impressive of his brothers when Samuel anointed him as the future king. Esther told Mordecai there was no way she could go before the king and defy his decree. The Bible makes it clear that the greatest heroes of faith didn’t feel like heroes when they were first called.

Maybe that’s the sign of someone who will make a good servant of God—someone who initially feels inadequate and unworthy. When Ellen White—a mostly uneducated teenager in poor health—received her first vision, the vision itself was exhilarating, but the idea of sharing what she had seen with others was daunting. “I went to the Lord in prayer and begged Him to lay the burden on someone else,” she wrote in Early Writings. “It seemed to me that I could not bear it. I lay upon my face a long time, and all the light I could get was, ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’”

People who don’t think they’re ready are, in fact, the kind of people God can use. If the task God is calling us to do seems too big for us, we can be assured that His strength and power will be with us. We respond to His call not in our own strength, but in His.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Reading Scripture in Class

It’s important to expose students to reading Scripture in class—perhaps more important than most of the things we do in Sabbath School, since they may not read the Bible on their own. But how do you present passages of Scripture as part of the lesson?

One option is to read aloud to students yourself. Another is to read through a passage assigning a verse at a time to different people to read. Or, as suggested in this week’s Out of the Story section, assign different students to read the spoken words of the characters in the Bible story, while you read the narration that ties it together.

Whatever method you choose, be sure to pick a Bible translation that will be lively and appealing to your group. A dynamic paraphrase such as The Message or The Clear Word can be good for bringing a passage to life and making it relevant to students. If you’re doing an activity where the exact words of a text are important, everyone should have the same translation (have a stack of NIV or NKJV Bibles in your classroom, or make photocopies of the passage in the version you want to use). For looking at a short passage from a few different perspectives, you can ask a couple of students who have different Bible versions to read and compare theirs.

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.

In advance, ask students to provide you with a picture of themselves as a baby or small child (or, if you have contact with the parents of all your students, ask parents to give you pictures so you can scan and print them, then return the originals, without your students even knowing you have them). At the end of the lesson, give each student a picture of him/herself as a baby. If you’re not able to arrange this in advance, have students cut pictures of babies from magazines and ask each one to stick a baby picture on an index card to represent their younger selves.

Write this week’s key text on the board and ask students to copy it onto the back of the picture or card. Tell them to keep it as a reminder that God has a plan for each of their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jeremiah was called by God to do a special task. He knew that it wouldn’t be easy and might even involve danger and persecution. At first, Jeremiah didn’t feel equal to the task. He thought he was too young and inexperienced. But with God’s help and support, he became a powerful messenger for the Lord. He accepted the challenge that was given to him.

God has a challenge for each of us, too. He knew you before you were born, just as He knew Jeremiah. His plan for you doesn’t cancel out your own free will, but He longs for you to put your will in alignment with His so that He can use you to do great things.

Like Jeremiah’s task, yours may involve challenge and difficulty. The things God asks us to do aren’t always easy. But they are always rewarding and always best for us in the long run—and they can provide far more excitement and challenge than a safe, “ordinary” life lived without God. Take up His challenge. Trust His plan for your life.

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 34.

*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.
who, me?

flashlight

“For forty years Jeremiah was to stand before the nation as a witness for truth and righteousness. . . . Despised, hated, rejected of men, he was finally to witness the literal fulfillment of his own prophecies . . . , and share in the sorrow and woe that should follow the destruction of the fated city. Yet amid the general ruin . . . , Jeremiah was often permitted to look beyond the distressing scenes of the present to the glorious prospects of the future, when God’s people should be ransomed from the land of the enemy and planted again in Zion” (Prophets and Kings, p. 408).

keytext

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

(Jeremiah 1:5, NIV)
Jeremiah was given an unpopular job to do as God’s prophet in tough times. Has being a Christian ever made you unpopular? Check any of the situations below that have applied to you:

- I’ve had to miss out on activities because they conflicted with Sabbath or church activities.
- I’ve had to say no when friends were doing things I believed were wrong—drinking, trying drugs, etc.
- I speak out when people are hurting or bullying others, even though I might get attacked myself.

Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to the people of Judah about the year 628 B.C. About a hundred years earlier, the northern kingdom of Israel—made up of 10 of the 12 tribes—had been overthrown by the king of Assyria. The Israelites of the northern kingdom were sent into exile, never again to return to their homeland. For centuries God’s prophets had been warning the people of Israel and Judah that if they didn’t remain faithful to God, destruction would come. For the kingdom of Israel, that day had finally come. Now, a hundred years later, Jeremiah was sent to warn the people of Judah that the same fate was about to happen to them.

“The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. . . . The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’

‘Ah, Sovereign Lord,’ I said, ‘I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.’

“But the Lord said to me, ‘Do not say, “I am only a child.” You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,’ declares the Lord.

“Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.’

“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘What do you see, Jeremiah?’

‘I see the branch of an almond tree,’ I replied.

“The Lord said to me, ‘You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.’

“The word of the Lord came to me again: ‘What do you see?’

“I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north,’ I answered.

“The Lord said to me, ‘From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms,’ declares the Lord. ‘Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah. I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made. Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,’ declares the Lord.”

(Jeremiah 1, NIV)
“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:15, 16, NIV).

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:29-31, NIV).

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV).

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11, 12, NIV).

“What was Jeremiah’s first reaction when God called him to become a prophet? Why do you think he reacted this way?

How far back does God’s plan for Jeremiah go? What does this tell you about God’s plan for your life?

If God chose Jeremiah as a prophet before he was even born, was Jeremiah really free to say no?

What was God’s special task for Jeremiah? How do you think he might have felt about being called to this kind of ministry?

What warnings does God give Jeremiah? How do God’s promises match up with His warnings?

“We are apt to mistake our vocation by looking out of the way for occasions to exercise great and rare virtues, and by stepping over the ordinary ones that lie directly in the road before us.”—Hannah More, 18th-century English writer.
Sabbath

God caught Jeremiah’s attention and gave him a special task to do. In Jeremiah 1:6 the prophet said he couldn’t ______________ because he was only a ______________.

Jeremiah was probably a teenager at the time. He didn’t consider himself ready for the task God had for him, but God assured Jeremiah He’d been planning this for a long time—even before Jeremiah was born!

Do you believe that God has a purpose for your life? What do you think you might say to God if He spoke to you as He did to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5?

Sunday

God’s call for Jeremiah was not to do an easy job that would make everyone like him. In fact, his job was to tell the people of Judah that because they had rebelled against God, He was going to punish them.

People don’t usually like hearing that they’re doing things wrong. God warned Jeremiah up front that his message would be unpopular and people would reject him for it. Jeremiah didn’t go out of his way to make people mad—he just did what God told him to do, and got in trouble for it.


Monday

Ask your parents what they remember about you from before you were born. Do they have ultrasound pictures, or pictures of your mom when she was pregnant? If you were adopted, ask your parents to tell about how you came to be part of their family. Think over what you’ve been told as you reread this week’s key text.

Tuesday

We all like to hear positive words. The Bible is full of hope, promises, and encouragement. But there’s a time for negative words, too—a time to point out sin, to warn people of the consequences of their actions.

“Prophets of doom” exist not just in the church but in the world, too. Scientists warn us about the dangers of damaging the environment and predict that terrible things will happen if we don’t clean up our act. Just like preachers warning that God will punish sin, predictions such as that can be scary. But they can also motivate us to change our ways!

Read the Flashlight section. According to this passage, what did God offer to balance the negative side of Jeremiah’s message?

Wednesday

The Bible verses in the Punch Lines section remind us that Jeremiah’s experience wasn’t unique. God calls all believers to do a special work for Him. He knows us so well that He knows the work He has for us to do, even before we’re born. And He warns us that doing His work won’t always be easy. It may make us unpopular, or get us into trouble. Your mission is to learn what that job is and do it the best you can—staying true to Him even when times get tough!

Thursday

Lots of believers, like Jeremiah, see things going on in the world around them—maybe even in the church—that don’t seem right. God calls us to speak out—not in condemnation but in love—against sin, injustice, and cruelty.

What things do you see going on around you that you think are wrong?

Friday

Look back at your answers for yesterday’s two questions. Speaking out against wrongdoing is a tricky business. It’s easy to slip into being judgmental or self-righteous rather than “speaking the truth in love” (see Ephesians 4:15, NIV).

Think and pray about what you wrote yesterday. Do you think God is calling you to be a “Jeremiah” right now by drawing attention to something in your community or church that’s not according to His will? If so, talk to Him and to an older Christian you trust about what would be the best way to approach the situation, so that you’ll bring glory to God.


this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 34.

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

Jeremiah’s call, as we saw last week, was to tell the people and rulers of Judah that God’s patience had finally run out. Time and again the call to repentance had been made, along with warnings of divine punishment if the people did not return to God. Now the message was stronger: Disaster is coming. Judah should prepare to be attacked and overrun by her enemies, because she had refused to listen to the repeated call of God’s prophets.

When Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch prepared a scroll to be read to the people declaring God’s message, the scroll found its way into the hands of the king. As the leader of the nation, the king should have led the way in heeding God’s warning and setting an example of repentance. Instead he made a very public show of his contempt for God’s message, tearing up the scroll piece by piece and burning it in the presence of his courtiers and advisers.

Most of us, like the king of Judah, don’t like to hear words of warning. We’d prefer to think that things are going just fine, even when we’re clearly headed down the wrong path. Though Jesus’ message was one of love rather than of fear, He, like the Hebrew prophets, did warn of God’s judgment and the consequences of our sin. Today, there is still a place for words of warning.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that bad choices lead to negative consequences. (Know)
• Feel God cares enough to give us warnings. (Feel)
• Choose to respond to God’s warnings and change behavior as a result. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Speaking the truth in love
• Obedience
• Judgment

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Divide the class into groups of three to five students and present each group with one of the following situations. (For large groups, use the same situation with several different groups.) Say: When you get into your groups, read aloud the situation you’ve been given and discuss what you would do in that situation. How do you think the different people in this scenario would respond?

• Your group of friends has been close since elementary school, but one in the group is starting
to get into trouble. You know that he’s hanging out with a different group of friends who drink heavily and use drugs, and you suspect your friend is doing the same things. You really care about him and want to help him before he gets in too deep, so a few of you decide to try talking to him about it.

- One of the girls you hang around with has a new boyfriend whom no one in your group likes. He’s jealous, possessive, and has a bad temper. One day your friend comes to school with a black eye. You’ve seen her boyfriend treat her badly before, and you suspect he might be abusing her. You want to raise the subject with her without getting her too upset.
- Your younger sister has been on a diet for months. She thinks she’s making great progress and looking terrific, but you think she might have an eating disorder. She seems too thin to be healthy, and she’s obsessed with losing even more weight. You discuss with your parents how you could help her.
- Several of your closest friends have been making life miserable for a guy in your class. You don’t really like this guy either, but you recognize that he has some problems, including some mental health issues, that make it hard for him to fit in. Your friends seem to take delight in teasing him and making fun of him. You haven’t been joining in, but you haven’t told them that what they’re doing is wrong, either. You believe that as a Christian you need to stand up for this guy, but you don’t want to lose your friends.

After each group has had time to discuss their situation, bring the groups back together and give them an opportunity to report on their discussion and ask the larger group how they might respond. In each case there are two main questions to consider: how would you deliver a message of “warning” to someone you care about, and, if you’re the person getting the warning, how would you respond?

If you have time and your group is comfortable with it, invite a couple of groups to role-play their situation.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In 2000 U.S. Senator Al Gore ran against George W. Bush for president of the United States. In the closest election result in U.S. history, the two men almost tied for the most important job in the country—but Bush won. Al Gore was left, like any losing politician, to decide what he’d do next.

Rather than immediately prepare for another election, or retire into private life, Al Gore decided to use his role in the public eye to bring people’s attention to what he believed was the most important crisis in the world—the issue of global warming. The documentary he narrated and promoted around the world was called An Inconvenient Truth. Gore used the movie to warn people that environmental disaster and human suffering would happen if global warming weren’t stopped.

Regardless of whether or not you agree with Gore’s conclusions about global warming, it’s hard not to admire his dedication. To him, this message is the most urgent thing the world needs to hear today, and as a result he chose to throw his time, energy, popularity, and money into getting that warning out to the world.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Caring for our environment is an important message to get out there. But even more important is the message that we need to live according to God’s Word so that we can live happier lives in the short term and enjoy eternity in heaven with Him. Just as God gave Jeremiah a message of last-minute warning for the people of Judah, He gives His church today a warning for the world: Get ready for His coming. How do we respond to warnings from God’s Word?

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 do you think the king of Judah felt when he heard the message in Jeremiah’s scroll?
- In the Bible passage, pick out words and phrases that tell us about the king’s reaction. Why do you think he reacted in this way?
- How do you feel when someone tells you you’re doing something wrong?
- If we have a message of warning for the world, how do we present that in a spirit of love rather than of condemnation? Can you think of exam-
s in today’s world of people who talk about God’s judgment in ways that are loving—or condemning?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Jonah, chapters 3 and 4—see below for discussion.

Sharing Context and Background

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

It’s interesting to contrast this story from the book of Jeremiah with the story of Jonah and his warning to the city of Nineveh (as found in the book of Jonah, chapters 3 and 4). In both cases, God sent a prophet with a warning of imminent destruction. This is no casual suggestion for improvement—the message is clear. Your city will be destroyed; you have rejected God and He has turned His back on you.

The pagan city of Nineveh, according to the book of Jonah, repented at once upon hearing this message. The king of Nineveh took the leading role in public repentance, even putting on sackcloth as a sign of mourning.

By contrast, Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, upon hearing Jeremiah’s warning, reacted with scorn and mockery. To demonstrate how little he cared about God’s warning, he burned the scroll on which it was written. Jeremiah 36 tells us that although the priests and people initially responded to the call for repentance, the king and his advisers showed no outward signs of fear or repentance. Their reaction, instead, was one of defiance.

Though Jonah gave the people of Nineveh no hint that God’s warning was conditional, upon seeing their repentance God chose to stay His hand and refrain from punishing the Ninevites. Jeremiah’s warnings made it clear that God had already set the wheels in

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.
motion for the Babylonian conquest of Judah to occur, yet in Jeremiah 36:7 we see again the call for change, the possibility that God’s wrath can be turned away if the people change their ways.

Two very similar messages presented to two nations and their kings. A pagan nation chose to respond with repentance, while God’s chosen people rejected the message and the messenger. Why? To the people of Nineveh, a message from the God of Israel was something new, something to be taken seriously. To the people of Judah, such warnings were old news. They had become so used to ignoring God’s calls to repentance that they no longer paid attention. We, too, can get so used to hearing God’s warnings that our consciences are no longer touched.

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Pass out index cards and pencils to the class. Say: We’ve talked about the warning messages God sends to us and how we should respond to them. Do you think there’s something in your life today that God needs to send you a message about? Something you need to change? On the index card, write what you think God is telling you today and what your response is. Keep this private—take it home with you and pray about it.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
Jeremiah warned the people of Judah that judgment was coming if they didn’t change their ways. They’d had plenty of warnings, but all those warnings had done was get them in the habit of ignoring God’s prophets. Their hearts had become hardened, and that attitude was demonstrated by King Jehoiakim when he tore up and burned the scroll on which God’s message for the people was written.

God has messages for us today—through His Word, through our consciences, through our Christian friends, parents, and teachers, and through His church. We don’t always respond as we should when we get a warning—sometimes we feel guilty but don’t do anything; sometimes a warning makes us more rebellious and determined to do our own thing. If you’re getting a message about something that needs change in your life—and you’re convinced because of your study of the Bible that it’s not just one person’s bossy opinion but something God really wants you to do—then you need to set aside some time with God in prayer and ask Him to help you change what you’re doing, so your life will be in line with His will. Remember, God knows best what’s best for us. His warnings are always for our own good!
“When men’s hearts are softened and subdued by the constraining influence of the Holy Spirit, they will give heed to counsel; but when they turn from admonition until their hearts become hardened, the Lord permits them to be led by other influences. Refusing the truth, they accept falsehood, which becomes a snare to their own destruction” (Prophets and Kings, p. 425).
When somebody gives me a warning or tells me bad things are going to happen if I don’t change my behavior, I
___ thank them for the warning and make changes right away.
___ get annoyed, but later think about it and make changes.
___ get angry and tell them to mind their own business.
___ ignore them completely.
___ do just the opposite of what they told me to, because I hate people bossing me around.

For many years while the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were divided, the Assyrian Empire was the most powerful nation in that part of the world. It was the Assyrians who conquered the kingdom of Israel and sent the 10 northern tribes into exile. But by the time of Jeremiah, the power of Assyria was on the way out. Egypt was still a mighty nation, and the king of Judah relied heavily on his alliance with the Egyptians. But an even greater power was on the rise—the Babylonian Empire. It was the newly powerful nation of Babylon that had its eye on the kingdom of Judah. The fall of Judah to the Babylonians was, in one way, a natural consequence of picking the wrong side in the power struggles that were going on in the region at the time. But in another sense, as the book of Jeremiah makes clear, it was God’s way of sending a message to His people—if they were not faithful to Him, they would suffer punishment.
“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11, NIV).

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

“From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near’” (Matthew 4:17, NIV).

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9, NIV).

“If you have sinned, do not lie down without repentance; for the want of repentance after one has sinned makes the heart yet harder and harder.”—John Bunyan, 17th-century English clergyman and writer.

“Jesus reserved his hardest words for the hidden sins of hypocrisy, pride, greed and legalism.”—Philip Yancey, 20th-century American Christian writer.

“It is a great sign of true repentance when a man approves of the justice of his own punishment.”—Hugo Grotius, 16th-17th-century theologian (Holland).
Sabbath
Remember the last time a teacher, a parent, or someone else told you that what you were doing was wrong? How did you feel? Look over your answers to the What Do You Think? section.

People respond to correction in very different ways. Sometimes it depends on how we’re feeling. Sometimes it depends on who’s doing the correcting—it’s much easier to take correction and warnings from someone we respect and have a good relationship with.

