• **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.*
with each lesson in this Teacher's Guide you will find an Explore section with topics listed that relate to this week’s story. Leadout Ministries has provided a variety of resources for exploring the topic you choose—from discussion questions to illustrations, from reader's theater scripts to learning activities. Use the resources at www.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.
### 2011
#### 1st Quarter
1. Adam and Eve
2. The Serpent
3. Cain and Abel
4. Seth and Enoch
5. Noah
6. Tower People
7. Abraham
8. Isaac
9. Lot
10. Rebekah
11. Jacob and Esau
12. Jacob
13. Israel

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

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

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

### 2012
#### 1st Quarter
1. God’s People
2. Solomon
3. Temple Builder
4. Proud Potentate
5. Repentant Author
6. Rehoboam
7. Jeroboam
8. Asa, Ahab, Jezebel
9. Elijah
10. Evangelist
11. Coward
12. The Sabbath
13. Jehoshaphat

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

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

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

### 2013
#### 1st Quarter
1. Jesus
2. It’s Time
3. Mary
4. Simeon/Anna
5. The Wise Men
6. The Child Jesus
7. The Voice
8. Victory
9. Messiah Found
10. Marriage Feast
11. The Temple
12. Nicodemus
13. John the Baptist

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

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

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

### 2014
#### 1st Quarter
1. The Mission
2. The Holy Spirit
3. The Lame Man
4. Ananias/Sapphira
5. God’s People
6. Stephen
7. Paul
8. Peter
9. Paul/Barnabas
10. Gentiles Included
11. Spreading Good News
12. The Thessalonians
13. The Ephesians

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

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

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

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### 4th Quarter

January

5—The Living Message [p. 11]
God has revealed Himself to His people through prophets, the Temple system, and through the written Word. But only Jesus can capture what God is really like.

12—Countdown to the Savior [p. 15]
Although the Jews desired the Messiah’s coming, they misunderstood His mission and purpose. Thus, they missed Him—just like we can.

19—Servant of the Lord [p. 19]
An angel presents Mary with the shocking news that she will bear the Son of God. God can do great things for and through us, too, but He requires our obedience.

26—What You Seek Is What You Get [p. 23]
It has been said that a person finds what they’re looking for. Simeon and Anna looked with anticipation for the coming of the Messiah. They were not disappointed.

February

2—Following Yonder Star [p. 27]
When the Magi went in search of the Messiah whom they had been studying about, God’s natural Global Positioning System placed them exactly where they needed to be.

9—Growing Up [p. 31]
Jesus faced many of the challenges and trials of youth that you face today, but He remained sinless. How did He do it? Can you imagine Jesus as someone whom you might want to know and hang out with?

16—One of a Kind [p. 35]
Just as God created John the Baptist for a holy purpose, He created each of us for a holy purpose. Standing for God will cost us much, as it did John. Is it worth it?

March

2—Come See [p. 43]
The dramatic incident of Philip introducing Nathanael to Jesus captures the coordination between the human and the divine as Christ makes disciples for His kingdom.

9—Partying With Jesus [p. 47]
Jesus worked His first miracle at a wedding feast in Cana, turning the water into wine and blessing the joyful celebration with His power. Jesus’ power continues today to transform ordinary things into extraordinary!

16—Get Out of My House! [p. 51]
Instead of having reverence for the house of the Lord, the money changers were using the Temple for their own gain, turning it into a place of greed and materialism.

23—A Slow Burn [p. 55]
Often people feel as if they’re not converted because they haven’t had a “Damascus Road” experience. But the story of Nicodemus reminds us that conversion can be a lifelong journey.

30—It’s Your Turn [p. 59]
John the Baptist could have become jealous when his disciples began following Jesus. But he chose to take joy in Jesus’ success. He realized his role was to prepare the way.
the living message

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 1.
Key Text: John 1:1.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The time of Jesus’ coming to earth marked the beginning of the most important stage of the plan of salvation. God the Son allowed Himself to be transformed from the dazzling God being that He’d been before, into what would be, by comparison, a severely limited human form, something less than even His angels are created to be. It was time for the Godhead to send One of their own into the dark, evil world that we inhabit, the world occupied by a sinister angel rebel with nothing but murder on his mind. The human race, having been taken hostage and slowly killed off by this rebel, could be saved only by God sacrificing His Son in the place of those doomed human beings.