The king of Judah was presented with a warning from God. How did he choose to respond? Read Jeremiah 36:21-23:

“...if you do this, then this will happen. If you watch TV instead of studying, then you’ll fail your exam—but if you change your ways and study, then you’ll pass.”

Think of some other if-then warnings that relate to your everyday life:

IF I . . .     THEN . . .
_____   _________________________
_____   _________________________
_____   _________________________

Even the final destruction of sin at the end of time is something we can avoid. If we turn away from sin and put our trust in Jesus, then we’ll enjoy eternity in heaven with Him.

Monday
Read this week’s Key Text. Mark the statements below true or false based on what you read in that text:

T  F  God was planning to punish the people of Judah for their sins.
T  F  God had His mind made up, and nothing was going to change it.

Many of the predictions and warnings that the prophets brought to God’s people were conditional. If they continued in their wicked ways, destruction would come. But if they were willing to change, the outcome would be different.

Most of the warnings we face are conditional too. They’re what computer programmers call “if-then” statements— if you do this, then this will happen. If you watch TV instead of studying, then you’ll fail your exam—but if you change your ways and study, then you’ll pass.

Think of some other if-then warnings that relate to your everyday life:

IF I . . .     THEN . . .
_____   _________________________
_____   _________________________
_____   _________________________

Even the final destruction of sin at the end of time is something we can avoid. If we turn away from sin and put our trust in Jesus, then we’ll enjoy eternity in heaven with Him.

Tuesday
The Flashlight suggestion for this week suggests that the more often we ignore God’s warning and refuse to repent, the harder it will be for us to change. (Check out the quote by John Bunyan in the Other Eyes section for the same idea in different words.)

Get in the habit of listening to God! Read your Bible, pray, and pay attention to the advice of Christian friends, teachers, parents, and leaders. If you get used to responding to God’s guidance, then it will get easier to follow!

Wednesday
Read through the Punch Lines texts and then use a Bible concordance to look up some more verses about repentance. In your own words, complete the statements below:

God has to punish sin because ________________________.

Repentance means ________________________.

Thursday
As we’ve seen, some people take correction better than others.

Below are some positive responses you could give to someone who offers a warning or correction. Can you add a few of your own?

• “Thanks for pointing that out. I’ll think and pray about it.”
• “I’m sorry. I’ll try to do better next time.”
• “I never thought of it that way before…. Thanks.”

Friday
Can you think of things in your life that the Holy Spirit wants to convict you about?

What are you prepared to change in your life in response to God’s call?

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Discipline, like medicine, is hard to swallow but necessary for healing. Zedekiah and Israel were poised to “take their medicine” and enter into captivity for a season determined by God. While their impending bondage to Babylon humbled Israel, they could have accepted the discipline of God and made the best of their situation by cooperating. A contrite spirit would have continued the good favor that King Zedekiah had with the reigning king of Babylon, fostering a strong witness of God’s providence and care.

Unfortunately, the human tendency to avoid punishment and seek alternatives becomes an irresistible temptation. False prophets offered a more palatable solution to their impending captivity, claiming: “This is what the Lord . . . , the God of Israel, says: ‘I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the Lord’s house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon’” (Jeremiah 28:2, 3, NIV).

Ellen White declares: “It was especially important that those in captivity should seek the peace of the land into which they had been carried. This, however, was contrary to the inclinations of the human heart; and Satan, taking advantage of the circumstances, caused false prophets to arise among the people, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon, who declared that the yoke of bondage would soon be broken and the former prestige of the nation restored” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 440, 441). False prophets could not stomach the discipline of God and fabricated the notion that they could still overcome their enemy.

This week’s lesson focuses on God’s life-shaping discipline and the stubborn resistance of the human heart.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that God’s plan for our peace and prosperity is real. (Know)
• Deepen their confidence in God’s providence. (Feel)
• Decide to embrace God’s methods for renewal instead of trusting in the shortcuts. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Secularism/worldliness
• Consequences
• Pride

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

This week’s activity challenges young people to examine how they approach the discipline of God—or
any discipline for that matter. Have the students rank the excuses given in the What Do You Think? exercise and invite them to share their first response. Also, you might have them examine the responses given and connect them to biblical characters that exhibit that behavior.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

After six months of dating, Gina decided to end her relationship with her boyfriend. Steve, feeling crushed and betrayed, overreacted when Gina broke up with him and stormed away. He then consumed half a bottle of aspirin, seeking to regain the affections of his former girlfriend by making her feel responsible for his despair. The school nurse questioned Steve all the way to the hospital as he writhed in pain. In the emergency room he was calmly presented with a couple of options by the doctor: (1) “You can sit here in pain while the aspirin slowly destroys your insides, and you can negotiate through a slow demise experiencing the long-term effects of liver damage,” or (2) “You can let us stick a hose down your throat and pump your stomach with charcoal, causing you to vomit all the toxins you chose to put into your stomach.” The doctor punctuated the lecture with “Please decide soon. I have to set a broken nose, and some kid has the stomach flu. So what’s it going to be?”

Clearly, the medical staff were not actually giving him the option, but they did want him to own his situation and his choice for recovery. (Apparently, they had seen this scenario on other occasions.) Steve endured the trauma of having his stomach pumped and eventually recovered from the broken heart as well. Steve learned to approach his relationships with more balance. But more important, he discovered more effective ways to endure the challenges and disappointments he faced.

How is Steve’s situation like the human approach to God’s ways of growing His children through discipline?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It’s not hard to see the many flaws in Steve’s response to his problem. Perhaps the first clue is that it was HIS PROBLEM! But instead of embracing what was wrong he sought a different course. Judah and the children of God were faced with another season of captivity. Even though God promised a peaceful era of renewal, the false prophets and king sought to opt for a more manageable punishment. Read the story and respond to the questions in the Out of the Story section.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

Invite the students to examine the behavior of the two prophets Hananiah and Jeremiah, and discuss how they depict the human struggle to avoid the truth when it is painful or discipline when it is inevitable. Below are a few key lessons you may want to discuss.

1. God’s discipline may often be uncomfortable, but it is always the sure way to becoming whole. What other examples in Scripture depict people trying to take a shortcut from character-shaping discipline? Read Jeremiah 28:1-15 (especially verses 8-10) and compare the events in that passage to this one.

2. Avoiding the impact of sin only leads to self-reliant behavior. The false prophets minimized their rebellion instead of repenting of it. When people fabricate their own solutions to their sin problem, the problem only gets worse. When in your life have you been tempted to downplay your own sin or mistake so as not to face up to it?

3. How you respond to seasons of discipline conveys a powerful witness to others about who you are and especially about the God you serve. Think of people in Scripture who embraced God’s will even though it exposed their weaknesses and challenged them greatly. How did their approach benefit them in the end?

Sharing Context and Background

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

This week’s story conveys a message to God’s people as they enter into another season of captivity—this time it’s not Egypt, but Babylon. God’s promise that comes through the prophet Jeremiah is basic: “Take your medicine!” If the Hebrews entered this time with humility and a desire to follow God’s plan, the 70
years would be a time of renewal and influence to others. But in Jeremiah 28 false prophets try to derail the people and offer another “message from God” that is much more palatable.

Remember in Jeremiah 27 that God told Jeremiah to wear a yoke and demonstrate visually the soon-coming discipline of God. God promised everyone that if they humbled themselves under the yoke of Babylon, He would bless them (Jeremiah 27:2, 8, 11, 12).

When Jeremiah checks Hananiah publicly, the false prophet takes the yoke off of Jeremiah and breaks it to illustrate his prophecy. The whole drama is a war of two wills: the will of God and the will of man.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

In the same way God had Jeremiah wear a yoke to dramatize the impending discipline of God’s children, invite the students to pair up and devise an illustration that conveys a message about God’s plan and promise to us today. Or you can ask the students: “If God were to use a visual device to arrest our attention today (such as the yoke in Jeremiah 27–29) what visual symbol do you think would make the greatest impact on people today?” The students can either share an example or describe a symbol that would be effective.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It is hard to face the truth when you are wrong. The people of God had wandered so far from God that the only way to bring them back again was to send them into captivity in Babylon. God’s plan wasn’t to punish them but to prepare them to become the kind of people they were destined to be to the world. The path to become God’s true ambassadors to the world is not an easy road, and the journey often includes moments in which your weaknesses, faults, and even sinful

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.
behaviors are exposed. But God’s grace and mercy are always there to reach you and teach you about the abundant life.

Remember the promise God spoke in Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” If your desire is to embrace this plan for your life, then be willing to receive the instruction and adversity God brings your way to grow you as a child of God.
Israel takes its medicine

“Flashlight”

“To the end of time, men will arise to create confusion and rebellion among those who claim to be representatives of the true God. Those who prophesy lies will encourage men to look upon sin as a light thing. When the terrible results of their evil deeds are made manifest, they will seek, if possible, to make the one who has faithfully warned them responsible for their difficulties, even as the Jews charged Jeremiah with their evil fortunes. But as surely as the words of Jehovah through His prophet were vindicated anciently, so surely will the certainty of His messages be established today” (Prophets and Kings, p. 442).

keytext

“This is what the Lord says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

(Jeremiah 29:10, 11, NIV)
Bad choices lead to unfavorable consequences. As humans, we often seek to find other ways to deal with our situation rather than owning the problem. Which method of denial do you think is most common today? Rank them according to the way you tend to respond. (1 most common, 5 being the least.)

When my actions cause unpleasant circumstances I tend to . . .

____ justify my actions by comparing them to more heinous actions of others.

____ minimize what is wrong.

____ avoid the truth by filling the time with busy behavior.

____ consider alternative perspectives.

____ focus on the seemingly judgmental spirit of my oppressors.

John Maxwell claims the following about leaders:

"Eighty-nine percent of what people learn comes through visual stimulation; 10 percent through audible stimulation; and 1 percent through other senses. So it makes sense that the more followers see and hear their leader, the greater their consistency in action and word. The greater their consistency and loyalty, the more they think, "Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too will increase in number there; do not decrease. Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city, to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:4-7, NIV)

"This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. (This was after King Jehoiachin and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.)" (Jeremiah 29:1-2, NIV)

"He entrusted the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said: 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too will increase in number there; do not decrease. Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city, to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." (Jeremiah 29:4-7, NIV)
"I am with you and will save you," declares the Lord. "Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished." (Jeremiah 30:11, NIV).

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

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.” (Revelation 3:19, NIV).

“Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty” (Job 5:17, NIV).

“You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty” (Psalm 18:27, NIV).

“A man who wants to lead the orchestra must turn his back on the crowd.”—Max Lucado, current U.S. Christian author and minister.

“When you have to make a choice and don’t make it, that in itself is a choice.”—William James, 19th-20th-century American philosopher and psychologist.
Sabbath

As you respond to the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson, read Hebrews 12:11. What does this passage say about the way we relate to discipline? Why do you think it is so easy to find another way rather than face up to discipline?

Sunday

Read the passage in the Into the Story section of the student lesson and respond to the study questions provided. What parts of this story are new to you, and what insights have you gained from this passage?

Do you think if we could see the big picture of God’s will we would embrace adversity better, or do you think we would turn away from the challenges that lie ahead?

Monday

Consider the message of the Key Text in this week’s lesson from Jeremiah 29:10, 11, NIV. “This is what the Lord says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” While this promise is one of the well-known passages of Scripture, the message of hope comes as a precursor to 70 years of submission to Babylon. How does knowing the context of this promise change the impact of the passage on you personally?

Tuesday

In this week’s Flashlight quote from Prophets and Kings, Ellen White refers to the way people at the end of time will “look upon sin as a light thing.” How do you see this as true to life today? In what areas of your experience do you see the world minimizing the sinfulness of sin? As you think about great leaders in your life, whom do you know that models sensitivity to the wrongfulness of sin but still manages to walk in the promise of God’s plan?

Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines in this week’s lesson and identify the passage that is speaking to you today. Why does this Scripture seem to be so relevant to you now? What do you think God is trying to say to you?

Continue to reflect on the passages about how we grow through discipline and ask God to give you an opportunity to share your insights with someone else this week.

Thursday

In this week’s lesson there are false prophets who try to persuade the people of God to minimize their need for discipline and subvert God’s plan for their growth. Their message was popular and easier to receive than Jeremiah’s, but completely untrue. Identify some of the voices that are “false prophets” in your life—voices that urge you to take the easy way instead of the right way. Maybe you have a close friend who struggles with honesty, or you find yourself wrestling with habits or temptations that derail your focus on Christ. Measure those voices against the promise of God in Jeremiah 29:10, 11 and choose firmly to walk with God even though the future may seem unpleasant. Discover for yourself that God’s promise is sure!

Friday

Reflect on the way God has guided you through seasons of learning that, although not pleasant, brought about real change and growth in your life. Perhaps you can identify with a person in Scripture that made a similar journey. Understanding the nature and purpose of God’s discipline deepens our trust in God and our loyalty to His cause in our lives.

this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 36.

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.
be swayed and besieged

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 37–39; 2 Chronicles 36.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 37.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson exposes a major flaw in Zedekiah’s leadership—inaction. His moral courage registered too low on the scale for leaders, and the result was horrendous damage to his family and his people. The options were simple: (1) submit to Babylon’s rule and live in peace for 70 years, or (2) resist and evoke the force of Nebuchadnezzar’s might. Zedekiah heard the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, but unconverted leaders and false prophets threatened him, and Zedekiah would listen to God only in private. Because Zedekiah could not act on his convictions, the great walls of Jerusalem fell, the glorious Temple of Jehovah was sacked and pillaged, and many were killed in the wake of senseless butchery.

As believers in God, there are times when our choices will have consequences, and those consequences are uncertain—even frightening. But far more dangerous is not making the right choice, thinking a better option will emerge. Ellen White states that while he had “no fixed purpose to do evil” he did not have the backbone “to stand boldly for the right” (Prophets and Kings, p. 458). If Zedekiah’s life teaches us anything today it is that God’s Word is to be trusted, even if it doesn’t make us feel safe. Perhaps we will obey God only in the pivotal moments when we practice faithfulness in the ordinary, not-so-pivotal moments.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that loyalty to God will at times be risky, but always right. (Know)
- Sense the peace that comes from exercising your faith in God. (Feel)
- Determine to live publicly our personal convictions about God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Friendship
- Sin
- Evil
- Devil
- The judgment

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Invite the students to share their responses to the activity on who has influence on your life. You might comment, “Everyone is influenced to a certain degree by all these options (parents, friends, public opinion), but their level of influence is different.”

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In class at a public university Jamie writhed in his
seat as the philosophy professor mocked Christian faith with snide remarks such as “C'mon people! Any thinking person can see that faith in God is a crutch created by humans who must believe that someone is in control.” He would stare at the class waiting for a response. Some would nod in agreement. Others stared in disbelief. Still others never made eye contact and simply took notes hoping not to be called on to respond. The professor would throw down controversial statements like gauntlets, daring anyone to take him on. The sassy teacher’s diatribes went almost uncontested until Jamie took the challenge, choked down his fear, and spoke up. “Professor, I disagree. In fact, I believe in God, not because I have to but because everything I have experienced gives evidence that God is real.” The teacher had not expected anyone to respond so confidently. Many in the class noticed as well and eagerly waited for the conversation to escalate into an all-out argument. The teacher tried to discredit Jamie intellectually and even intimidate him with questions about proof. Nevertheless, the more cynical the professor became the more the class began to show curious support for Jamie. The teacher moved quickly to change the subject, getting in the last word.

But Jamie’s words struck a chord in a few classmates. As they left the building they expressed their appreciation for the way he stood up to the teacher. They were believers as well, and were equally uncomfortable with their own inability to respond.

During the next few weeks many students gained the moral courage to share their convictions in class. This surprised the professor so much that he noticeably toned down his bitter rhetoric.

When in your life have you witnessed someone boldly take a stand for God, not knowing how others would respond? When have you ever had to make your loyalty to God clear to others?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

In every age the opportunity comes to believers to take a stand and boldly remind the world that God's Word is real, right, and true. Whether it’s speaking up for God in a class or bravely obeying God's Word when others are sure to laugh and ridicule you, there is a time to stand. Most of the time it’s risky and even frightening. Read the story about how Zedekiah heard the word of God from Jeremiah to submit to Babylon’s rule and not trust the Egyptians to save them. But popular opinions froze him in fear, and the people paid the price.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- This week’s passage from 2 Chronicles 36 is a summary of the events of Jeremiah 37, 38, and 39. Read through these chapters to get specific insights into the story.
- In what way was Zedekiah stiff-necked and hard-hearted?
- In what way does Zedekiah’s age factor into his struggle as a king? What are the positives and negatives of being a young leader?

This story is a classic example of how the stubbornness of leaders can cause horrific pain and tragedy for many.

Some might think the destruction of Jerusalem was harsh. Read Jeremiah 38:14-24 and compare the exchange between Jeremiah and Zedekiah to the summary in 2 Chronicles. How does a person become so careful of public opinion, even when the threat of death and shame is near?

- What do you think it means when the Bible says, “The land enjoyed its sabbath rests” (2 Chronicles 36:21, NIV)?
- How would you summarize the key message in this story?
- How does this story affect your perception of Christian leaders? How does it affect your perception of God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Daniel 3; Luke 5:1-6; Acts 4; Matthew 25:14-30.

Sharing Context and Background

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

This week’s lesson is focused on the actions and inaction of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, and his interaction with the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah embraced the call of prophet as a young man (Jeremiah 1:6, 7) and served from about 627 B.C. to
560 B.C. Zedekiah reigned from about 597 to 586 B.C. where he witnessed the final collapse of God’s people as they were taken into captivity. The overall context of this story has to do with God preparing His people for His judgment. God’s purpose was to use Babylon as a tool to bring discipline to Judah, but God did not chastise His people without offering them grace to be restored. In fact, God clearly mapped the season of renewal, if they should respond with humility and surrender (Jeremiah 3:14-17; 23:5; 31:31; 33:16). By 586 B.C., the tragic refusal to hear God’s counsel came to fruition as Zedekiah succumbed to the urging of false prophets and was violently defeated and broken.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary describes the nature of Zedekiah’s role in this time of discipline:

“Zedekiah was a puppet king of the Babylonians, yet at the same time a legitimate heir to the throne. He was no doubt required to take an oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, but within a few years violated that oath by entering into an alliance with various neighbor nations against Babylon” (vol. 4, p. 484). Zedekiah seemingly responded to Jeremiah as though he were a true prophet from God as seen in his repeated attempts to seek the man of God out and be advised (37:3, 4; 38:14-16).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary comments further about Zedekiah: “It would appear that Zedekiah’s decisions reflect vacillation more than they do outright doubt or unbelief.” Perhaps this quality represents the deeper, more pervasive problem of trying to find our own way to salvation and security instead of trust in God’s. Stubbornness always leads to suffering and humility to wholeness. King Zedekiah had the opportunity to obey God and do the right thing, but buckled under the pressure.