Jesus’ coming to earth—God the Son in human form—was the climax of the long story of Israel’s covenant relationship with God and God’s quest to reconcile humanity with Him. Jesus, the Logos, the Word of God, came to show the world what God was like. This perspective needs to be in place before we even begin to read the Gospels. We must explore every story, every parable, every miracle, every saying of Jesus with the question “What does this tell us about God?”

God had already revealed Himself to His people through prophets, through the Temple system, through the written words of Scripture. But none of those revelations was able to completely capture what God was like. Only Jesus was able to do that; only Jesus is God’s living message to humanity—not just for the 33 or so years He walked the earth, but for us today.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand the purpose for which God became a human being. (Know)
• Feel God’s love for humanity expressed in Jesus. (Feel)
• Choose to follow the God they see revealed in Jesus. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Nature of man
• Trinity
• Humility
• Intimacy

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.

What does it mean to think of Jesus as God’s message to humanity? Hand out 3” x 5” index cards or small pieces of paper with pencils and say: “If God were going to write a message—maybe drop you a note, or an e-mail, or a text message—right now, what message do you think God would have for you? Write it on this card.”

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
After each student has written their message from God, ask if a few people are willing to share what they wrote. Then ask them to think about how that message connects to what Jesus said or did in the Gospels. In what way did Jesus deliver God’s message to us today?

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
Writer Louis Cassels penned a story about a man who simply couldn’t believe in the Incarnation—this idea of God coming to earth as the Man Jesus Christ. One Christmas Eve he told his wife and children to go off to church without him. He watched them drive away through the snow, reflecting that he just couldn’t believe everything they were preaching at church this Christmas.

As he sat in the living room reading his newspaper through the gathering snowstorm, he heard a thudding noise from outside. He looked out to find a small group of birds, huddled and miserable in the snow. Looking for shelter, they had tried to fly right through the living room window.

The man went out and opened his barn door and tried to guide the frightened birds into the barn. But they were as frightened of him as they were of the storm, and they would not follow him, even when he tried to lure them with bread crumbs. He knew that they’d freeze if left outside in the storm, yet he had no way to communicate with them, no way to tell them there was a place of safety. If only I could become a bird for just a few minutes! he thought. Then I could tell them, and they’d understand.

For the first time the man really understood the story of the Incarnation—that God had to become a human being in order to reach us with the message of salvation. Only by becoming one of us could He lead us to safety.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Share the following in your own words:
We send and receive messages all the time. We use texts, e-mails, social media messages, and voicemails. Every day we use body language to send messages without words. You have probably noticed how angry someone is by the way they move and the look on their face.

What we always want to do is send a clear message. What would happen if you greeted your best friend every day with friendly words and a frown on your face? You might not keep that friend for long, because they would start to believe that you don’t really mean the words you say.

We all send messages to others all the time. But our messages get through best when we speak to people in the language and format with which they’re most comfortable. You’d probably use different language if you were asking your teacher for extra time on an assignment than if you were sending a text message to a friend inviting her to a party. When it comes to communicating with other species, as the man in the story found, the gap is usually too great to bridge. But God bridged the ultimate gap by finding a way to speak to us in our own language—by becoming one of us and living among us as Jesus of Nazareth.

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.

• Reproduce the boxes from Monday’s section of the student lesson on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart at the front of the room. Say: “The Scripture passage we’ve read in John 1 tells us that Jesus came to show us what God was like. As we read in the Gospels the stories of what Jesus did, we are reading the record of God’s message to us, the picture of God’s character in human form.”

• Get the class to suggest three stories from Jesus’ life. Divide the class into three groups and ask each group to read and discuss one of the stories. Ask them to brainstorm a list of what each story teaches us about God. After allowing 10 to 15 minutes for discussion, bring the groups back together and ask each group to report on their story. Write down their findings in the boxes at the front. Discuss what picture of God’s character we get from all these stories.

• Ask: “Would these messages about God’s character have had the same effect if they were passed on through a prophet and written down? What’s the advantage to having Jesus come personally to do these things?”
“Incarnation” is a heavy theological concept for high school students to grasp—and for adults as well! On the surface it seems simple—God taking on human form, coming to earth as a human baby, growing up to reveal to earth’s people what God is like, and how much God loves them.