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.
Here is what happened to Zedekiah as described in Jeremiah 39:

- 39:1 Nebuchadnezzar besieges the city.
- 39:2 The walls of Jerusalem are pulled down.
- 39:5 Zedekiah tries to run but is caught and sentenced.
- 39:6 Zedekiah’s sons and the nobles are killed in front of him.
- 39:7 Zedekiah’s eyes are removed.
- 39:15-18 The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah announcing that God has brought disaster instead of prosperity, as the king and the people have chosen. However, Jeremiah and those who were faithful were spared and given help, “because you trust in me, declares the Lord” (39:18, NIV).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Invite students to make a list of scenarios in which they wish someone would be brave enough to stand up for what is right. Prompt their lists with this question: I WISH SOMEONE WOULD STAND UP AND DO SOMETHING WHEN . . .

Have them make these lists in pairs or groups of three and read their lists out loud to the class. You may notice some powerful convictions the students have about what is right and what is needed. Invite them to be the kind of person who will stand and remind them that, like Jeremiah, they can trust in the Lord.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Zedekiah was not bent on evil; in fact, he kept reaching out to Jeremiah for insight. He knew what was right and believed he should do it, but not enough to do it. Our world is looking for leadership—people who have a clear sense of right and wrong, of what is true and what is false. And even though some are cynical, the hearts of people are watching and searching for guidance from God. There are many who live their lives with regrets, not about what they did, but about what they did not do. How do you want to live your life as a believer in God? There is the Zedekiah way: Play it safe. Hope for an easy way. Don’t take the risks of being hated or misunderstood. Perhaps you can see the determined look on the faces of Bible heroes who stood in the face of adversity and declared their loyalty to God. Noah. Moses. Elijah. Daniel. Esther. John the Baptist. Paul. The list goes on of people who were faithful. Where is the list of those who remained silent? How about you? Will you be swayed and besieged by inaction, or will you stand and be counted faithful 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 37.

*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.
CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
JULY 28 2012

STUDENT LESSON

be swayed and besieged

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 37–39; 2 Chronicles 36.
Commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 37.

flashlight

“With tears Jeremiah entreated Zedekiah to save himself and his people. With anguish of spirit he assured him that unless he should heed the counsel of God, he could not escape with his life, and all his possessions would fall to the Babylonians. . . . He sacrificed the noble freedom of his manhood and became a cringing slave to public opinion. With no fixed purpose to do evil, he was also without resolution to stand boldly for the right. Convicted though he was of the value of the counsel given by Jeremiah, he had not the moral stamina to obey; and as a consequence he advanced steadily in the wrong direction” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 457, 458).

keytext

“The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.”

(2 Chronicles 36:15, 16, NIV)
To what degree are you swayed by the following influences:

Friends
Almost never Almost always
1 2 3 4 5

Parents and family
Almost never Almost always
1 2 3 4 5

The popular masses
Almost never Almost always
1 2 3 4 5

Which of the above have the most influence in your life? Why?

Hebrew word for “falter” means to limp around. Someone who limps or falters is almost walking correctly. One leg works; the other doesn’t. One step is sure; the other stumbles. Walking and even stumbling is more difficult than walking, and even falling, is more difficult than stumbling. Walking requires a full commitment; either way, God all you have to do is believe in something and never really do anything about it.

Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the Lord. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God’s name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the Lord, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the temple, the priests and the officials and burned all the value there.

He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, those who remained of the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took his mother to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried into exile to Babylon some of the princes of the land, the officers and the wise men of Jerusalem, and he made Zedekiah the king of Judah and the priests and the people live in the city.

He carried into exile to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord’s temple and the treasures of the king’s palace.

They set fire to God’s temple and burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

He carried into exile to Babylon all the people who remained in the city, who had not been put to death or carried away into exile to Babylon, and he made them live in the city of Babylon as refugees until the seventy years were fulfilled in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah. Then the Lord fulfilled the word that he had spoken.

The forty years were completed, and the Lord took care of his promise.
OUT OF THE STORY

This week’s passage from 2 Chronicles 36 is a summary of the events of Jeremiah 37, 38, and 39. Read through these chapters to get specific insights into the story.

In what way was Zedekiah stiff-necked and hard-hearted?

In what way does Zedekiah’s age factor into his struggle as a king? What are the positives and negatives of being a young leader?

This story is a classic example of how the stubbornness of leaders can cause horrific pain and tragedy for many. Some might think the destruction of Jerusalem was harsh. Read Jeremiah 38:14-24 and compare the exchange between Jeremiah and Zedekiah to this summary in 2 Chronicles. How does a person become so careful of public opinion, even when the threat of death and shame is near?

What do you think it means when the Bible says: “The land enjoyed its sabbath rests” (2 Chronicles 36:21, NIV)?

How would you summarize the key message in this story?

How does this story affect your perception of leaders? How does it affect your perception of God?

PUNCH LINES

“Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord” (Psalm 107:43, NIV).

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

“It is better to heed a wise man’s rebuke than to listen to the song of fools” (Ecclesiastes 7:5, NIV).

“But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened’” (1 Peter 3:14, NIV).

“They would not be like their forefathers—a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him” (Psalm 78:8, NIV).

“Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (John 3:20, NIV).

“There is a time when we must firmly choose the course we will follow, or the relentless drift of events will make the decision.”—Herbert V. Prochnow, 20th-century U.S. banking executive, toastmaster, and author.

“If men will not be governed by God, then they must be governed by tyrants.”—William Penn, 17th-18th-century English Quaker, founder of Pennsylvania.
### Sabbath
As you respond to the exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week’s lesson, who (parents, friends, masses) do you think has an unhealthy level of influence in your life? Read Romans 12:2 and rewrite this verse in your own words. Try not to use any of the major words contained in the verse.

### Sunday
Read this week’s story from Scripture and answer the questions given in the *Out of the Story* section. But first, take a few moments to read Jeremiah 37–39 for a more detailed sample of the drama between the prophet, false prophets, and King Zedekiah. Why do you think this story is in the Bible? What does it tell us about people? What does it say about God?

### Monday
Read the *Key Text* found in 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16 and think about how frustrating it must have been for God as well as for the faithful remnant. Perhaps you know of people whose hearts have hardened so much that they resist any prompting from God, friends, or strangers. Take time to pray for such people today.

### Tuesday
This week’s *Flashlight* quote truly captures the problem for Zedekiah, and for believers in every age. Notice the sentence “With no fixed purpose to do evil, he was also without resolution to stand boldly for the right.” Consider the brief word study in the *Did You Know?* section, and reflect on the times in your life when you took a stand for God that was risky? How did you feel? Compare that experience with times you chose not to do anything.

### Wednesday
Read the *Punch Lines* for this week and rank them 1-5 as if you were using them for a Bible study with someone who was struggling to take a stand for God. Maybe you know someone who is wavering between making a decision or not making a decision. How would you organize these verses to help them respond? What other verses might you include?

### Thursday
Write out three things you believe to be true about God and His plan for your life. How much do you believe these words? What evidence could you give from your own experience that demonstrates your convictions?

### Friday
Reflect today on the patience of God throughout history—not only with biblical characters, but with you. As you ruminate on the great moments of grace, say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for pursuing you relentlessly.

Dear God,
Thank you for ________________________
_____________________________
_____________________________
_____________________________
_____________________________


*this week’s reading*
Prophets and Kings, chapter 37.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity. It is plain that they were from some form of royal Israelite line. They were taken for the express reason of becoming the ruling class in Babylon, and to help integrate Israelites into Babylonian society. To integrate into another culture, three things help to make this process more complete: (1) an ability to communicate in their language, (2) an understanding of their literature and thinking, and (3) an appreciation for their food—since food is such an integral part of social life in any culture. Daniel 1 reveals that King Nebuchadnezzar knew this (see Dan. 1:3-5). As such the king treated the young men with respect and gave them positions of favor within the kingdom. In fact, the king even gave them food from his own table! But herein lay the trouble. The Babylonian society put a high value on idol worship. Even the names given to the young men had a history of idolatry. Whether the boys knew this or not is not known. However, they were committed to honor God with their lives.

It is a story that is well-known. For 10 days they did not partake of the food given to idols; rather they just ate vegetables and water. After 10 days they were tested, and the text tells us that they did “ten times better” than their Babylonian counterparts.

This lesson points us in the direction of obedience. However, it is not an obedience that is born out of fear of rejection. Rather, it is an obedience that comes from a knowledge of who God is, and the fact that He loves us enough to save us. This is an important fact in teaching this lesson. It is an important fact in life. We obey not to gain favor, but because we respond to the grace given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand the difference between obeying in order to gain acceptance and obeying because they are accepted. (Know)
• Sense that God loves them deeply and wishes to bless them. (Feel)
• Integrate the knowledge of the love of God into their responses to Him. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Obedience
• Grace
• Healthy lifestyle

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 the students which question they marked as the best answer. This exercise was simple in that the correct answer was very clear. They all should have
chosen it.

Now lead them in this exercise: Ask them if they would rather climb a mountain with someone they knew or with someone they didn’t. Ask them if they would rather scuba dive with someone that they knew cared about them, or with someone that they were not sure about. Ask them if they would like to skydive with someone who was trained, or with someone of whose background they knew nothing.

The answers are simple. As is the answer to why we are motivated to obey. Do we do it because we hope God will love us, or do we do it because we know that God does love us?

**Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

There once were two best friends. They went everywhere together and knew each other very well. They shared everything they had and always seemed to know what the other was thinking and feeling. When one would ask the other to do something the other would immediately do it. One day they were apart. One had a test to take, and the other had to go to the beach. Before the first one took his test he asked the second to bring him back some sand.

“Sand?” said the second. “Why?”

“Don’t worry, just do it!” said the first.

So the second friend went to the beach. He played in the water, played on the shore, and generally had a great time. When it came time to leave, he grabbed a handful of sand and stuck it in his pocket.

When he saw the first friend once again, the second immediately said he had the sand in his pocket. He reached into it and found it to be empty! He looked at his friend and apologized profusely, bringing out only a few grains of sand left in his pocket. He hoped his friend would still be his friend after losing all the sand.

The first friend smiled and said, “No problem; it’s not about the sand!”

“What do you mean?” asked the second, puzzled.

“It was never about the sand. It was about whether or not you trusted me!”

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

It is hard to trust sometimes—especially when you are not sure about the object of that trust. In this story, the young men were sure about who God was and is. It is that much easier to trust when you are sure that the object of that trust is trustworthy.

Obedience comes down to a question of trust in that which we will obey. Daniel and his friends knew this, and they knew beyond a shadow of a doubt who God was.

**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 have the students play the different parts with different voices. It will help make the story come alive.
- Have the students underline where Daniel and his friends took risks and leaps of faith.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Romans 5:19; Romans 16:19; 2 John 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.

The Israelites were a conquered people. Because of that, it would have been easy for Daniel and his friends to give up hope in a God who could be of service to them. They were away from their homeland, and even though they were living in luxury, they were still essentially slaves. It took a great deal of faith to even believe that God cared for them, let alone that He was watching out for them. In a strange land the God of their fathers could have seemed even more distant than ever before.

However, these young men, obviously learned, knew the God they served. They knew that He had desires for them that went beyond what was convenient for them. They were in a city that was the center of the world, and God was allowing them to have an influence over Nebuchadnezzar, arguably the most powerful man of his age. What a huge responsibility that was placed on their shoulders!

Babylon, in modern-day Iraq, would have been a city of many wonders and great wealth. The hanging gardens were said to be one of the wonders of the ancient world. This is the opulence and grandeur that these young men would have been becoming accustomed to. It would have been amazing, especially
compared to their lives before coming to Babylon. They probably would have lived either in a small village or in the small city of Jerusalem. Either experience would have paled in comparison. It would have been easy to think that the gods of the Babylonians might be more powerful than the God of Israel.

However, this was not the case for these young men. They were committed to their God, and this could have happened only because they studied Him and knew who He was. They found God to be trustworthy again and again. Their responses to Him were coming from a strong understanding that their God loved and accepted them completely.

III. CLOSING

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

Have the students think of five people whom they trust completely. Ask them if they would do what any of those five people asked of them. Then ask them why they would obey. Remind them that the quality of a relationship is often what allows us to obey even strange requests, and remind them that God is ultimately the best one to trust. Pray with them that they might live their lives in response to a God who loves them completely.

Summary
Share the following thoughts 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.
not fearful of His response to them because He had already proven Himself worthy of their love. It is a really special relationship that we get to have with God. He loves us, we love Him, and He proves to us His love again and again.

The blessing bestowed upon the young men as well was much more than they probably had in mind. We often think too small when we think about the blessing that God wants to give to us. It is usually more than we can imagine.

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 39.

*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.
Among the children of Israel who were carried captive to Babylon at the beginning of the seventy years' captivity were Christian patriots, men who were as true as steel to principle, who would not be corrupted by selfishness, but who would honor God at the loss of all things. In the land of their captivity these men were to carry out God's purpose by giving to heathen nations the blessings that come through a knowledge of Jehovah. They were to be His representatives. Never were they to compromise with idolaters; their faith and their name as worshipers of the living God they were to bear as a high honor. And this they did. In prosperity and adversity they honored God, and God honored them" (Prophets and Kings, p. 479).


what do you think?

What do you think it means to be “obedient” to what God wants for your life? Put an X by the answer you think it is:

_____ It’s about rules and regulations.
_____ It means that there are things we have to do in order for God to like us.
_____ It’s about our responding to the grace and love that God has given us.

This may seem a bit obvious, but when our actions become responses to love as opposed to rules that might obtain us acceptance, the word “obedience” becomes less like a burden and more like a blessing.

“...a young man named Daniel, from the tribe of Judah, was one of them. The king appointed him a position of high rank in the land and gave him the name Belteshazzar. He was an excellent sprout in the royal garden. He was taught the literature and language of the Babylonians, and his mind was open to all kinds of wisdom and learning. He possessed a “good spirit.” And even the king himself had a special liking for Daniel. Within a short time he would go some distance towards becoming a king himself. ...”

The chief official took Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who had been given new names, and had them appear before the king. The king asked them, “Do you know about the laws of my land?”... “Do you not know what I have decreed?” he asked. “I have appointed you to a high position because you have been expert in the literature and learning of the Babylonians, and because I have found you outstanding. You have shown yourself to be wise, which is why I have made you my servant.”

“...Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.’ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

“...for the food and drink they were given in the king’s palace was a worse threat to Daniel than death itself. So he had much killed and the health of Daniel remained the same. The chief official was astonished, and when this was reported to the king’s servants, he was glad.

“...the chief official said to Daniel, ‘God has sent his angel to help you. Your God, the God of your ancestors, has sent him to lead you out of the fire, and today he will start you on your journey home.’ ...”

The names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were given to Daniel’s friends. It’s true! They even gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar. This was done by the Babylonians in an attempt to integrate these young men into Babylonian society. While they were prisoners, they were not slaves. They were taken from the royal Israelite families in order to help govern those lands conquered by the Babylonians. This was a common practice in antiquity. By the food they were given it is seen that they were treated even better than many Babylonians. This means that their step in faith to refuse the king’s bounty was a very serious risk. Obviously, these were young men who were committed to their God and following what He had for them in their lives.

Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, ‘I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.’

“Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.’ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

“At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

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“...the chief official said to Daniel, ‘God has sent his angel to help you. Your God, the God of your ancestors, has sent him to lead you out of the fire, and today he will start you on your journey home.’ ...”

The chief official invited them to the king. The king asked, “Are you ready to receive an award?” The men answered, “It is your majesty who should receive an award.”

At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. And Daniel remained there until the first year...
“For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19, NIV).

“Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil” (Romans 16:19, NIV).

“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love” (2 John 1:6, NIV).

“Strength was the virtue of paganism; obedience is the virtue of Christianity.” —David Hare, current British dramatist, screenwriter, and director.

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

“There is no justification without sanctification, no forgiveness without renewal of life, no real faith from which the fruits of new obedience do not grow.” —Martin Luther, 15th-16th-century German monk and theologian whose questioning of certain church practices led to the Protestant Reformation.
Sabbath

I was driving the other day and I saw a sticker on an electrical box on the side of the road. The sticker simply said: “OBEY,” with a weird looking face on it. Almost scary! But it got me thinking about what it means to obey.

This week’s lesson focuses on some young men who were willing to risk a great deal in order to obey what they believed God was calling them to. It seems that they were not obeying in order to become accepted by anyone—for if they had, they would surely have eaten the food of the king in order to gain his acceptance. Rather, they were obeying God as a response to the love that He had already shown them! This must have changed everything for them. Rather than taking a risk to find out if God loved them, they took a risk because they knew God loved them. This, in all our lives, can be a vast source of strength!

Are you an obedient person? Have you learned to obey? Explain.

Sunday

Put yourself into the circumstances of these young men. Would you have done the same thing? Is there a place in your life in which you find yourself having a hard time being obedient? Why do you think that is? Do you have the assurance that God loves you beyond a shadow of a doubt? Do you think that you must be obedient in order to gain favor? Or do you believe that you are loved and want to do exactly what that source of love wants for you?

These questions all are asking the same question really: “Do you know you are loved by God?” Answer this, and everything becomes easier!

Monday

God blesses us in much greater ways than we normally imagine. In our Key Text it is said that the king found them to be “ten times better” than the others from his own kingdom. Do you think that Daniel and his friends imagined that they would pass each test with such flying colors? They were obedient to God, to be sure. But what they found out was that God was willing to go beyond their wildest desires for success and prove His goodness to them in the outcome of their tests. How do we tend to undersell the blessings that God is willing to bestow upon us?

Tuesday

The strength that these young men were able to muster came from a “knowledge of Jehovah.” They were not guessing that God might be faithful. No, they came into this trial knowing that God would honor His promises to them. How did they know?

They were constantly seeking Him and His ways. They knew who God was, they understood His character, they desired His will for their lives. It is hard to follow someone you are not sure you trust. However, it’s easy to follow your best friend. Perhaps they had spent the time to understand that God is a God of kept promises, not broken ones!

Wednesday

How important is obedience? Read Romans 5:19. It says that the world was saved by the obedience of one man (Jesus!). Even as the world was lost because of one man’s disobedience (Adam). It is plain to see that this concept of obedience makes a world of difference in all of our lives.

Thursday

Is it easy to trust God? That really is what obedience is, right? Isn’t it just the ability to believe that what God wants for your life is truly what is best for you? Sometimes it’s hard to trust, to believe, but the more we do it, the easier it becomes. So the question for you is: Do you trust God? How does your life reflect that trust?

Friday

Obedience takes many shapes and forms. The reality is that God wants you to obey because it is what is best for you, and it truly shows our connection to Him. By being those who trust God we show the world that God is trustworthy. We obey not to gain the acceptance of God, but because we have been accepted. Do you really believe that God loves you? Do you believe that He accepts you?

God even gave the dream

I. SYNOPSIS
This Scripture portion is the story of Daniel and his reliance on God to give him not only the interpretation of the dream, but the dream itself. This is important for many different reasons: 1. It showed the wise men of the kingdom to be nothing more than charlatans. 2. It proved the power of God to King Nebuchadnezzar. 3. It showed God to be a God of power, wisdom, and grace. This gives us many opportunities for teaching. Especially for a better understanding of reliance on God to meet all our needs. It shows us what faith really is.

What a powerful God we serve! This continually shows us that God is a Deity that not only gives His people escapes from certain situations, but also allows the situations in the first place.

This gives us a great opportunity to talk about things such as the sovereignty of God, the power of His grace, and the strength to be found in faith.

II. TARGET
The students will:
- Realize that God is a God who sets up situations as well as decides their outcome. (Know)
- Understand that total dependence on faith is what God asks of us. (Feel)
- Learn to look for ways to depend more fully on the grace of God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
- Faith
- Sovereignty of God
- His connection to His people

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

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

Invite the students to share how they think they would have felt if they were the wise men of Babylon in this story. Would they have feared for their lives? Would they have tried to convince the king that his request was completely unreasonable? Would they have tried to run away? Could they have had any say in how they were to be killed?

Do the students think that the wise men may have prayed to a God they didn’t necessarily know as a last-ditch effort? Do you think those prayers would have counted?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
In 1853, when young Hudson Taylor was making
his first voyage to China, his vessel was delayed near New Guinea because the winds had stopped. A rapid current was carrying the ship toward some reefs, and the situation was becoming dangerous. Even the sailors using a longboat could not row the vessel out of the current. “We have done everything that can be done,” said the captain to Taylor. But Taylor replied, “No, there is one thing we have not done yet.” There were three other believers on the ship, and Taylor suggested that each retire to his own cabin and pray for a breeze. They did, and while he was at prayer, Taylor received confidence from God that the desperately needed wind would be sent. He went up on deck and suggested to the first officer, an unbeliever, that he let down the mainsail because a breeze was on its way. The man refused, but then they saw the corner of the sail begin to stir. The breeze had come! They let down the sail and in a short time were on their way! (Taken from W. Wiersbe, Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers, p. 240.)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
When we trust in God, oftentimes what seems like it might be ordinary becomes extraordinary. Whether it is discernment we should not have had, or wisdom that comes from beyond us, it is always an exciting adventure to be in the midst of God working. That is something that faith really allows us to do, see God in all His power, working through 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.
• Would you be afraid if you were one of the wise men?
• Have you ever had a conversation with God when you felt as if He were talking back to you? How did you feel?
• How often do you find yourself completely depending on God as Daniel did?
• Do you want to be someone who finds wisdom from what God is telling you?
• How did Daniel give the glory to God and not to himself?
• In what situation could you find yourself giving honor to God, even if you had done something well?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Genesis 41.

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.
Since Nebuchadnezzar was king for two years while his father was still alive, this story actually happened in the fifth year of his reign over the Babylonians. Likewise, it is estimated that it was the fourth year of the captivity of Daniel.

Some have suggested that the word “Chaldeans” was used as a designation for scholars, sorcerers, astrologers, and magicians as well as its ethnic use. Since in the Neo-Babylonian Empire the Chaldeans occupied all high offices, including the priesthood, the ethnic name “Chaldeans” seems to have become a designation for the priestly work and office, which included the work of divination. The term “wise men” originally denoted an ancient priestly class during the time of the Medes and Persians, but came also to mean “one adept in the sciences of astrology, etc.”

It is important to remember that since Daniel and his friends were considered to be wise men as well, it is safe to assume that they were sentenced to death along with the other wise men. As the Lord gave Daniel the dream and the interpretation, He was not only saving Daniel and his friends, but also all of the other wise men in the kingdom.

It is interesting to note that the wise men did not ask for more time. Perhaps they did not ask for more time because they knew that more time was not what would get them the answers the king so desired. Rather, they figured they were just prolonging the inevitable. Daniel, however, asked for more time in order that God might reveal the secrets of the king to him. Daniel, even in asking for this time, showed a great deal of faith that God would provide that which the king so desperately was seeking.

Daniel was brave in teaching Nebuchadnezzar the prophecy. Why? Because it was not necessarily good news that the king was to hear. Rather, it was a message about the power of the one true God. However, the message was so clear that even this idolatrous king was convinced that God was the God above all other gods. He was convinced that there was nothing
on this earth that could compare with the power of Daniel’s God. Do we come into a knowledge of God that is as exciting and earth-shattering as it was for the king? Do we find that God’s power is overwhelming and it forces us to change our lives when we recognize how amazing God’s sovereignty is in this world? King Nebuchadnezzar understood what Daniel was saying in the interpretation of the dream. The message was clear. Nebuchadnezzar realized his place on this earth, and for a moment he became enthralled by the power and might of our Lord and Savior.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Bring the students into a circle and have them all hold hands. This may seem a bit cheesy, but it will build a sense of community. Ask them each to think of a time when they had to rely totally on God. Then, when you pray with them, ask each one of them to pray for another opportunity to rely on God completely.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

While Daniel learned to rely on God completely, it is often a long process for us to come to the place where we have that same reliance. What can we do to make us more reliant on God? It seems that crisis is a good way to rely on God. However, this lesson seeks to help students realize their need for God and for leaning on their faith regardless of the circumstances. What can we do, as teachers and mentors, to help disciple each young person into a situation where they can more readily see the power of God in their lives, even in the times that are not full of crisis? We can always point them to the characters in the Scriptures who learned to trust no matter the circumstances.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

“Doing” Bible Study

Students learn by doing; this is knowledge that is pretty common. However, how do you have students “do” a lesson study from the Bible? There is a myriad of ways that they can connect the story to their lives. Anything from drama to song to Scripture reading to role-playing will allow the students to feel as if they are in the midst of the story. Even something as silly as getting them to stand when they are used to sitting makes it possible for them to remember things better than they would have otherwise. This is important as they begin to internalize the Scriptures and apply them to their lives.

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, chapter 40.

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God even gave the dream

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. The king said to Daniel, ‘Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.’”

(Daniel 2:46, 47, NIV)

flashlight

“In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the Word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold—above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions—the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will” (Prophets and Kings, p. 499).
Please answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think that Nebuchadnezzar tested his wise men and soothsayers in this story?
2. Doesn’t chopping them up and destroying their homes seem to be a pretty extreme punishment?
3. Do you think that the king had trouble remembering his dream and that was why he asked the wise men to not only interpret the dream but to tell him what it was as well?
4. Couldn’t they have simply made up a story for him? Why or why not?

**did you know?**

Did you know that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was probably the most powerful king at the time of this story? Babylon was considered one of the wealthiest places on earth. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, created by Nebuchadnezzar around 600 B.C. for his wife, are considered one of the original Seven Wonders of the World. As well, if you remember the name Nimrod, from Genesis 10, you also know the name of the man who founded Babylon.

**dream and interpret it for me.**

"Once more they replied, ‘Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it.’ Then the king answered, ‘I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me.’ . . .

"Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, ‘Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him.’ Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, ‘I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means.’ The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), ‘Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?’ Daniel replied, ‘No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these:

"As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.’"

(Daniel 2:1-9, 24-29, NIV)
“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior” (Habakkuk 3:17, 18, NIV).

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7, NIV).

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV).

“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4, NIV).

“Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe.”—Augustine, 4th-5th-century church father, bishop of Hippo.

“That’s the thing about faith. If you don’t have it you can’t understand it. And if you do, no explanation is necessary.”—Kira Nerys, in Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.

“Life is a battle between faith and reason in which each feeds upon the other, drawing sustenance from it and destroying it.”—Reinhold Niebuhr, 20th-century U.S. Protestant theologian.
Daniel once again is found to be completely relying on the wisdom that God has given him. It’s amazing when you think about everything Daniel was able to do throughout his life by having complete dependence on God. I guess the question is this: “Do we live our lives with that same dependence?” I know that I feel I am pretty capable, as you probably think you are as well. Sometimes I think that I am so capable that I don’t really need God to direct my ways. I think as humans we all fight with those emotions. Why is it that we have such a hard time depending on God for everything? Remember, Daniel didn’t depend on God just for the interpretation of the dream; he depended on God for the actual dream itself.

Sabbath

Daniel replied, ‘No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come’” (Daniel 2:27, 28, NIV).

Have you ever taken credit for something that was not entirely your accomplishment? Have you ever been a part of something great that was not as much your work as that of a team, yet you still thought you should get the glory? Daniel was very clear on whom to give credit to for the telling and the interpretation of the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. His is a great example of how to give credit to God for the things He does and reveals to us. He began by proclaiming God’s divine power and His responsibility for the great things that happen.

Sunday

When King Nebuchadnezzar asked the wise men what his dream was, they must have been surprised. My guess is that they were very surprised. The king had put them on the spot by not telling them the dream, so they could not come up with whatever came to their heads at that moment. This must have created a great deal of anxiety from these charlatans who called themselves wise men! They were having to come up with whatever came to their heads at that moment. This must have created a great deal of anxiety from these charlatans who called themselves wise men! They were having to not telling them the dream, so they could not.

prove their worth to the king. This they could not do.

Daniel, however, was not interested in proving his worth to the king; rather, he was interested in proving God’s worth to the king. And he simply let God do what He is best at: taking care of His people.

How can we get caught up in trying to “prove ourselves” to others? What can Daniel’s story teach us?

Monday

Read the Key Text. When we allow God to be who He is, in all of His glory, even the most cynical among us see that God is the God of all. The king recognized the power of God immediately as He worked through His servant Daniel.

Describe a time when God could work through you in the same way so that those around you can see what a powerful God He is.

Tuesday

Why was God able to give Daniel the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had? As the quote in the Flashlight section tells us, God has all this in His hand. Daniel trusted in God to be simply the God he knew had the power to see all that can be seen. This gives us a great deal of comfort in that we know that no matter what happens, God has this all in control!

Wednesday

So what is faith? (Reread Punch Lines and Other Eyes for some thoughts about faith.)

Faith is __________________________

It is sometimes believing that God has all of this life under His control. Enough even to give Daniel the dream, not just the interpretation of the king’s dream. If God can do that, how much more can He do for you?

Thursday

How do we test our faith in God? Sometimes it is as simple as trusting Him when you don’t feel like you should. Sometimes it is trusting Him when all you have left is that trust. Sometimes it is going forward in spite of your unbelief. God will not fail you. Believe and have faith in that!

Friday

What can you do this week that will provide you the opportunity to live by faith?

I believe that if you ask God for the opportunity to trust Him, the opportunity will show itself.

Faith is __________________________

For more info about the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 40.

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 familiar story can be approached in many ways. The Scripture portion used in the student lesson is the part of the story in which Nebuchadnezzar creates the golden statue formed after the one God had shown him in his dream. Then he demands that all worship this image at his command. Only the three Hebrew youth choose not to kneel in worship. Neither do they want the second chance Nebuchadnezzar offers them, implying that they don’t answer to him and therefore won’t be changing their minds (Dan. 3:16). The fire is heated up. Those carrying out Nebuchadnezzar’s orders die from the heat, but the three young men—having been joined in the fire by Jesus Himself—don’t even smell of fire when they finally come out at Nebuchadnezzar’s command.

The student lesson is focused on the idea that these young men were simultaneously existing in two different kingdoms: the earthly one ruled by Nebuchadnezzar, and the kingdom of God ruled by the King of kings and Lord of lords. They were wisely choosing to give their allegiance to, and to trust, the most powerful Ruler (the one who could actually keep them from smelling like smoke, let alone be killed by the fire), even though they did not know for sure that He would choose to spare them. This allegiance and trust is what will be needed as this type of scenario is replayed near the end of time. God has promised to be with us through the trials in the same way as He was with these young men.

Another interesting theme is the one of forced religion. Nebuchadnezzar tried to force everyone to worship his image—that he had copied from God’s design. And then when he admitted that God was truly more powerful than he was, he tried to force everyone to worship God—which was just as abominable to God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that they function in both a temporal and a spiritual kingdom. Times come when one must choose allegiance to the spiritual kingdom over the temporal—when they conflict. (Know)
• Sense the kingdom of God as a reality in which their lives function. (Feel)
• Create a personal reminder to help them visualize the reality of God’s kingdom. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Adversity/trial
• Worship
• Kingdom of God
• Courage
• 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? sect-

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
A preacher recently preached a sermon on a Bible story that is closely linked to this one—Daniel and the lions’ den. His sermon was titled “Whose Den Was It—Daniel’s or the Lions’?” His premise was that even though the devil is “a roaring lion” seeking to devour us, if we are “with God” in His kingdom, the Lion of the tribe of Judah is with us, and the supreme power in that den when Daniel was in there was God’s power. The lions who regularly resided in that den were, during that period of time at least, residing in a different kingdom. They were not the supreme authority about who got eaten and who didn’t.

This general principle can be applied to the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Just think about the physical reality of the fire. Who was the Supreme Commander to whom the three young men were paying due allegiance—the earthly power who couldn’t even keep his own soldiers from being killed by the heat, or the heavenly Power who didn’t even allow their silk robes to smell like smoke? If the young people can come to consider the sometimes tangible and concrete evidence of the power of God and the reality of His kingdom, they may be able to develop a trust that will see them through similar difficult times ahead of them.

**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.

- Whose original idea was the image in this story (see Daniel 2:28, 31)? (Point out that God was the author even of the idea that Nebuchadnezzar decided to pervert and make his own.)
  a. How “in control” was Nebuchadnezzar when he first saw this vision?
  b. How did he finally come to understand what the vision was all about?
  c. How might this story have been different without the previous story?
- Compare the image from the dream in chapter 2 and the image in this passage. What are the similarities? The differences? (Nebuchadnezzar copied God’s image, except for the details that showed that Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom would someday come to an end.)
  a. In what ways was Nebuchadnezzar trying to “rewrite” God’s prophecy?

**Illustration**

Share an illustration in your own words:

From your own life experience, something you have read recently in a Christian periodical, or an online mission story (www.adventistmission.org) share a story of God’s care and intervention that has a setting much more current than Bible times. The closer you can bring these truths about God to your students’ lives, the better.

The point is to make this experience as “real life” to the students as possible, encouraging them to trust in a kingdom and a power outside of themselves, and outside of the visible “reality” that they live in daily and often can’t see beyond.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

For many young people who have grown up in a Christian home, this story is almost too familiar to them now. It is intriguing, as a fairy tale is intriguing. They believe it along with the Creation story if they are from a conservative Christian background. But to benefit from the important lessons that they will need in their own difficult times, they should be guided to look at the story from a slightly different angle to get a fresh perspective on the timeless truth of God’s trustworthiness, power, and authority over everything.
b. How might God have intervened in Nebuchadnezzar’s self-worship even if there had not been a Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? How likely do you think it is that He would have done that?

c. In whose kingdom does this story take place? (Start your students thinking about the fact that God was ultimately in control. Look at the Punch Lines. From an earthly perspective and a simply physical point of view, it appeared that Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the kingdom of Babylon.)

- Who were the subjects of this kingdom? (Continue the line of discussion from the previous question.)
- To what kingdom did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego belong? (Their ultimate allegiance was to God. Part of the constitution of God’s kingdom is that we are to obey earthly kingdoms as long as they don’t directly violate the law of God, since, in reality, God has the power to set them up or set them down as He sees fit.)
- Why do you think the three said to the king, “We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter”?

(While some commentators have considered this an arrogant comment, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary points out that there are other ways of interpreting it. They did not need to defend themselves or to apologize, because the charge against them was true. They, however, did not intend to alter their course of action even though they did not know what the outcome might be.)

- Were they being insubordinate? (Point out that, while respectful, they were making it clear that they were functioning in the framework of another kingdom in which Nebuchadnezzar himself was actually the one being insubordinate.)
- Is it ever appropriate to be insubordinate to the ruler of the kingdom to which you belong? (Discuss the differences between the earthly and the spiritual kingdoms. Remind the students of what Jesus said in Matthew 22:15-22. This might be a good time to use the Rabbi 101 activity.)

Sharing Context and Background

“The fiery furnace was probably a brickkiln. Since all buildings were constructed of bricks, many of them of burned bricks, kilns were numerous in the vicinity of ancient Babylon. Excavations show that ancient brickkilns were similar to modern ones, which are found in that area in great numbers. These kilns are ordinarily cone-shaped structures built of bricks. The unbaked bricks to be fired line the inner walls. An opening on one side of the wall permits fuel to be thrown into the interior. Fuel consists of a mixture of crude oil and chaff. A tremendous heat is thus produced, and through 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.
the furnace, and their song of thanksgiving to God for deliverance.