But when you realize that huge theological battles have been fought, schisms have occurred, and heretics have been condemned over questions such as how Jesus could have both a divine and a human nature, whether He had two separate natures or one that was completely human and completely divine, whether He had the nature of Adam before the Fall or of humanity after the Fall—well, you get the picture. It becomes a little more complicated, and theologians can tie themselves (and each other) into knots over trying to fully comprehend the incomprehensible!

Keep in mind some basic assumptions that Seventh-day Adventists have about what it meant for Jesus to be “incarnated” into human form.

1. Only a human-divine Savior could bring salvation to lost humankind. We don’t understand completely how Jesus could have a combined nature, but it was a necessity that He be fully human and fully God. Only God in human form, still God but subject to the same experience as ordinary human beings, could accomplish the requirements for reconciling sinful human beings to God’s perfect existence.

2. By becoming human, Jesus limited Himself in particular ways. He put a veil over His glory, so that

Sharing Context and Background

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

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Colossians 2:9, 10; Galatians 4:4-6; Philippians 2:5-11.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. 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.
sinful people would not die when they saw Him in person. But Jesus never stopped being God. He said while He was on the earth, “ ‘Before Abraham was born, I am’ ” (John 8:58, NASB).

3. Jesus is identical in nature to His Father and the Holy Spirit. The disciples (and all of Israel, it seems) mistakenly thought that the Father is the true God. It took them a long time to realize who Jesus really is. Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

As you discuss what it meant for God to become man, you may come across questions you can’t answer. That’s OK. You can spend your lifetime studying the answers to questions about the Trinity and the nature of Jesus. But as you think about the heavy theological stuff, don’t lose sight of the big picture. Whatever formulae we use to explain it to ourselves and others, the fact remains that somehow, God made the ultimate sacrifice and became human—and that the purpose of everything Jesus said and did was to reveal God to us, and to be God with us.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Ask students to take out the cards from the Getting Started activity on which they wrote God’s message to them. Say: “After we’ve talked about how Jesus revealed God’s character to us, do you still think this message that God is sending is what He would like to say to you? Are there any changes you’d like to make to this message?”

After giving them time to add to or change God’s message, ask them to turn the card over and write their response to God. Encourage them to take the card with them and use it in prayer this week.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus came to earth for one purpose—to be “God with us.” When you think of God, don’t picture a distant, remote figure far away on a throne in heaven. Picture Jesus—walking the dusty roads of Galilee, healing and touching sick people, taking little children on His lap, telling people about God’s love. That’s what God is like. He lives in the real world and shows love to each of His children and provides for them in practical ways.

And that’s what God wants us to do—to carry on Jesus’ work of representing His character by the love we show to others every day. We are living messages to the people around us who don’t yet know or have not accepted the fact that God is their loving Creator and Savior.

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1 Fundamental Belief No. 7.
2 Fundamental Beliefs No. 2 through No. 5.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 1.

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

“By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God—God’s thought made audible. . . . But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God’s wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which ‘angels desire to look,’ and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song” (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19, 20).

**keytext**

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

*(John 1:1, NIV)*
What's your favorite way to get a message to someone?

- Phone
- E-mail or Facebook message
- MSN/chat
- Text message on my phone
- Handwritten note
- Face to face
- Through another person

Why do you prefer this method of sending a message?

__________________________________  ____________________________________  ___________________________________

In the Phillips translation of the New Testament, the first verse of John 1 (today’s Key Text) is translated as “At the beginning God expressed himself.” That translation does a good job of capturing Jesus’ special relationship to God and the reason He came to this planet. The Greek word for “Word” in John 1:1-3 is logos, which means “God’s speech, God’s message, what God has to say.”

In other words, what God has to say to this planet was—Jesus. If we read the beginning of John 1 as the behind-the-scenes introduction to the whole story of Jesus, then we learn that Jesus was sent here for one specific purpose: to tell us what God is like. People have a lot of false and mistaken ideas about God, but we can point to the stories of Jesus in the Gospels and say, “This is what God is like! And this is what God has to say to us!”

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . .

“From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”

(John 1:1-18, NIV)
If Jesus came to show the world what God is like, what can we say about the character of God based on the kind of person Jesus was? Try to come up with five or six words that describe God as revealed by Jesus.

Why do you think sending Jesus was God’s best way of communicating with us? What other ways had He already tried? What other ways could He have tried?

What does it mean to say that Jesus “gives light to every man”? What about people who have never heard of Jesus, or rejected Him? Does He bring light to them too?

Why do you think “the world did not recognize Him”? If you had lived at Jesus’ time, do you think you would have recognized Him as the Son of God? What stops people from recognizing Him today?

What does it mean to be “born of God”?

“He [Christ] is the self-expression of the Father—what the Father has to say. And there never was a time when He was not saying it.” —C. S. Lewis, 20th-century English scholar.

“He is the most perfect image of God, into which we are so renewed as to bear the image of God, in knowledge, purity, righteousness, and true holiness.” —John Calvin, 16th-century Swiss Reformer.
**Sabbath**

The Into the Story passage from John 1 describes how Jesus came to be God’s message to this world. John uses metaphors to describe Jesus (remember those from your English class?): Jesus is the Light. Jesus is the Life. Jesus is the Word.

What does each of those images tell us about Jesus?

- Light ____________________________________
- Life _____________________________________
- Word ____________________________________

What other things can you think of that Jesus is compared to in the Bible? What do they tell us about Jesus? What else could you compare Jesus to? What does that comparison mean to you?

**Sunday**

Look back at the What Do You Think? portion of the lesson. What’s your favorite way to send messages to people?

Sometimes how you send a message depends on what it contains. MSN may be great for chatting idly with friends, but if you want to say something that requires a lot of thought, you may want to compose an e-mail or a handwritten letter. Some people would rather break up over the phone because it’s easier to hang up and walk away. Some of us find it easier to express deeply personal emotions in the written word, while others always prefer to speak face-to-face.

For God’s ultimate message of love to His earthly creation, only one kind of “Logos” would do. God had already communicated for hundreds of years, speaking through prophets, Bible writers, and the Temple worship service. But no secondhand method would do for telling humanity that God loved them enough to die for them. Only God Himself in human form could do that.

What about your message back to God? How
can you communicate that to Him?

**Monday**

What does the life of Jesus tell us about who God is and how God thinks and feels about us?

Think of three stories from Jesus’ life that you know and like. Write a very brief summary of each in the boxes below (see example). Then, for each one write what you think that tells us about God.

**Jesus Feeds 5,000 People.**
- God can do a lot with a little.
- God is concerned.

**Tuesday**

According to the Flashlight passage from The Desire of Ages, Jesus came to earth not just to demonstrate God’s love to people on this planet, but to those watching on other, unfallen worlds. Imagine you are a sinless alien watching the drama unfold as God the Son comes to earth as a human being. What do you think your reactions might be? What conclusions would you draw about God?

**Wednesday**

Read the verses in the Punch Lines section of the lesson. What can you learn from each of these verses about Jesus’ purpose in coming to earth?

Isaiah 9:6 _______________________
Matthew 1:21 _______________________
Luke 2:10, 11 _______________________
Luke 2:34, 35 _______________________
John 14:8, 9 _______________________

**Thursday**

Jesus came to show people what God is like. But when Jesus returned to heaven, His work here wasn’t finished. He left His people—His church—behind to con-tinue showing the world what God was like.

As Christians, we don’t always do the greatest job of that. But it’s sobering to reflect that “your life may be the only Bible some people will ever read.” What’s one practical thing you can do today that will help someone else see what the God you worship is like?

**Friday**

As you think about Jesus’ coming to earth and what that reveals to us about God, what is your response? Write a short letter-prayer reflecting your feelings. Use the sentence starters below if they help.

Dear God,

When I think about Jesus coming to earth to show us what You are like, it makes me feel ____________________________

I want to tell You that _________________

Because of Jesus, I think You are _________________

**this week’s reading**

The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 1.

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

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson is unusual in that it uses *The Desire of Ages* as the source text. Ellen White’s writing in chapters 2 and 3 of that book focuses on the Jews through history and the circumstances at the time of Jesus’ birth. In chapter 2, “The Chosen People,” she sets the scene for the coming Messiah by describing how the Jews had been entrusted to reveal God to mankind, but as they departed from God, they lost sight of their calling and purpose. Although the Jews desired the Messiah’s coming, at the time of His arrival their hope was deliverance from Roman rule rather than the promise of their redemption from sin. “They looked for the Messiah to come as a conqueror, to break the oppressor’s power, and exalt Israel to universal dominion. Thus the way was prepared for them to reject the Saviour” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 30).