“Few biblical stories have been as popular as this tale of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It is a story about the God of Israel who is more powerful than Nebuchadnezzar or any of his gods. It is a story of religious persecution and divine deliverance. More important, it is a story of a religious faith that does not surrender, a faith that endures even in the face of martyrdom” (Mills, Watson and Wilson, Richard, gen. ed. Mercer Commentary on the Bible [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995], pp. 712, 713).

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words. This is a repeat of the activity suggested for the students to do in the Friday portion of their lesson. If you have a class in which most of the students study their lesson each week (either before or after it is taught), this is a good time to compare and share ideas about this activity.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
The more we talk with God, study His Word, and actually test Him out, the more real His kingdom becomes to us and the more we trust Him. As we strengthen our “grasp” of God’s kingdom, the hold that the earthly kingdom has on us loosens. The more this can happen in our lives, the more prepared we will be to live in the reality of God’s kingdom, even when it is in conflict with the one we see all around us.

The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is a good example of respectful noncompliance with an earthly kingdom when it is necessary for the glory of God and His kingdom.

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Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Prophets and Kings, chapter 41.

*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.
choose your kingdom

flashlight

“In the closing period of earth’s history the Lord will work mightily. . . . He who walked with the Hebrew [youth] in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. . . . Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God’s saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself . . . able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him” (Prophets and Kings, p. 513).

keytext

“Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”

(Daniel 3:28, NIV)
what do you think?

Circle A if you agree, and D if you disagree with the statements below. Then write a number between one (very little) and five (very much) for how strongly you agree or disagree.

A  D  ___ When with a small group of close friends, it would be relatively easy for me to do what I thought was right, even if they didn’t.

A  D  ___ If I were in a large group with none of my friends, it would be difficult for me to do what I thought was right if everyone else didn’t think the same way.

A  D  ___ I am fine doing whatever the group I am with thinks is best as long as they are Christians.

The term theophany means "appearances of God." There are several foreshadowings of God or the preincarnate Christ in a visible form in the Old Testament. This story of His appearance in the fiery furnace is one of them. Nebuchadnezzar probably did not "recognize" the Son of God (verse 25) in the sense that he was given knowledge about what Jesus would look like when He took human form many years later. But Ellen White shares in our chapter for this week that the Hebrew young men had shared about the expected coming of the Son of God. And they represented by their lives “the principles of righteousness” so much that Nebuchadnezzar recognized their companion in the flames.

did you know?

So these men were brought before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, ‘Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?

“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.’

“Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. . . . The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

“Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, ‘Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire? . . . Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.’”

(Fairly 3:1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12-14, 16-20, 22-25, NIV)
**punch lines**

“They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers” (Revelation 17:14, NIV).

“He sets up kings and deposes them” (Daniel 2:21, NIV).

“Without inquiry he shatters the mighty and sets up others in their place” (Job 34:24, NIV).

“Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever” (Psalm 136:3, NIV).

“God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15, NIV).

**other eyes**

“A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow Him.”

“God grant that the kingdom of Jesus Christ may grow in his church on earth, God hasten the end of the kingdoms of this world, and establish his own kingdom in power and glory!”—Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 166).

“Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not whether they be clergymen or laymen, they alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth.”—John Wesley, 18th-century English minister and theologian.
Look over the statements in *What Do You Think?* and give some careful and honest thought about how you would respond in similar situations. Think of times in the past, or imagine situations in the future, that might test your response to these statements. Now read Daniel 3:16. These young men were not being arrogant. They knew they were guilty of the charge, but didn’t feel that they were guilty of insubordination to the kingdom in which they were functioning, or any unrighteous action. Why do you think they felt that way?

**Sunday**

Read *Into the Story* and then thoughtfully answer the questions in *Out of the Story*. Who was in charge in this story? To what kingdom were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego giving due respect? Consider where the original idea of a statue representing kingdoms came from. Consider who had no control over whom the fire did and did not kill. Which “authority” or “power” would it make more sense to align yourself with? Explain.

**Monday**

Consider the Key Text. Why do you think it was so easy for Nebuchadnezzar to make such an “about face” about who deserved respect and worship after the furnace incident? What previously gained knowledge do you think Nebuchadnezzar had about God? What previous experience do you think the young men had that would cause them to trust God’s plan even though they weren’t sure He would rescue them?

**Tuesday**

The Flashlight quotation tells us that we will face similar tests of our trust in God’s love for us and His ultimate plan and protection. What might give you the courage to act as the young men did in this story? What might you be able to do to strengthen that trust, and the chances that you would be able to function in the kingdom with the more powerful ruler when the time came?

**Wednesday**

In the Other Eyes section of the lesson are two statements by a German theologian named Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A book he wrote, *The Cost of Discipleship*, discusses what it is like to live as first a loyal citizen of God’s kingdom before being a loyal citizen of the kingdom (country, government) in which we live on earth. Why might we consider ourselves citizens, first of God’s kingdom, and then of our earthly countries? Read through the Punch Lines. Do they help you answer the question? Who would you rather give your ultimate allegiance to—someone whose guards were killed getting close to a fire, or Someone who kept His subjects from even smelling like smoke after they had been hanging out in the middle of the fire?

**Thursday**

Even though you may not have to choose between allegiance to God’s kingdom and allegiance to an earthly government, situations come up all the time that could be compared. For instance, when you are with a group of friends that has a “leader” other than yourself, how easy is it for you to choose not to go along with something the group decides to do? What other situations can you think of that might test your allegiance to God’s kingdom? How might it help you if you thought about which “ruler” or “leader” was actually the more powerful? (Write your answer in the Notes section in the back of this study guide.)

**Friday**

Draw a big circle, and around the outside write “Kingdom of God.” Now draw a medium-sized circle in the middle of the larger circle. Label it with the name of the country in which you live. Then draw a smaller circle in the middle of the medium-sized circle. Write your name inside that circle. That is how things would ideally line up in this world if earthly governments or kingdoms acknowledged who was really in charge of them (refer to the Punch Lines). Draw these circles again, but make the medium-sized circle partly inside of and partly outside of the “Kingdom of God” circle. In this new graphic, where will you put yourself? If you are lined up with the kingdom that is not completely lined up with God’s kingdom anymore, are you still lined up with God’s kingdom? It, of course, depends exactly how you drew the circles, but you can see where problems might arise. Draw another one of these representations and label it according to the Bible story today. Can you see now why Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said what they said in Daniel 3:16?

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**this week’s reading**

*Prophets and Kings*, chapter 41.
I. SYNOPSIS
Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed on several occasions the sovereign hand of God, and throughout those experiences responded with wisdom and submission to God's plan. Over time, the glory of his empire and the success of his rule caused pride in his heart to surge. Again, the king was given a dream that portrayed a tree growing full and rich, but being cut down and devastated at the word of a heavenly Messenger. Clearly the message depicted a person whose glory would change to shame. This seven-year season of madness would end with an unmistakable reality—his kingdom was not only temporary, but granted at the will of the Sovereign Lord. The entire chapter is what seems to be a personal testimony from the king himself offered to the world as a testimony to God's glory and mercy.

In this week’s lesson, Nebuchadnezzar’s humility check seems to be a foremost theme. But consider the merciful way God offers the king an opportunity to respond and accept the reality of God’s eternal kingdom. There is a soft spot in this great king’s heart. And while he was pagan from birth, the tendency of his heart continually bends toward the God in heaven. Perhaps another angle for this week’s lesson might even be the power of a great leader’s personal testimony. Babylon’s wealth and power is considered one of history’s wonders, and the fact that Nebuchadnezzar, in his wealth and wisdom, ultimately submitted his life to God is quite a statement.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Deepen their understanding of God’s plan to establish His kingdom on earth. (Know)
• Experience a sense of God's compassion and desire for everyone to trust in Him. (Feel)
• Choose to check their pride and embrace the humility which ultimately brings people to greatness. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Pride
• Confessions/repentance
• 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 the person they ranked “hardest to humble.” If they had a chance to speak truth to someone they thought was extremely powerful in the world today, who would they choose and what would they say?
Out of the Story for Teachers

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

- What words and themes seem to be repeated in this passage?
- As you read this story, highlight what you think is the key thought in this passage and why.
- Underline all of the words Nebuchadnezzar used to describe himself through this experience (good and bad).
- Read Daniel 4:10-18, list the specific points of the king’s dream, and write what you think each part means.
- How does Daniel respond to the king’s request and the meaning of the king’s dream?
- What other stories in Scripture does this event remind you of, and why? How are they similar and how are they different?
- What one word would you use to describe the essence of this story? Why?
- What do you think is the message in this story for... Leaders? Believers (like Daniel)? Young people today?
- In what ways do you see God’s mercy and grace revealed in this strange story? Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Acts 4; Daniel 1–3; Matthew 24.

Sharing Context and Background

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

The event of Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream is a timeless story of the conflict between God’s reign and the tentative rule of man. The first dream of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign found in Daniel 2 comes at the beginning of his leadership, whereas the dream in Daniel 4 emerges at the end of his time as ruler in Babylon. Nevertheless, the central issue of God’s sovereign rule is the same.

The structure of chapter four is interesting in that the story begins and ends with what some scholars claim as songs of praise. Sandwiched in the middle is the personal testimony of a king who conveys frankly the story of his pride, fall, and submission to the rule of God. Zdravko Stefanovic states: “The chapter was
intended to be an open letter that was to be read public-ly throughout the Neo-Babylonian Empire” (Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 148 [Pacific Press, 2007]). Stefanovic adds: “The main event in the chapter is left undated, yet the context of the story, described in the king’s own words, betrays the era of ‘Nebuchadnezzar the builder’—the second phase of this king’s reign, which was characterized by great building projects, mostly in the city of Babylon. Most commentators agree that the chapter should be dated to the closing years of Nebuchadnezzar’s long reign” (Stefanovic, p. 148). Clearly, the problem with pride is one that monarchs and mainstream people throughout history continually struggle with.

Part of getting perspective on the significance of the king’s dream in chapter 4 has to do with understanding the timing of the other events in the book of Daniel. The events in chapters 1–3 occurred in the first part of the Babylonian captivity, whereas the dream that came to Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4 occurs toward the end of his 42-year reign. In verse 4 it says that the king was “at rest” which “indicates that the king was now in undisturbed possession of his kingdom” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 788).

One interesting facet in this story has to do with speaking truth to power. In ancient times it was common to flatter their sovereign leaders instead of telling them the truth. Clearly, anyone hearing this dream of the glorious tree being cut down and broken is going to sense the doom in the dream. Even the king himself knew it was bad because the text claims: “I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me” (Daniel 4:5, NIV). But the group of “experts” did not offer an interpretation either because they did not know or they knew all too well and didn’t want to be the ones to hand such bad news over to the king. Notice that the King James Version translates it a little differently:

• “but they could not interpret it for me” (NIV).
• “they did not make known unto me the interpre-
tation thereof” (KJV).

Herein lies the salient quality of a prophet: A man or woman called by God to speak for God.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

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

Invite students to think of an important lesson that needs to be taught in the world today and couch it in a parable. Have them divide into groups of two to four to devise a story that teaches, and introduce the parable, saying, “I was asleep when I received a dream. . .” Have the students share their dreams and invite the others to interpret. Or, if there is not much time, challenge the students to modernize this story in Daniel 4 as if it were to happen today.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The most important part of Nebuchadnezzar’s story is also the most important part of our story: what we think and say about God in the end. Notice Nebuchadnezzar’s last words recorded in history:

“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” (Daniel 4:37, NIV).

It has been said: “There are two things sure in this life: (1) There is a God, and (2) you are not Him.” While very few ever feel tempted to claim to be God, we often live our deepest loyalties to ourselves. Perhaps this thoughtful king learned a lesson for us all: no matter how great, powerful, smart, or whatever you become, God will always be God. The most amazing part of this truth is that God loves humanity so much that He goes to some amazing lengths to make sure we know who He is. Our eternal lives depend on our response to God’s great gift of mercy. So, like King Nebuchadnezzar, what would be your final thoughts on the matter? In the same way this whole chapter is a personal testimony—what is yours?

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 42.

*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.
humility check

“God’s purpose that the greatest kingdom in the world should show forth His praise was now fulfilled. This public proclamation, in which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the mercy and goodness and authority of God, was the last act of his life recorded in sacred history” (Prophets and Kings, p. 521).

scripture story: Daniel 4.
commentary: Prophets and Kings, chapter 42.

now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.” (Daniel 4:37, NIV)
Rank the following:
Which person do you think would have the hardest time being humble (1 hardest, 5 the least)? Why?

- President or leader of a country
- Famous movie star
- Champion athlete
- Nobel Peace Prize winner
- Business tycoon

The word “Babylon” means “the gate of God.” One of the things Babylon is famous for was its legendary hanging gardens during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. While no one has any evidence of the hanging gardens, the folklore describes gardens that were suspended in such a way that it looked as if the plants and vines were virtually floating.

“Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

“At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’

“At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”

(Daniel 4, NIV)
other eyes

“A mountain shames a molehill until they are both humbled by the stars.”—Unknown.

“To be clothed with humility does not mean that we are to be dwarfs in intellect, deficient in aspiration, and cowardly in our lives, shunning burdens lest we fail to carry them successfully. Real humility fulfills God’s purposes by depending upon His strength.”—Ellen G. White, 19th-century inspired writer and church cofounder.

“Pride makes us artificial; humility makes us real.”—Thomas Merton, 20th-century Roman Catholic monk and author.
Read and respond to the What Do You Think? activity, and reflect on what Jesus said about the centurion in Luke 7:1-10. While the centurion is not the leader of an entire empire, he might be tempted to be self-absorbed about his authority. Examine the centurion’s viewpoint on authority and imagine how Nebuchadnezzar’s story might be different if he had the same spirit as the centurion.

Get Into the Story this week by answering the questions in the Out of the Story section in this lesson. If you are reading this story for the first time, what about this passage impressed you the most? Why? If you have read this story before, what new insights did you get out of the passage? It was traditional to record only good things about yourself that will be remembered in history, but Nebuchadnezzar immortalizes this seemingly embarrassing event in Scripture. In your own words, what lesson do you think Nebuchadnezzar learned?

Read the Key Text in this week’s lesson from Daniel 4:37. Think of a time in your life when this statement that the king makes would have been easy for you to say. Also, think of a season in your experience when this verse would be very difficult to say. Memorize this passage or write it down where you will see it often. But in place of Nebuchadnezzar, put your own name to personalize the passage to you.

Read the Flashlight quote from Prophets and Kings. Clearly, God’s purpose is not to break down great kingdoms but simply to get them to recognize where every good gift comes from—Him! Throughout history, God has blessed great kings such as Nebuchadnezzar, whether they are pagan or believers. But notice the last line in this quote: “This public proclamation . . . was the last act of his life recorded in sacred history.” If it were to be recorded for all to read, what would you want your last and final testimony to be?

Read the Punch Lines for this week and find the passage that is speaking to your heart today. Perhaps you have aspired to greatness at times and need to be reminded that while God’s desire is that you become great, you always remember what true greatness is. In light of these passages, how would you define true greatness? Think about someone you know who is great, but also humble, and say a prayer of thanks for them today.

Nebuchadnezzar’s lesson in humility taught a lesson to the king: Humble yourself or be humbled. Think about an area of your life that you are really confident about (e.g., sports, music, school). Practice humility by asking someone else for advice or instruction in an area of your strength.

Area of strength:

Advice given:

Take time to reflect on God’s patient work to bring Nebuchadnezzar to the truth about who he was and who God is. The same God, loved earnestly, works to bless His children with both struggles and success to teach that His kingdom is eternal. Scan through your experience and consider how God has led you to a knowledge of His rule.


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.
It is instructive that Daniel 4 closes with a humbled King Nebuchadnezzar, newly awakened from a bout of temporary insanity, while Daniel 5 begins with another puffed-up monarch soon to get his comeuppance. Belshazzar learned nothing from the experience of his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar’s run-in with God. This is evidenced not only by the lavish party that he threw for his well-heeled friends and compatriots, but his behavior at the gathering. The party was no doubt “jumping” before he decided to “bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his [grand]father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them” (Daniel 5:2). This act of defiance was the final straw that led God to literally write the end of his kingdom, the fulfillment of which happened that very night.

There are several lessons that your students can glean from this awesome biblical narrative. The story of Belshazzar teaches us that while God may tarry, His judgments are no less sure. There are consequences to our actions. It also teaches that lives dedicated to pleasure-seeking often end in destruction, that sacred instruments of worship are not to be tampered with, that choosing the right friends is important, as is being a positive influence on them, and the importance of speaking truth to power no matter what the consequences or bribes.

Perhaps the greatest lesson to be learned, however, is that God is sovereign over all, and we forget about Him at our own peril.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Understand that our motives and behavior matter to God and are the evidence upon which we are judged. (Know)
• Sense the importance of heeding God’s warning and counsel. (Feel)
• Make a decision to choose activities that will ennoble and uplift them. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Consequences
• Entertainment and leisure
• God (existence of a sovereign)

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

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

This activity is meant to get the class thinking about happenings that can severely alter the course of one’s life. After the students have given their responses, ask a volunteer to briefly describe a time in their life when something truly life-changing occurred.

Make the point that life-altering events often come with little or no warning, but the judgments of God
rarely come this way. Belshazzar’s failure to heed God’s warning led to his destruction.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
A U.S. Air Force transport plane with its captain and five crew members was flying over Alaska in the mid-1950s when they entered an unusually fierce snowstorm. The navigator contacted an air base only to be told that he had veered several hundred miles off course. Correct coordinates were given to the navigator, who continued to insist that his own calculations could not be that far off. Soon the plane ran low on fuel.

The six men decided to abandon the plane and parachute to safety, but because of the -70 degree Fahrenheit temperature and winds that gusted to 50 mph, they were all frozen within minutes of hitting the ground. A friend of mine was part of the rescue team that discovered and retrieved the bodies three days later. As a result of the navigator’s pride, five other people went to their deaths.