Chapter 3, “The Fullness of the Time,” centers on the circumstances present when God saw fit to send forth His Son and that the timing of His arrival was as He had ordained. A historical look at the progression of the Jews as His chosen people and a review of the times at Jesus’ birth provides opportunity to look at the circumstances of today’s world and the role of Seventh-day Adventists in revealing Jesus. As we ponder the return of Jesus, her words (on page 32) remind us that “like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God’s purposes know no haste and no delay.”

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize the similarities that exist between the times when Jesus was born and the world today. *(Know)*
- Realize the risk that exists for Seventh-day Adventists to miss the signs of His coming as did the Jews of old. *(Feel)*
- Resolve to be ready for His coming while revealing His character and saving grace. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Prophecies
- Hope
- World issues

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

**Activity**

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

Invite the students to discuss the similarities or dissimilarities they identified between the Jews of old and the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. One idea is to re-create the continuum on the floor (using masking tape), asking the students to stand on the line according to their response.

Review some of the signs of the coming of Christ compared with conditions or events in the world today.

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
Ask, without any outward show of response, if any are unsettled or worried about what is taking place in the world and/or their assurance of salvation. Remind your students that Jesus has promised His grace is sufficient.

Make a list in front of the class of what the students suggested regarding what to watch for and pray for.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

I recall a dream I had while a high school student some months after hearing the Adventist teaching about the second coming of Christ for the first time. In the dream I was dazed and walking on a New York City street as a terrified horde of people ran toward me. The buildings were shaking, the ground quaking. As I turned around and began to run with the crowd, I asked a man next to me what was happening. His answer struck fear in my heart: "Jesus is coming!" I turned and looked upward but could see nothing but a skyscraper canyon and an endless stream of panic-stricken people. Then I heard an amazingly loud sound like an air horn amplified to 200 decibels, and I awoke with a start, heart pounding and brow sweaty. Although I was a Christian who believed that Jesus would come again, the immediacy of that dream caused me to wonder why I woke up frightened.

Four years later, then a student at Southern Missionary College, I was walking on campus on a glorious spring day. Suddenly, the silence was shattered by a horn blast-like sound that caused an immediate flashback to that memorable dream. Not knowing what it was, I immediately spun and looked eastward anticipating the sight of the coming King. It was the volunteer fire department signal horn high atop Lynn Wood Hall. I smiled and realized I was disappointed. No pounding heart, no sweaty brow, just an assurance that when He did come, I would be ready to greet my Lord with joy.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

For more than half a century the strains of “Lift Up the Trumpet” have traveled the airwaves as the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry enters the homes of millions of radio listeners. The words of each stanza, and the stirring refrain, bring the promise of Christ’s coming home. “Coming again, coming again, Jesus is coming again!” Well, sure, we believe that. We teach that. But what did we do this week that shows we live that belief?

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.

• “Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race” (The Desire of Ages, p. 37). But calamities are part of our post-Eden world. See www.whiteestate.org/issues/calamities.asp for information regarding God’s love and calamities.

• If you live in an Adventist center, discuss with your students the pros and cons about daily life in such circumstances.

• Identify what symbols of Christ are included in an Adventist worship service. Is there a crucifix anywhere in your sanctuary? on your church? Apart from the grape juice and wafer used during Communion, are any other symbols evident? Why or why not?

• Given the Adventist belief that beings exist on unfallen worlds, how does that belief impact topics such as UFOs and the growing regularity of astronomers identifying new planets beyond those in our solar system?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 19:37-44.

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 [Old Testament] prophecies concerning Israel constitute a declaration of God’s purpose with respect to the Jews as the covenant people; these prophecies were strictly conditional upon their cooperation; by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah the Jewish nation withdrew from the covenant relationship and forfeited its special relationship to God under the covenant; the covenant promises and privileges were permanently transferred to the Christian church as the new covenant people, to be fulfilled to the extent that they are applicable under the new historical situation; details dependent on literal Israel retaining its status as the covenant people, resident in Palestine, have lapsed by default; we are dependant upon later inspired writers for a valid application of these [Old

“The invitation to participate in the second coming of Christ is paralleled by other occasions when God Himself has sent His servants at pivotal times in history to offer salvation to humanity. A study of the key elements involved in each of these events will clarify the issues just before the second coming of Christ.

“As we study these events, a pattern emerges that parallels the event of the second coming of Christ.