Proverbs 12:15 (NKJV) tells us that “the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” The results may not always be so dramatic, but we must all be careful to seek the counsel of God and wise individuals before making decisions of lasting significance. (Source: Dave McPherson, senior pastor, Maranatha Bible Church, Louisiana.)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
God sends us warnings that we might yield to His Holy Spirit, who alone can give us the strength and power to correct our course. Daniel 5 demonstrates in stark relief the consequences of ignoring God’s warnings. It was no more inevitable that Belshazzar should perish in God’s overthrow of Babylon to free the Israelites, than it was inevitable that Nebuchadnezzar should perish because of his sin of pride. As you prepare to explore this biblical narrative, delve into it with the understanding that God truly is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

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

- The Old Testament is replete with stories of sin and its consequences. What makes the story of Belshazzar’s rise and fall unique?
- The handwriting on the wall spoke of God numbering the days of Belshazzar’s reign. Do you believe that God numbers each of our lives? Is there other scriptural support for this idea?
- Underline the parts of the narrative where power and influence are seen.
- Circle parts of the story that are new to you, the parts that deepen your understanding of the narrative.
- What parallels can be drawn between what people in Daniel’s time considered enjoyable entertainment and what people do today to entertain themselves?
- What actions of Belshazzar’s do you think especially outraged God? Why did these behaviors upset Him?
- What is Daniel’s chief role in this story? What parallels can be drawn between the role that Daniel is playing in Babylon’s kingly court and our role in society today?
- What part of Daniel’s actions can be likened to that of Christ while He ministered on earth?
- Daniel’s reputation for interpretation was well known. How did Daniel prevent this special gift of God from becoming a source of personal pride?
- Pay close attention to Belshazzar’s reaction to the handwriting on the wall. What does his reaction tell us about the power of God to humble the greatest of us in a moment?
- In what had Belshazzar placed his security?
- Belshazzar’s religious sellouts were unable to read the writing on the wall. Why didn’t God write in a language that all could understand?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Ecclesiastes 12; Romans 1; Psalm 51.

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. Babylon now. If you want to get to Babylon today you’ll need to go to the nation of Iraq. You’ll need to get on the road to Babylon, the
main Baghdad-Hilla highway. You'll have to get by several checkpoints of armed guards, not to mention the ferocious traffic that narrows from four lanes to two lanes without breaking speed. After a while you'll come to the fertile Mesopotamian plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. There you will find a mound with a few mud-brick buildings, all broken down and in much disrepair. This is all that remains today of mighty Babylon.

More than 100 years before its destruction, Jeremiah wrote this: “Babylon’s thick wall will be leveled and her high gates set on fire; the peoples exhaust themselves for nothing, the nations’ labor is only fuel for the flames” (Jeremiah 51:58). Isaiah added, “She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations” (Isaiah 13:20).

2. Daniel’s contemporaries. The Israelites who were taken into captivity by the Babylonians were not left without comfort and divine instruction. God raised up faithful servants, such as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who modeled the behavior they were to adopt while in exile. But even before the captivity, Jeremiah’s voice could be heard weeping and calling the people to repentance. Jeremiah’s ministry continued into the first part of the Babylonian captivity. There were others whom God sent to His people. During the captivity, Ezekiel was a prophet and priest who ministered during this time. He exhorted the stubborn Israelites, warning them of Jerusalem’s impending destruction, and that God expected their obedience and worship while under Babylonian control.

3. Sin against knowledge. Should Belshazzar have known the true God? Absolutely. Here’s what Ellen White says on this point: “Many had...
been his opportunities to know the divine will and to understand his responsibility of rendering obedience thereto. He had known of his grandfather’s banishment, by the decree of God, from the society of men; and he was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion and miraculous restoration. But Belshazzar allowed the love of pleasure and self-glorification to efface the lessons that he should never have forgotten. He wasted the opportunities graciously granted him, and neglected to use the means within his reach for becoming more fully acquainted with truth” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 522, 523).

4. The final straw. The act that doomed Belshazzar and Babylon to infamy was the misuse of the gold and silver goblets from the old Jerusalem temple plundered by King Nebuchadnezzar. Not only did Belshazzar and his guests drink wine from them, they “praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone” (Daniel 5:4). It was after this act of worship that “suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared” (verse 5).

The question of worship has always been at the center of human existence. From the Fall to the end of time, whom we choose to worship is the most important question we must answer. The first angel’s message of Revelation 14:7 commands humanity to respect the God who made everything, and worship Him.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

This week’s lesson urges us to make positive changes before we face the consequences of our behavior, but many teens don’t know how to start. Talk through the following general steps to making lasting change, then ask God to bless the students as they chart new courses in their lives.

1. Decide firmly to make a change and ask God what in your life needs to change.
2. Spend 15 minutes each day in prayer asking God for strength and wisdom to implement your change.
3. Set goals and write them down on paper.
4. Identify one small step you can make toward your first goal and do it. Continue this way each day. Ask someone to help you.
5. When you become afraid, find a Bible promise that fits your need, then ask God to help you.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The rise and fall of Belshazzar makes for fascinating reading. We are tempted to laugh as we picture the awesome scene of a disembodied hand writing on a wall in the middle of a big-time party. We cannot help smiling at the sight of Belshazzar’s knees, knocking violently.

But when we apply the lessons of this story to our lives, our hearts are humbled. Through Belshazzar God is warning us to remember Him in all our dealings, that He alone is sovereign over all and can with impunity bring an end to sin at any moment. God is exhorting us to worship Him and to put away the gods that please and entertain us.

In Daniel 5 God also summons us to the holy calling that He gave Daniel during his prophetic ministry. We are to shine so brightly that when the world is groping in darkness—as Belshazzar and his guests were that fateful night—they will call for us. We are called to be faithful witnesses for 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 43.

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In his pride and arrogance, with a reckless feeling of security Belshazzar 'made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.' All the attractions that wealth and power could command added splendor to the scene. Beautiful women with their enchantments were among the guests in attendance at the royal banquet. Men of genius and education were there. Princes and statesmen drank wine like water and reveled under its maddening influence" (Prophets and Kings, p. 523).

"This is the inscription that was written: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin. This is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting." (Daniel 5:25-27, NIV)
Life-changing events happen in every life. On a scale of 1 (most difficult to deal with) to 7 (not a problem), rate your reaction to the following life-changing experiences:

___ A. Your best friend’s mom dies.
___ B. You receive several rejection letters from colleges you hoped to attend.
___ C. Your parents decide to divorce.
___ D. Your pet dies.
___ E. Your parents take away your car.
___ F. Several schoolmates beat you up.
___ G. A close friend betrays you.

Explain your choices of the most and least life-changing events.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

did you know?

Did you know that at the time that Belshazzar, king of Babylon, threw his ill-fated party, the nation of Babylon was under siege from the Medes and Persians? King Darius and his mighty armies had cut off Babylon’s ability to get food and other supplies in or out of Babylon. In spite of this impending doom, Belshazzar chose to party and have a good time.

“King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

“Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.

“The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, ‘Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.’

“Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled. The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. ‘O king, live forever!’ she said. ‘Don’t be alarmed! Don’t look so pale! There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king, I say—appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners.

“This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.’”

(Daniel 5:1-12, NIV)
punch lines

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18, NIV).

“Then men will say, ‘Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth’” (Psalm 58:11, NIV).

“I am with you and will save you,’ declares the Lord. ‘Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished’” (Jeremiah 30:11, NIV).

“Then Daniel answered the king, ‘You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means’” (Daniel 5:17, NIV).

“I will rise up against them,’ declares the Lord. . . . ‘I will cut off from Babylon her name and survivors’” (Isaiah 14:22, NIV).

“By living fully, recognizing that all we do is by His power, we honor God; He in turn blesses us.”—Rebecca Laird, current U.S. Christian author.

“Life is a long lesson in humility.”
—James M. Barrie, 19th-20th-century Scottish dramatist and novelist.

“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”—Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16th president of the U.S.
Sabbath
Complete the What Do You Think? activity. Which experience did you feel would change your life the most? would be the most difficult to overcome? What life-altering experience happened in the life of Belshazzar? (Daniel 5:4-6).

How did Belshazzar react to this supernatural occurrence? __________________________
How do you think the rest of the guests responded? __________________________
Why do you think God chose to intervene in Belshazzar’s life in the way that He did? __________________________

Sunday
Read the Into the Story section of this week’s lesson and respond to the Out of the Story section. Daniel 5 paints a picture of two very different individuals—Daniel and Belshazzar. How would you describe Daniel in a sentence or two? __________________________

How would you describe the kind of person Belshazzar was? __________________________

Describe an aspect of God’s character that comes through in the story. __________________________

If you had to share with a friend the most important lesson that God wants us to learn from this Bible episode, what would you say? __________________________

Monday
Check out this week’s Key Text. Daniel shared with King Belshazzar the meaning of the writing on the wall. When God wrote to Belshazzar, “[I have] numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end,” do you think Belshazzar knew that his kingdom and his life would end that same night? __________________________

What does God tell us to do in Psalm 90:12? __________________________

What do you think God is asking us to do? __________________________

Tuesday
Read this week’s Flashlight quotation from Ellen G. White. What are some of the activities that were going on at Belshazzar’s big party? __________________________

How did alcohol influence Belshazzar’s decision making that fateful night? __________________________

How do you resist the pressure to use drugs or alcohol? __________________________

How do you go about choosing positive friends to hang with? __________________________

Wednesday
Read the Other Eyes. How do you think power can test a man’s or woman’s character? __________________________

What admonition from Scripture could help remedy that temptation? __________________________

Thursday
Read Daniel 5:13-17. Daniel’s role in the unfolding drama of Belshazzar’s dark night is a crucial one. What did Belshazzar promise to give Daniel if he could successfully interpret the writing on the wall? __________________________

What was Daniel’s reply? __________________________

Daniel was summoned by the king to interpret a coded message from God. If God simply wanted to deliver a message to Belshazzar, why didn’t He just write in a language that Belshazzar could understand? __________________________

Why did God involve Daniel in this process? Why does He choose to use us to warn others of destruction when He could do it Himself? __________________________

Friday
Ellen G. White comments: “Many had been his opportunities to know the divine will and to understand his responsibility of rendering obedience thereto. He had known of his grandfather’s banishment, by the decree of God, from the society of men; and he was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion and miraculous restoration. But Belshazzar allowed the love of pleasure and self-glorification to efface the lessons that he should never have forgotten. That which Nebuchadnezzar had finally gained at the cost of untold suffering and humiliation, Belshazzar passed by with indifference” (Prophets and Kings, pp. 522, 523).

What is something that you enjoy doing that may be preventing you from hearing God’s voice of warning? __________________________


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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Darius the Mede became king of Babylon sometime after the Babylonians were overthrown by the Medo-Persians. Darius immediately divided the kingdom into provinces—each governed by a prince. There were 120 princes in all, and three governors were set over them. Daniel was the first of the three governors selected. And Daniel had a more “excellent spirit” than all the others. For this reason, King Darius thought to put Daniel in charge of the whole kingdom.

We get a glimpse of Daniel’s excellent spirit in the very beginning of his exile from Jerusalem. As a very young man, Daniel showed his loyalty to God over man by choosing, along with his three companions, not to eat from King Nebuchadnezzar’s table, which was lavish with impure and unhealthful food and drink. Instead, Daniel asked for the natural food that God had intended for mankind to eat and water to drink. As a result Daniel and his friends were stronger and in better health than those who ate from the king’s table, and the Lord blessed them with “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.”

Daniel continued to show integrity throughout his life and remained faithful to God. Later, when he heard of the decree that no one in the kingdom was to pray to anyone except King Darius for 30 days, Daniel’s trust in God was not shaken. Even in the face of death, he continued to remain faithful in prayer to his God—the God of heaven. The Lord honored Daniel’s faithfulness, and delivered him from the hand of his enemies.

The teacher should discuss the importance of maintaining a consistent prayer life, which includes talking to the Lord, as well as listening to His Spirit speak to the heart. It is this unceasing two-way communication with the Father that will allow us to develop an “excellent spirit”—one that is obedient to the Lord in the face of all difficulties and trying experiences.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand the importance of being loyal to God. (Know)
• Trust that the Lord will keep His promises to help us in difficult circumstances. (Feel)
• Choose to show their love for God by obeying His Word. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Prayer
• Integrity
• Emotions
• Persecution

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 the students divide into small groups of two or three. Each group will discuss the scenarios given in the What Do You Think? section, and write down the group’s responses. After a few minutes let each group take a turn sharing their responses with the class. If the class is not large enough to divide into groups, give class members a few minutes to reflect on the What Do You Think? section and write down their individual answers. Then ask two or three people to share their responses with the class.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of a girl who lost her library book. She searched everywhere but could not find it. “Did you pray about it?” her mother asked. “No,” she replied, but thought to herself, I don’t think God cares about lost library books. She began to clean her room, hoping the book would show up. She remembered the discussion in her Sabbath School class about the universe and how powerful God is. The teacher talked about the speed of light, and said that it would take 20 billion years for man to travel across the whole universe. Sarah thought, If God is that powerful, maybe He can help me find my book.

Sarah searched the rest of the house but still could not find the library book. “Have you asked God to help you?” her mother asked again. Sarah laughed. “God is too busy to keep track of little things like that.” Her mother looked serious. “The Lord cares, even about little things,” she told Sarah. “The Bible tells us that He knows how many hairs are on our heads. He loves you 10 million billion times more than you can imagine. Ask for His help, and maybe the book will show up where you least expect it.” Sarah went to her room and prayed, “Lord, if You are not too busy, please help me find my book.”

Later that evening, Sarah went to her little sister’s room to read her a bedtime story. After the story, Sarah tucked her sister in, and there under the covers was Sarah’s library book.—Adapted from Jerry D. Thomas, Great Stories for Kids, book 4, “Ten Million Billion,” p. 30 (Pacific Press Publishing Association).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

God does care about little things. He cares enough to help us with small problems as well as bigger problems. The Lord also cares about the choices we make. Throughout our lives we are faced with choices—choices that shape our characters, choices that determine what our futures will be. Daniel’s choices led him to a position of recognition and authority. Even more than that, Daniel’s choices led him into a trusting relationship with God. Not only did Daniel trust in the Lord, but the Lord could count on Daniel. Daniel was obedient even in the face of death, and the Lord delivered him from death.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• What was it about Daniel that impressed King Darius? Name some specific characteristics that might cause the king to trust Daniel to rule the whole kingdom?
• How do you think Daniel responded to the king’s recognition?
• Even though Daniel was a Hebrew captive in a foreign land, he was given a high position in the kingdom. What does this teach us about being faithful to God?
• What was the motivation of the other princes and governors who wanted to bring an accusation against Daniel?
• Think of some life choices we must make that will determine our loyalty to God or to man. Share with the class.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Joshua 24:15; Psalm 50:15; Daniel 6:16; Matthew 22:37; John 15:14.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. Daniel was an exile from Jerusalem. As we read the first chapter of Daniel we learn that he was one of those who had been taken captive when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Jerusalem. It was somewhere around 70 years later that he was faced with the decision to obey God or to be thrown into the den of lions. Review and discuss the history of the Babylonian captivity of the Hebrews and subsequent events in the life of Daniel that led up to
the lions’ den. (Note: use the following texts to help the class understand the 70-year prophecy of Jeremiah. Around the time that Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den, the Hebrews were at the end of the 70 years: 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21; Jeremiah 25:11, 12; 29:10; Daniel 5:30, 31; 6:1-5; 9:1, 2.)

2. Have the class compare and discuss Daniel’s story with the story of Joseph. What are the similarities? (See Genesis 37:18-20, 28; 39:1-23.)

3. We are in spiritual bondage. Everyone in the human race is taken captive at birth. And we are faced with choices—to eat at the king’s table or eat the food God has given, to worship the gods of this world or honor the God of heaven, to give in to temptation or obey the Word of God. Discuss with the class the similarities between Daniel’s experience and our experience as Christians living in a sinful world that is not our home.

4. Each of the kings of Babylon had great respect for Daniel and trusted him. They knew of his loyalty to his God, and witnessed the power of God in his life. (See Daniel 4:18; 5:11-14; 6:3.) King Darius saw an “excellent spirit” in Daniel. Darius not only trusted Daniel, because he was upright and honest, but he admired Daniel as well. Show how loyalty to God can also gain the respect of those who do not know God. Discuss with the class.

5. Even though Daniel had done nothing wrong, the princes of the kingdom set out to find fault in him. When they could find nothing to accuse him of, they made something up. We are sometimes faced with situations where we are treated unfairly or accused wrongly. And in many cases there is nothing we can humanly do to defend ourselves, as in the case of Daniel and Joseph and others in the Bible. What does this teach us about putting our trust in man? How should we relate to those who treat us

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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.
wrong? Go over the Out of the Story section in the student’s lesson with the class.

6. Daniel knew the importance of prayer. Each day he looked toward Jerusalem and prayed to the God of heaven (Daniel 6:10). By having a consistent prayer life, he developed a close friendship with God. He knew he could trust the Lord in every situation. First Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to “pray without ceasing” (KJV). In your own words describe what this means.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask class members to stand and each person to move to another seat. Then ask two people to switch seats. Ask two different people to switch seats. Now (if possible) ask everyone to get up and turn their chairs around to face the opposite direction. (Or ask everyone to stand and face the opposite direction.) Next, have everyone face the front again. Ask someone in the class to describe what they did in this activity. Talk about changes. Everything in life changes, but the Lord remains the same. His Word stands forever and His promises are sure. The Lord also wants to depend on us to remain the same, to remain loyal to Him, even when we are faced with changes or difficult circumstances.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The Bible says to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37, NKJV). Love is an action word. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 we find a list of some of the actions of love. Our love for God can be seen in what we say and do. When we love others, when we treat others with kindness, we are also showing our love for God. But the greatest test of our love for the Lord is our obedience. Remember the words of Jesus: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15, NKJV). Determine with all your heart to show your love for the Lord by obeying God rather than man.

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Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Prophets and Kings, chapter 44.

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“God did not prevent Daniel’s enemies from casting him into the lions’ den; He permitted evil angels and wicked men thus far to accomplish their purpose; but it was that He might make the deliverance of His servant more marked, and the defeat of the enemies of truth and righteousness more complete. ‘Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee’ (Psalm 76:10), the psalmist has testified. Through the courage of this one man who chose to follow right rather than policy, Satan was to be defeated, and the name of God was to be exalted and honored” (Prophets and Kings, p. 543).
What would you do in the following situations?

1. Someone in your class cheats on a test using the answers from your paper, without you knowing it. Later the teacher accuses you of cheating and gives you a zero for the test. The other student does not admit to cheating and gets a passing grade. What would you do?

2. Someone tells your best friend something about you that is not true, and your friend stops talking to you. The person who was dishonest becomes good friends with your best friend. What would you do?

The lion is often thought of as a symbol of power, nobility, and courage. Lions have a social system based on teamwork, and live in groups called prides. The teamwork of the pride is evident in their hunting methods. The female lions of the group work together to track and overpower their prey. The lions in the den of Daniel 6 worked as a team to overpower Daniel’s adversaries and broke them into pieces before they even hit the bottom of the den. (See Daniel 6:24.)

“IT PLEASED DARIUS TO APPOINT”

120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. . . . Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, ‘We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.’

“So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: ‘O King Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, pre-
“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9, NKJV).

“The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. At the king’s command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.” (Daniel 6:1–24, NIV)

After reading the story in Daniel 6, answer the following questions.

Have you ever been wrongfully accused? How did you handle it? What would you do next time?

The princes and governors had a plan in Daniel 6, but God had a different plan. What was God’s plan?

Circle the words that show the things that make up an excellent spirit. Cross out the words that are left.

faithfulness prayer jealousy
loyalty greed deception
honesty pride kindness patience

What does the story teach us about being faithful to God?

“The reputation of a thousand years may be determined by the conduct of one hour.” —Japanese proverb.

“Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.” —William Shakespeare, 16th-17th-century English dramatist and poet.

“Prayer may not change things for you, but it for sure changes you for things.” —Samuel M. Shoemaker, 19th-century U.S. clergyman.

“The trouble with our praying is, we just do it as a means of last resort.” —Will Rogers, 19th-20th-century U.S. actor and humorist.
Trusting God the way that Daniel did comes from having a personal connection with Him. It comes from daily prayer and studying God’s Word, and the determination to obey His will.

Read the Key Text of the lesson again. Then reflect on your own experiences. Do you believe that God is able to deliver you from problems or difficult situations? Name something in your life that you would like to be delivered from or that you want the Lord to help you with.

Tuesday

In the Flashlight section we read that “God did not prevent Daniel’s enemies from casting him into the lions’ den.” Instead of removing the danger, the Lord used it to show His power to deliver His servant. Just as in Daniel’s case, God does not always prevent bad things from happening to us. In many cases, the Lord uses our experiences for our own good, or to bring about some future blessing. We may not understand why things happen the way they do, but like Daniel, we must trust that the Lord has our best interest in mind. Can you think of other Bible characters who were treated wrong but in the end were blessed by God? (See Genesis 37:28 and 1 Samuel 19:1, 2 for two examples.)

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________

Wednesday

Review the verses listed in the Punch Lines section. Some of the key words in these verses are listed on the left below. Draw a line to connect the words on the left to the synonyms that match on the right.

courage  shelter  set free
strength  brave  power
deliver  faith
refuge
trust

How many of the Punch Line verses are promises?

Which verse is a prayer?

Thursday

When we are faced with danger or with a difficult situation it is natural to become fearful—especially if we cannot see a solution to the problem. List some specific things you can do to overcome fear:

_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________

Fearfulness comes as a result of doubting God. What can we do when faced with doubt? (See Mark 9:24.)

_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________

Friday

Standing for what is right can be a hard choice to make. Many things prevent a person from doing the right thing—wanting to be like everyone else, wanting to be accepted by others. Sometimes doing what is right means missing out on something. The choice to keep the Sabbath holy might mean missing out on certain school activities. The choice to live healthfully might mean missing out on some favorite foods. The choice to accept and treat everyone the same might mean not being popular with certain people. What are you willing to miss out on, for the sake of doing the right thing and choosing to obey God’s Word?

_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________

_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________

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this week’s reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 44.

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

In Daniel 7 God takes Daniel into vision and shows him a troubling dream filled with weird-looking, fearsome creatures. First the lion, then the bear, a leopard, and a dragon-like beast that starts out with 10 horns and later loses three to a little horn with eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks boastfully (Daniel 7:8). Whew!

As Daniel peered through the scene he saw thrones set in place and the Ancient of Days having taken His seat. The scene is a cosmic courtroom, and the books of humanity’s record are open (Daniel 7:9, 10). The vision culminates in a blaze of glory as the fourth beast is slain and the Son of man, Jesus, is “given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him” (Daniel 7:14, NIV), and His kingdom lasts forever.

This chapter of the Bible sets the Word of God apart from all other sacred texts because it points the way to the end of time and the ushering in of God’s eternal kingdom. Your students must know that in Daniel 7 God has allowed them to peer into the future, to get a good look at how the world will end. He wants them to know that just as God through Jesus has saved us from the power of sin, one day He will save us from the presence of sin. Thus, Daniel 7 is more than strange beasts; it is an unveiling of history designed to prepare us to meet God and give us hope as we wait for His soon appearing.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Know that the vision of Daniel 7 is God’s way of letting us know that He will save His people from the presence of sin into a kingdom without end. (Know)
- Trust God with their future lives since He holds the future. (Feel)
- Choose to accept God’s invitation to be ready for His imminent return. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Hope
- Salvation (experience of)*
- Restoration

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.

Share the following answers to the What Do You Think? quiz.

1. Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp. (DEC), maker of big business mainframe computers, arguing against the PC in 1977.
students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

• Underline the central theme of Daniel 7 as you see it, and prepare to share it in your own words.
• What surprised you in Daniel 7? What made you want to study deeper?
• If prophecy is one of the things that separate the Bible from all other forms of literature, including other sacred texts, how much time should we devote to its study?
• Is there a promise in Daniel 7 that spoke to you of God’s love? Which one is it, and why do you think it captured your attention?
• Place an X at the points in the narrative where you see God’s grace. Is there grace in Daniel 7?
• Some lament the fact that the distinctive prophecies of the book of Daniel are rarely taught or preached. Is that true and if so, what can be done to make these prophecies more engaging to young, as well as older minds?
• Daniel describes God’s throne as engulfed by fire. What do you think this imagery is meant to communicate about God?
• What are some of the objections people might raise to “our” Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Daniel 7? Should we respond, and if so, how?
• The little horn of the fourth beast is a religio-political power with eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks boastfully. What power is being referred to here?
• If we are saved by grace through faith, does an understanding of these prophecies matter to our ultimate salvation? Isn’t living the life of discipleship to Christ enough?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

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

The Word of God is marvelously concentrated, designed to help us live victoriously in this life and prepare for the life to come. In Daniel 7 God gives us a prophetic view of the nations that would rise and fall at the end of time, the judgment of the wicked, the salvation of the righteous, and the ushering in of God’s everlasting kingdom. The momentous events of Daniel 7 remind us that God is soon to return for His children. The question is, however, “When He comes what will He find us doing?”

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.

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. Why so cryptic, God? Much of the writing of the book of Daniel is symbolic. God unfolded for Daniel critical truths about how the future would unfold and usher in His kingdom, but God did so in a manner that was, well, less than clear. There were reasons for this. God did not
want His prophecies to be readily tampered with by nations to which they referred. For instance, in the dream God gave to Nebuchadnezzar found in Daniel 2, the king could not recall the dream, let alone understand its interpretation. By not divulging all the particulars to Nebuchadnezzar, God set the scene for His servant Daniel to carry out His divine will without any interruption by Babylon’s monarch.

God also used symbolic language because through such language He was able to compress huge swathes of time without having to unfold minute details that would inevitably overwhelm His human servants.

2. Understanding the Symbols. If much of Daniel is symbolic, where do we find the key that unlocks the symbols? Why, in the Word of God, of course. Here are some of the symbols found in Daniel 7 and what they mean:

- **Sea** (Daniel 7:2) means multitudes, people, nations (Revelation 17:15).
- **Beasts** (Daniel 7:3) means kingdoms or empires.
- **Lion, bear, leopard, and dragon-like beast** (Daniel 7:3–8) represent four kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Daniel 7:17).
- **Ten horns** (Daniel 7:7, 8) means 10 kings or kingdoms.
- **A little horn** (Daniel 7:8) represents a power that is not political, but spiritual in nature (Daniel 7:24, first part).

**Eyes like a man** (Daniel 7:8). Eyes indicate

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Keeping It Real**

One of the constant struggles that teachers face is how to make what they are teaching relevant and interesting to their students. Not only do the students in the class have a somewhat fractured attention span, but in most cases they will be oblivious to the material.

To make the material you are sharing relevant, use history to give a subject an up-to-date spin. Try the following:

- Locate maps, photos of trinkets, symbols—anything that would communicate a sense of the historical significance of the subject matter.
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable on the history of the subject to make a brief presentation to your class.
- Plan ahead. Give your students an Internet research assignment to find and report an interesting or unknown fact about the subject.
- Ironically, by showing the history of a thing you pique the interest of your young learners who have very little knowledge of history.

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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.
understanding or wisdom (Ephesians 1:18). Eyes like a man indicates a system based on human, rather than divine, wisdom.

**Time, times, and half a time** (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:6, 14) works out to 1,260 prophetic days or 1,260 literal years. A prophetic day equals one year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6; Genesis 29:27). *(Source: “Unsealing Daniel’s Mysteries,” a Bible study by Mark Finley for It is Written. Copyright 2004-2007.)*

3. **Daniel’s struggle.** The prophecies in the book of Daniel troubled him greatly. One of the abiding themes in the book, especially the later chapters, is Daniel’s struggle to come to terms with what God is showing him (Daniel 7:28). Daniel was unsettled because the prophecy of Daniel 7 was not for his time. As the angel Gabriel commanded in Daniel 12:4: “But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.” These prophecies are for times in which we are now living, for the kingdoms they point to have come and gone from the scene, except the kingdom of God. God was speaking to us through Daniel.

**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

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

The prophecy in Daniel 7 reminds us that God will not tarry forever, that His coming is sure. Knowing this, how then should we live? Ask the students to ponder this question by finishing the following two statements:

- “People who are ready when Jesus returns will be found doing . . .”
- “People who are ready when Jesus returns will have given up . . .”

Allow the students to share some of their responses. Then ask for a volunteer to pray that everyone in the class will make preparation for the second coming of Jesus the focus of their lives.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The blessed hope of Daniel 7 is that the God who dwells in the heavens and walks astride through time cares about the plight of puny humans marooned on earth. After reading this chapter, one is left with the question of why God would bother to share an end-time message with a prophet who could neither grasp nor fully understand it.

Truth is, God loves us too much to leave us hopeless pawns in the hands of “powerful” men and women and their kingdoms. Through the prophecies of Daniel, He reminds us that He alone sets the sunrise and sunset of human powers. Whether they be political or spiritual powers, no matter how powerful they speak or how many weapons at their disposal, they have no power over God. When their time is up, He throws them onto the ash-heap of history.

Daniel 7 with its strange beasts reminds us that Jesus is soon to return to earth, that His kingdom will have no end, and all who love His appearing will live forever in the presence of the Ancient of Days.

*Fundamental Belief No. 10.*

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is Prophets and Kings, chapter 45.

*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.*
“Shortly before the fall of Babylon, when Daniel was meditating on these prophecies and seeking God for an understanding of the times, a series of visions was given him concerning the rise and fall of kingdoms. With the first vision, as recorded in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel, an interpretation was given; yet not all was made clear to the prophet” (Prophets and Kings, p. 553).

“Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey Him.”

(Daniel 7:27, NIV)
The answers to the following quiz are going to require that you do some research to find out who made these predictions:

1. “There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.”

2. “There is practically no chance communications space satellites will be used to provide better telephone, telegraph, television, or radio service inside the United States.”

3. “Television won’t last. It’s a flash in the pan.”

“Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ‘The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.’ Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left.

“I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

“He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

“But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’ This is the end of the matter. I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”

(Daniel 7:15-28, NIV)
punch lines

“Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7, NIV).

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15, NIV).

“However, as it is written: ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’” (1 Corinthians 2:9, NIV).

“For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me” (John 17:8, NIV).

“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord . . . will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9:7, NIV).

“Prediction is very difficult, especially if it’s about the future.”—Niels Bohr, 20th-century Danish physicist, Nobel Prize winner.

“Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century Irish novelist, scholar, broadcaster, Christian apologist.
Sabbath
Did you find the answers to the What Do You Think? quiz? Niels Bohr had it right when he quipped that predictions are difficult, especially if it’s about the future. God is seemingly unfazed by the daunting task of predicting what will happen a day, month, year, or century from now.

Read Daniel 7:9 and 10. How did this picture of God add credibility to the message that Daniel was being shown in vision?

If the humans we can see constantly make predictions that fail, how can we trust the Word of a God whom we cannot see?

Sunday
Before reading the Into the Story section and completing the Out of the Story questions, first read Daniel 7:1-7 to get the full context of Daniel’s vision. Having read Daniel 8:1-7, what was it that troubled Daniel so deeply?

Why do you think God chose such scary imagery to describe future kingdoms of the world when He could have simply named them and told what they would be like?

Before going very far into the interpretation, Daniel’s divine instructor encourages him greatly. Find and paraphrase below this verse of hope.

Monday
This week’s Key Text is one of hope and encouragement. God interpreted Daniel’s dream, much as He had done in times past when Daniel interpreted the dreams and visions of others.

When we give our hearts to God and surrender our lives to Him, God salvages us through His Son, Jesus. What is being salvaged or saved in our Key Text?

This message of hope was not just for Daniel; it was also for us. Your personal salvation is just part of God’s plan to one day take all His people to His kingdom that will never end.

Tuesday
This week’s Flashlight quotation offers us some background that helps us understand Daniel’s dilemma. Read Isaiah 44:28 and Jeremiah 25:12. What is the central message of these two scriptures?

These prophecies and many others were known and studied by Daniel and the Israelites who had been held captive by the Babylonians. They read them carefully, praying earnestly for God to show them when they would once again be free. It was in answer to these prayers that God gave Daniel a series of visions that helped to explain the future of ancient Israel and spiritual Israel, all who believe on Jesus and accept Him as their Savior and Lord.

Wednesday
Read this week’s Punch Lines. Focus for a moment on John 15:15 and John 17:8. Jesus is the person speaking here. To whom is He speaking in John 15:15? John 17:8?

In John 15:15 what special thing did Jesus do for His disciples?

Do you think Jesus is willing to do the same for you?

Thursday
God gave to Daniel a vision of the future that almost short-circuited his mind. If God was willing to tell Daniel the future of the world, why don’t more people seek His guidance about the future of their lives? What sorts of things get in the way of seeking God?

Friday
Does the unknown scare you? Are you afraid of the future? Do you have friends who may be? Based on this week’s look at Daniel 7, write a short paragraph offering them hope. Quote at least one verse from Daniel 7 in your paragraph.


*This week’s reading*
Prophets and Kings, chapter 45.

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.
God is in control

Scripture Story: Daniel 8 and 9.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS
Daniel had a very distressing vision of things to come. Goats, rams, and horns tortured his sleep. A vision of a little horn perplexed and appalled him because this horn trampled the saints of God, defiled the holy sanctuary, and even came against God Himself. He threw truth to the ground and prospered while doing it. Daniel fainted at the thought that this would actually take place. He grew ill over the stress of things to come.

Daniel knew that God’s Word was certain. If God said it, it would surely come to pass—even if God said it thousands of years in advance. God is all-knowing and can predict with great accuracy what will transpire in the future.

The certainty of God’s Word brought both confusion and comfort to Daniel. Daniel was confused at how or why God would allow trouble, tragedy, and rebellion for so long. And though answers were not readily given, Daniel was comforted in the fact that God Himself would war and win against the little horn and bring His people through victoriously. Not only is God’s Word certain, His power is reliable.

Even though the future, and oftentimes the present, seems hard to stomach, Daniel shows us that God is still in control. The fact that God showed Daniel such trouble was coming is reassurance that nothing, not even tragedy, catches God by surprise. Not only does He know about it, He has a plan to rectify it, in His time.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that nothing, not even their problems, catches God by surprise. (Know)
• Feel secure in the reliability of God’s plan and power. (Feel)
• Respond to life’s problems by trusting in God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Gift of prophecy
• Sanctuary (Christ’s ministry in heavenly)
• Bible/Holy Scriptures

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 alternate activity for this lesson is to pass out index cards to each student and ask them to come up with a definition for the word “vaticinate” (vā-tĭ-kān′-ət), without the use of a dictionary. After the students have finished composing them, collect all the definitions. Shuffle them and add to the pile the correct definition, which is “to prophesy or foretell.” Read all the defini-
Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• What was Daniel’s reaction to the vision God gave him?
• Why do you think he responded this way?
• What kingdom did the goat represent?
• What reasons can you give for God using symbols such as goats and horns to describe future kingdoms?
• Daniel’s visions made some pretty bad accusations about some coming kingdoms. If the prophecies were written out in plain language, rulers of those kingdoms would have completely destroyed the Bible and such important prophecy. Sometimes God hides things from us and reveals it at just the right time. Read Daniel 8:26. God told Daniel to seal up the vision. Why do you think He told Daniel to do this?
• The goat had a horn that would start out small but would grow up to the heavens. Underline the things the little horn would do.
• What promises does God make in this passage?
• God promised that the little horn would be destroyed, but not for a long time. Why do you think God would allow the little horn to get away with doing wrong for so long?
• What do you think God means when He says He will reconsecrate the sanctuary?
• Why is the cleansing or reconsecration of the sanctuary necessary?
• What does this passage teach us about God?
• How can we use this knowledge in our lives today?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Daniel 8:26; Psalm 77:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Romans 8:35-39; Isaiah 55:8, 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.

Daniel had a disturbing vision about a ram and a goat. The vision opened with a mighty ram with two horns. He was very powerful. Nothing could withstand him. He conquered to the west, the north, and the south. The ram’s power, however, came to an end.
when a ferocious goat, with a giant horn, came on the scene. The goat trampled the ram and grew to be very great. The goat’s giant horn was broken, but was replaced by four horns. Out of one of the four winds of heaven came a little horn that grew great in power. In prophecy, horns represent kings (Daniel 8:20).