1. In the fullness of time, God acted on His own time schedule to bring about judgment and salvation.
2. The event initiated by God took place when humanity had sunk in sin to its lowest depth.
3. The political, religious, and intellectual leaders of the age were foremost in leading the people into sin and apostasy.
4. Apostasy led to the creation of ‘designer gods’ who fit the mood, the culture, the worldview, and the intellectual thinking of the age. Reliance upon ‘designer gods’ led to the rejection of God and doubt in His message.
5. God chose a messenger to bring His Word of warning and salvation.
6. God’s people received the salvation offered by God because they accepted His Word by faith. Faith is what gave them certainty in the prophecies of God’s Word” (E. Edward Zinke, taken from the devotional message delivered September 30, 1999, at the 1999 Annual Council, found at www.adventist.org/world_church/official_meetings/1999annualcouncil/zinke.html).

III. CLOSING

Activity
Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.
Ask if any students have had a dream about the

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Engaging the Senses
In order to make more real for your students something that happened long ago or will happen in the future, such as the Second Coming, ask your students to engage all their senses as they view a photo, look at a graphic, or form an image in their mind about an event. Ask: “If you were there right now, what are you hearing? Do you taste anything? What do you smell? How are you feeling? Describe what you’re seeing.” In the case of a photo or other graphic it is useful to have them view the image in quadrants so they can focus special attention and likely see more detail.

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

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

• Flashlight
Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. 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.
Second Coming and what their reaction was upon waking. If the thought of the Second Coming causes anxiety or doubt in any of your students, share texts such as 1 John 1:9 that give comfort and confidence. Offer to further discuss God's saving grace with any who need assurance. Show a graphic of the Second Coming. As if they were seeing the real thing, ask what they would hear, smell, see, feel, or perhaps taste.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

A church friend of mine, with whom I went to public high school, came to me near the end of our senior year and said, “No one found out I am a Seventh-day Adventist.” Upon hearing those words I thought to myself, How could someone not know you were a Seventh-day Adventist—especially given public high school mainstays such as cafeteria “mystery meat,” Friday night football games, etc. To me, those words bespoke a fulfilled desire to fit in and not stand out.

As we draw closer with each passing week to the day of His coming, challenge your students to daily live their lives standing on principle, serving those around them, and looking forward in confidence to the Second Coming. The word advent is part of our name, chosen to identify our denomination in 1863. We Adventists should reveal Jesus through many ways, including how we live our lives.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 2, 3. A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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.
**countdown to the Savior**

**flashlight**

“For more than a thousand years the Jewish people had awaited the Saviour’s coming. . . . In song and prophecy, in temple rite and household prayer, they had enshrined His name. And yet at His coming they knew Him not. . . .

“Yet God had chosen Israel. He had called them to preserve among men the knowledge of His law, and of the symbols and prophecies that pointed to the Saviour. . . . They were to reveal God to men” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 27).

**keytext**

“So in heaven’s council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem.”

(*The Desire of Ages*, p. 32)
Do you agree or disagree with these statements?
The Jewish nation and the SDA Church are similar. The Jewish nation and the SDA Church are different.

Mark on the continuum where your response to these statements would fall. Be prepared to explain your answer.

The Bible contains many prophecies pertaining to the coming Messiah, and specifically to both His first and second advents. The first prophecy is found in Genesis 3:15, speaking not only about Satan’s war against God’s church, but also the eventual crushing of Satan after the lesser harm (albeit human death) he inflicts on Christ. Adam and Eve believed their firstborn son would be the Messiah.

Every part of the Temple ritual was a foreshadowing of Christ. Its cruciform layout is common in great cathedrals today.

The last chapter of the Bible ends with the prophecy and promise of the return of Jesus.

“Did you know?”

“They did not become the light of the world, but shut themselves away from the world in order to escape temptation to idolatry. In the instruction given through Moses, God had placed restrictions upon their association with idolaters; but this teaching had been misinterpreted. It was intended to prevent them from conforming to the practices of the heathen. But it was used to build up a wall of separation between Israel and all other nations” (The Desire of Ages, p. 29).

“At the Saviour’s coming was foretold in Eden. When Adam and Eve first heard the promise, they looked for its speedy fulfillment. They joyfully welcomed their firstborn son, hoping that he might be the Deliverer. But the fulfillment of the promise tarried. Those who first received it died without the sight. From the days of Enoch the promise was repeated through patriarchs and prophets, keeping alive the hope of His appearing, and yet He came not. The prophecy of Daniel revealed the time of His advent, but not all rightly interpreted the message. Century after century passed away; the voices of the prophets ceased. The hand of the oppressor was heavy upon Israel, and many were ready to exclaim, ‘The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth.’ Eze. 12:22. But like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God’s purposes know no haste and no delay” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 31, 32).

“As they departed from God, the Jews . . . lost sight of the teaching of the ritual ser-vice. That service had been instituted by Christ Himself. In every part it was a symbol of Him; and it had been full of vitality and spiritual beauty. But the Jews lost the spiritual life from their ceremonies, and clung to the dead forms. They trusted to the sacrifices and ordinances themselves, instead of resting upon Him to whom they pointed” (The Desire of Ages, p. 29).
Are Seventh-day Adventists you know “in the world but not of the world”? Do you have any good friends who are not Seventh-day Adventists? Why or why not?

Describe how the various components of the Temple ritual service were symbols of Christ. What symbols of Christ are included in Seventh-day Adventist worship services?

Why were the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds intensely interested in what was happening on earth? Do you think those beings are as interested in today’s world?

Can you reconcile the statement that “through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race,” yet calamities such as the holocaust and the Christmas 2004 tsunami occur? Explain.

“Look upon Jesus, Child of God, come for to save us, Child of God. In His time He came at first prophecy’s end; in our time we pray may He come again. In the world, not of it, the Savior our Guide, we, His blessed children, each must decide: Do we serve God or Mammon as we live out our days? For what shall it profit if we’re not His always.”—Rick Blondo, Seventh-day Adventist Church member
Sabbath

And yet at His coming they knew Him not” (The Desire of Ages, p. 27). Do you believe the adage “What is past is prologue”? Will there be a group of people in the last days who, like the ancient Jewish nation, are students of the Scriptures yet fail to recognize that the hour of His coming is at hand? How can we prevent our being part of that group? What can we do to be alert to the signs of His coming?

How does this “not to worry” text often shared with teenagers give you comfort: “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)?

Sunday

Adventists are called to be a separate people, meaning that we do not conform to the degenerate ways of this world, yet are still part of this world. Within Adventism one can find the entire range of degrees of separation as evidenced by how one lives, where one lives, how one dresses, where one goes to school, what one drives, what one drinks, what one eats, ad infinitum. Where are you on this spectrum, and why? How do you feel about or react to those who are elsewhere on that spectrum?

Messiah did not come as quickly as the patriarchs thought He would. Over time, many people lost hope. Others lost the vision entirely. Ellen White states: “God’s purposes know no haste and no delay.” What are your personal thoughts on the second coming of Christ? Do you believe it could happen next month? next year? in your lifetime? Are you hoping to achieve so much before the Second Coming that you do not think you’ll want to live in an area with a high concentration of Seventh-day Adventists? Why or why not? Would you want to enter mission service in a country or environment far different from your own? Why or why not?

Monday

Who comprises the heavenly council? If things on earth are transpiring according to a metaphorical “great clock of time,” is there merit to the idea of predestination? Is it possible we humans can hasten or delay the second coming of Christ?

Tuesday

How do Seventh-day Adventists reveal God to men and women? Here’s another way to think about that: When your classmates, friends, neighbors, coworkers, teachers, police officers, boyfriend, girlfriend, parents, pets (OK, that last one is a bit much, but you get the idea) see you, what is it about God they also see?

Wednesday

You’re not out here all alone. Someone is looking after you or for you as a shepherd does his sheep. Does that thought bring you comfort or annoy you? That may depend on where you’re at in relation to the rest of the flock. And the someone could be a Someone or others such as a grandparent, parent, pastor, teacher, friend. Maybe you’re sometimes the someone looking after or for another person. With the “finding” of a lost sheep, coin, or person comes rejoicing on earth as it does in heaven. Have you had a “rejoicing” experience—either from your “being found” or from “finding” someone else?

Thursday

Should time last long enough for you to establish a home of your own, do you think you’ll want to live in an area with a high concentration of Seventh-day Adventists? Why or why not? Would you want to enter mission service in a country or environment far different from your own? Why or why not?