Gabriel told Daniel that the ram with the two horns represented the empire of the Medes and Persians. The goat symbolized the empire of Greece. The great horn represented Alexander the Great. At his death, his kingdom was given to his four generals, hence the four horns. Out of the four winds of heaven came a little horn that did some big things against God and His people.

This little horn symbolized the kingdom of Rome. Rome would not war against just man. It would war against God and His people. This little horn would defile God’s sanctuary, trample God’s people, come against the Prince of princes, and throw truth to the ground. While this horn was doing all of this, the Bible records that he prospered.

Daniel was literally sick. How could God let such a thing take place? Gabriel reassured Daniel that things would be put back into order and the sanctuary would be reconsecrated in 2300 days, which in prophetic time was 2,300 years.

As Daniel continued to study, he realized that the Jews should be freed from Babylonian captivity soon. It was supposed to last only 70 years, but the last vision made it seem like oppression would go on for thousands of years.

Gabriel gave Daniel a clearer understanding that the things he saw were for the end times. Gabriel also shared God’s solution for the problem, the Messiah. He not only shared that the Messiah would come but when the Messiah would come! See Daniel 9:24-27.

God still had everything in His control. Even though there were some rough times ahead, none of these situations would catch God by surprise. He would bring justice in His time. God also promised that the little horn would not get away with his dirt. He would be destroyed—not by man, but by God.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book 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.
Give each student a piece of paper and instruct them to write at the top of the paper a situation they want to completely trust God to work out. Below the situation’s description, have them pen a prayer of surrender, letting God know they are going to stop worrying about this problem and place it in His hands. Lead the students in a season of prayer in which each student can share a sentence prayer of surrender aloud.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
We are indeed living in the last days of earth’s history. And though the Bible promises they will be marked with victory, they will not end without a fight. The people of God will experience turbulence ahead. God, our Pilot, does not promise to lead us around every storm, but He does promise to lead us safely through the storm. God’s warning of storms ahead affords us an opportunity to be prepared and affirms that God has prepared also.
God’s Word is certain and His power is reliable. He will bring us out, not only of the trouble in the last days, but out of the problems we face today. “Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice” (Steps to Christ, p. 100).

1 Fundamental Belief No. 18.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 24.
3 Fundamental Belief No. 1.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series.
“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.
God is in control

flashlight

“Through another vision further light was thrown upon the events of the future; and it was at the close of this vision that Daniel heard ‘one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision?’ Daniel 8:13. The answer that was given, ‘Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed’ (verse 14), filled him with perplexity” (Prophets and Kings, p. 554).

keytext

“O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

(Daniel 9:19, NIV)
Daniel received a vision from God about things to come in the last days. It told about some terrible things that would happen to the people of God. The vision not only scared Daniel but the Bible records that after he saw it he fainted and became very sick.

Why do you think God showed Daniel such terrible things? What benefit do you think it had? What was the downside to God sharing the future with Daniel?

If something bad were going to happen in your life, would you rather know in advance or be surprised?

What factors would influence your decision?

The 2300-day prophecy is the longest time prophecy in the Bible. One day in prophecy is equal to a year (Ezekiel 4:6), so this prophecy is actually 2,300 years long! It would be that long before God would clean up the mess the little horn caused. Daniel 9:25 tells us this prophecy would begin when the decree went out to rebuild Jerusalem. History books say this happened in 457 B.C. Twenty-three hundred years later takes us to 1844. Remarkably, God gave Daniel this prophecy 90 years before it would begin. Even so, it happened just like He said. How’s that for accuracy!

“Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, ‘How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled—the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?’

“He said to me, ‘It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.’ . . .

“And I heard a man’s voice from the Ulai calling, ‘Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.’ . . .

“The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. . . . In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.’ . . .

“I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king’s business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.”

(Daniel 8:1, 5, 8-14, 16, 21, 23-25, 27, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

What was Daniel’s reaction to the vision God gave him? Why do you think he felt this way?

The goat had a horn that would start out small but would grow up to the heavens. What kind of things would this little horn do?

God promised the little horn would be destroyed but not for a long time. Why do you think God would allow the little horn to get away with doing wrong for so long?

What does this passage teach us about God?

How can we use this information in our lives today?

punch lines

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered” (Daniel 12:1, NIV).

“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Numbers 23:19, NIV).

“Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled” (Joshua 21:45, NIV).

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV).

“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock” (Psalm 27:5, NIV).

“I would rather walk with God in the dark than go alone in the light.”—Mary Gardiner Brainard, 19th-century U.S. poet.

“I’ve read the last page of the Bible. It’s all going to turn out all right.”—Billy Graham, current U.S. evangelist.

“God, who foresaw your tribulation, has specially armed you to go through it, not without pain but without stain.”—C. S. Lewis, 20th-century Irish scholar, novelist.

“Nothing that is attempted in opposition to God can ever be successful.”—John Calvin, 16th-century French theologian.
Most people like good surprises, but sometimes life throws us surprises that can hardly be consideredgood. Jesus promised we would have tribulation. He also promised that we would be victorious.

In the What Do You Think? section, you had to decide if you wanted to know in advance of hard times ahead, or if you wanted to be surprised. Whether trials come to us with notice or by surprise, one thing is certain, God is never caught off guard. What feelings do you have about God knowing what lies ahead for you, even before it comes?

The enemy often uses counterfeits to distract us from God's plan for our life. What kind of counterfeits have you encountered? How did you respond to them?

When we find Daniel, he is in Babylon with the rest of Israel in captivity. Daniel was hoping they would be freed soon, but God kept giving him these disturbing visions. As a result, Daniel was not sure when all of this trouble would end!

Read this week’s Key Text. On the lines below, rewrite it in your own words.

What does this prayer reveal about Daniel’s faith? What does it reveal about Daniel’s relationship with God?

In this week’s Flashlight, Ellen White talks about God’s solution to the problem the little horn was causing. He was defiling the sanctuary and trying to take away the sacrifices. God would cleanse the sanctuary and resegregate it. God would bring restoration. God would do this through judgment. What things come to your mind when you think of judgment?

In competition, the judging is the most exciting part, because someone is declared a winner. God has declared that all who love Him and keep His commandments would be victorious. Even though we had to fight hard, when judgment comes we will be vindicated and declared winners!

We have pondered why God would share such a distressing prophecy with Daniel. In the Punch Lines section, Jesus gives us a possible answer: ”I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace” (John 16:33, NIV).

How can we have peace when we know that our future will be tattooed by trouble? Because we have the assurance that God knew about our trouble in advance and has a way for us to either get out of it or get through it. Are you willing to trust God with your future?

One of the strongest themes of Daniel is that God is in control, no matter how bad things get. No matter how dark the storm, God promises to guide us through it. God not only predicted dark times, but He promised deliverance.

When times get dark, we must hold on to the light of God’s Word. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105, NIV). Choose a promise or two that reminds you of God’s power and His plan to get you through tough times. Commit it to memory. Write it on an index card and put it in a prominent place so you can see it every day.

Nothing, big or small, catches God by surprise. He knows all and has a plan to make it work out in the end. What situations have tempted you to believe God has forgotten about you? What situations have been so bad you have wanted to forget God?

Someone said, “If it hasn’t worked out yet, then it is not the end.” God has solutions for problems you have not even had yet. Write out a prayer of thanksgiving that God has charted out your future.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

As we tackle these texts, it is important to start with the forest before we get to the trees. It is tempting to jump into a word study and attach dates to phrases and be done with the prophetic study. However, it is of paramount importance to be able to have the students see the overarching themes of grace and love that come through in our interpretations of prophecy. It is only in this context that words have impact.

In Daniel 10 we learn that Daniel had a vision that was very troubling to him, a vision that he could not understand, and that left him feeling very distraught. After this vision experience, Daniel began to fast and pray for several weeks—seeking to know the meaning of what he saw. The moment he began to pray to the Lord about the disturbing vision, a heavenly messenger was dispatched to go to Daniel and to reveal to him its meaning. But the messenger was delayed—caught in a battle—and could not get to Daniel right away. After about three weeks, from the time Daniel began to pray for help, the “man” from heaven finally reached Daniel in answer to his prayer.

In chapter 11 the messenger begins to explain the meaning of the vision to Daniel. By this time the kingdom of Babylon had been overthrown by Medo-Persia, and Cyrus was in his third year as king of Persia. The angel tells Daniel that Persia would have three more kings after Cyrus, and then a fourth king would reign, who would be richer than all the others and would use his wealth to gain power. Following this fourth king would come another even more powerful king. This king would not rule for very long, but his kingdom would be divided into four. The divided kingdoms would not be as strong as the first.

For many years to follow, kings, princes, and mighty men would rise and fall in their quest for power. Then a time would come when the sanctuary of God would be defiled by a king who would think to exalt himself above God, and who would persecute those who opposed him. But God’s people will stand for the truth and will teach others to do the same. The work and influence of this king, who thought to set himself above God, will extend to the time of the end.

Finally, as we learn in chapter 12, Michael will appear. Then there will be a great time of trouble on the earth. But God’s people, whose names are written in the book of life, will be delivered.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that earthly kings may rise and fall, but in the end God’s kingdom will prevail and will rule over the earth forever. (Know)
- Trust the power of God to deliver and save His people from harm. (Feel)
- Choose to serve the God of heaven rather than earthly powers. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Prophecy and its purpose
- Eschatology
- God’s character as revealed through prophecy

You will find material to help you explore these and
II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We are on our way to meet Jesus. And He has left directions for us to follow. He’s given us a road map. Through the prophets the Lord has given us a clear picture of what lies ahead, what twists and turns we will have to make, what stops we will come to along the way, and what obstacles to look out for. By knowing all these details, we can be prepared and well equipped for our journey.

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.

- Daniel 10:5, 6 gives a description of the “man” who spoke to Daniel. Who could this man be? Ask class members to give a few possible answers and to tell why.
- Discuss the meaning of the “book of life” with the class. Name some other books that are mentioned in the Bible. Tell what purpose they serve. (See Philippians 4:3; Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12.)
- Even though Daniel was a man of God, he was afraid when he saw the vision and when the messenger touched him. What do you think was the reason for his fearfulness?
- There were other men with Daniel when he first saw the vision. These men did not see the vision, yet they were also afraid and ran away. Why do you think they were so frightened if they could not see the vision?
- What does the fearfulness of Daniel and the other men tell us about the power of holy beings? What is the source of their power?
- What should be our response or reaction when we are aware that we are in the presence of God?
- From the moment that Daniel prayed for help, the messenger was sent forth to meet with him in answer to his prayer. Do you think that the Lord responds to us in the same way? Does the Lord always give an immediate answer to our requests?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Exodus 14:13, 14; Zechariah 4:6; Revelation 12:10, 11.
Sharing Context and Background

1. The prophetic books of the Bible, such as Daniel and Revelation, provide unique insight into the fate of the world in light of the saving action of Christ on the cross. The symbolic metaphors, historical allegories, and vivid descriptions of the closing events in these prophetic books stymie all too often those individuals who take the time to study them. And because of this, many of the prophecies found in Daniel, as well as Revelation, are often seen as abstract and mystical, or obtuse and impossible to understand. Daniel 10–12 are probably some of the hardest to comprehend. What do you think is the overall theme of these chapters and what is their prophetic message? Who is the message for? (See Daniel 10:14; 11:31-33; 11:36, 37; 12:1-3. It may be helpful to read these texts in different Bible versions.)

2. When the last-day events of Daniel 10–12 are considered by the reader for their implications of God’s grace, and His purpose and power to deliver His people from the hands of their enemies, these chapters could have a very personal impact. What impact, if any, does Daniel 10–12 have on you personally? How can the message of deliverance be applied to your daily experiences? Is it important for God’s people to understand His grace and experience His deliverance before the end comes, and if so why?

3. The prophecies, such as those found in the book of Daniel, were written to help us remember some specific truths about God:
   (a.) God is in charge;
   (b.) God will fulfill all of His promises regarding salvation;
   (c.) There are only two types of people: God’s...

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Your Story
- Students are always interested in your story. Allow them to step into your life with anecdotes that make sense to you and are true to the reality that you live every day.
- It is important to be simplistic and honest.
- Never give an answer you don’t believe or is not your own. Take these lessons and internalize them so the truth you are relaying is truth that has transformed your own life.
- Using helpful tools, such as quotes from sources other than the Bible or simple demonstrations and illustrations, can help to give emphasis to some of the important points that you want to make.
- Be prepared to have your own answer ready for each question that you present to the class.
- The class wants to know you and the God you have experienced!

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.
people and God’s enemies. In the last days, the activities of these two groups will support this division. Discuss the differences between the activities of the people of God and those of His enemies in the last days.

4. In Daniel’s vision (chapters 10–12) the struggle that moves the world to eternity is couched in language that reveals the fact that evil will ultimately have a terrible end. On the other hand, victory always comes for God’s children, because He acts in their behalf. If we claim God’s victory in Christ at the cross, that victory becomes ours. We may not feel it, or see it in the midst of our struggles, but victory for the people of God is certain! Knowing that we have the assurance that God’s people will prevail in the end, why do you think God allows this great controversy between good and evil to continue or to seemingly be prolonged?

III. CLOSING

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

Discuss the following questions with class members as a closing activity. How is God’s character revealed throughout the book of Daniel? What is the significance of using the rise and fall of nations to reveal God’s true character and to demonstrate His power? Other than the nations and rulers that are mentioned in the Bible—specifically in the book of Daniel—does God appoint or select specific people (or nations) to be rulers or in leadership positions in today’s society, such as in the United States or other present-day countries and governments? Tell why you believe the way you do.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:
This lesson was written in an effort to give us a broader understanding of the last few chapters of the book of Daniel. It might be helpful to follow up this study with a more in-depth study of the actual time line of the prophecy if you are prepared to do so, and if there are students that so desire. It would not be surprising if students are interested in delving deeper than these few minutes allow, now that they have the theological framework to understand that prophecy points to a God who is true in character and great in power.

Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series.
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flashlight

“In this life we can only begin to understand the wonderful theme of redemption. With our finite comprehension we may consider most earnestly the shame and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy, that meet in the cross; yet with the utmost stretch of our mental powers we fail to grasp its full significance. . . . The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they are seen and know as they are known; but through the eternal ages new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. Though the griefs and pains and temptations of earth are ended and the cause removed, the people of God will ever have a distinct, intelligent knowledge of what their salvation has cost” (The Great Controversy, p. 651).

key text

“The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place.”

(Daniel 11:36, NIV)
If you thought this lesson would be an easy one, think again!

Ask yourself a few tough questions:

1. What is the purpose of prophecy?
2. How can it make a difference in my life today?
3. Why do you think Daniel wrote these visions down?
4. What do you think they meant to the children of Israel, especially while they were in the midst of the Babylonian captivity?
5. Why should we even study this stuff? Have you ever read this before?
6. Why is this so important to the Adventist Church?

... that the vision in the tenth through the twelfth chapters of Daniel actually more fully describe the vision of the eighth chapter of Daniel?

... that Daniel mourned not just the regular seven days, but thrice that, or 21 days to show extreme mourning?

... that chrysolite, also called beryl, or topaz (more commonly), is a clear stone?

... that the interpretation of this time (1290 days, 1335 days) as based on something called the “year-day” principle was first interpreted like this in the eighth century by Jewish expositors?

“I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision: I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, ‘Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.’ And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

“Then he continued, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.’

“While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, ‘I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.’

“Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ‘Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed,’ he said. ‘Peace! Be strong now; be strong.’

“When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, ‘Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength.’

“So he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth.”

(Daniel 10:7-21, NIV)
punch lines

“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2, NIV).

“For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21, NIV).

“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near” (Revelation 1:3, NIV).

“D. L. Moody once said, “I never preach a sermon without thinking that possibly the Lord may come before I preach another.”—Source Unknown.

“The Lord has wrought through human agents to fulfill the prophecies.”—Ellen G. White, 19th-century inspired writer and church cofounder.

“There are many who do not understand the prophecies relating to these days, and they must be enlightened.”—Ellen G. White, 19th-century inspired writer and church cofounder.
These are tough texts. The language of prophecy is sometimes confusing and hard to understand. However, there is always a point to prophecy. In it we get to see that God is a God who loves us and who always wins. It is easy to get lost in the midst of finding what every jot and tittle means, and while this is important, it is also important to note that these were words that are used to show us who God is and how He relates to us. It is exciting to think that there is a God who understands what this world is all about and can make a difference from the past to the future.

Sabbath

Let’s ask that first question again: “What is the purpose of prophecy?” While it is easy to get lost in the large amount of minutia that is contained in these texts, we must not forget the bigger picture, which is that prophecy reveals God and His character to us. As Revelation 1:3 tells us: “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy. . . .”

List at least 2 ways that you have been blessed this week by studying prophecy.

Sunday

The quote and the questions in the Into the Story and Out of the Story sections are specific for a reason. We are beginning to see the background information that is coming along with the prophecy.

Where is Daniel? What are the circumstances of the vision? How does Daniel feel when receiving the vision? How much does God want Daniel to understand of this vision?

Monday

Daniel 11:36 speaks of a king who is willing to do whatever it is that he finds in his fancy to do. What does this say about us? What application can we make from this text? Is it safe to say that there are ways that God expects us to live? Would it be prudent to extract from this text that God is not altogether happy with those who find themselves living with no sort of moral code or ethic? Take some time to reread the text and see what it means to you today!

What does the vision hold for us today?

How is God revealed through this vision?

Tuesday

In Flashlight we begin to see that redemption and salvation are such huge things that we will not fully understand them until we find ourselves sitting at the table with Jesus Christ. It will be a wonderful day when Jesus sits beside us and explains to us all those things we barely were able to understand in texts such as these. What a glorious moment when it is all made clear and plain! However, it is so awesome to know that we understand all that we have to in order to be able to sit with Jesus at that banquet table.

What do these prophecies tell you about God?

What application do they have for your life?

How does this study make you closer to Jesus Christ?

These are important questions that only you can answer for yourself.

Wednesday

1 Corinthians 13:2 puts in the right place our concept of so many things. It is all subject to the love that is involved. If these prophecies don’t bring us to a place of greater love and ap-