Friday

If you harbor the notion that the second coming of Jesus will happen at some far-off time, have you ever thought about how short life can be? God forbid it, but if your life were to end tomorrow (in my house we refer to this line of reasoning as “If I were to get hit by a cement truck tomorrow”), then the next thing you’ll know is the second coming of Christ. Are you at peace knowing with assurance that you are saved right now through Christ’s sacrifice for Himself on the cross? If not, or uncertain, please talk with your Sabbath School teacher, parent, or pastor. It isn’t presumptuous to have that assurance of salvation. It is a promise fulfilled.

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this week’s reading*

The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 2, 3.

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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
The story of God coming to earth as a Man begins with a young girl—probably a teenager—who receives shocking, almost unbelievable news. Mary’s fiancé, Joseph, didn’t believe in the idea of a virgin birth at first, and the idea is still a stumbling block today for people who find it difficult to accept the story of Jesus as it’s presented in the Bible. But Mary’s story offers a beautiful lesson in obedience, faith, and trust.

Mary is not overpowered by Divinity without her consent. The angel presents her with the shocking news that she will bear the Son of God, but it’s left up to Mary to say, “May it be to me as you have said” (NIV). Mary’s song of praise, the Magnificat, says: “The Mighty One has done great things for me” (NIV). God can do “great things” for and through us too, but He requires our obedience.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that God chose a poor peasant woman as the mother of His Son. (Know)
• Feel that God has a destiny for each of them just as He had for Mary. (Feel)
• Respond with obedience to God’s call in their own lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Obedience
• Knowing God’s will for your life

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.

Look at Sabbath’s activity in the student lesson. If you have access to a laptop, do the activity together in class, looking through the various works of art that you can access by typing “Annunciation” into Google Images (or a similar image search engine). Or, find some Annunciation paintings in art books you can borrow from the library and bring to class, or print out color copies of paintings found online.

As students look at the images, note the different styles from various eras of art history and draw attention to details highlighted in each picture. Ask, “How do you think this artist viewed Mary? What did the artist think about angels? What details in the picture stand out to you?” Move on to a discussion of the comparison between the story as the Bible tells it and what appears in the various pictures.

Illustration
Share this illustration in your own words:
When Lana got pregnant at 16, she felt people staring at her wherever she went. She stopped going both to school and to church. Her parents were sup-
portive, but her boyfriend had dumped her and wanted nothing to do with either her or the baby. A few friends stuck by her, but far more were quick to gossip about her behind her back. Lana figured her life was pretty much over. She believed abortion was wrong and couldn’t imagine giving her baby up for adoption, so she was determined to keep the baby and raise it herself. But she couldn’t see how she’d ever finish high school, go to college, get married, or even have a fun night out with her friends.

Three years later, Lana’s world looked very different. She had just finished high school by taking courses part-time. It had taken a lot longer, but she was proud of what she’d accomplished. She began applying to colleges. No, she wasn’t dating and out having fun with her friends as much as she’d like, but she did have a core group of friends who supported her. She’d also made friends with a few other young moms who could relate to what she was going through. She even felt comfortable enough to start going to church again so she could take her little boy to Sabbath School. She found people there kinder and more helpful than she’d expected. And her 3-year-old son was the greatest joy in her life.

Lana realized that although getting pregnant as an unmarried teenager hadn’t been God’s will for her, He had still managed to work in her life. She grew to appreciate God’s love for her and loved Him as well. As she learned to follow God’s leading and obey His principles in her life, step by step, things had worked out far better than she’d ever dreamed.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Though Mary’s pregnancy was the result of the Holy Spirit, it is likely that most people would not have believed her story. She still would have experienced a lot of the shame and disapproval directed at a young woman who got pregnant out of wedlock. And yet Mary did not defend herself. She was not offended or discouraged. She did not become angry at the injustice of being falsely accused, nor did she indulge in a self-pity party. It seems that she gave her damaged reputation no thought at all. She was too busy thinking about the blessing God had presented to her. She probably would have understood Lana’s situation and encouraged her to have hope and be faithful. Mary was called by God to a very difficult and challenging calling. We can only imagine how she might have felt when the angel visited her with the news. But we know how she responded—with faithful obedience.

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.

Say: “At the beginning of today’s lesson we looked at some examples of famous artwork that various artists have created to try to capture the moment described in this Bible passage in which Mary is told she is going to be the mother of God’s Son. How would you depict that moment? What would you choose to show and emphasize if you were trying to make it real to an audience of today’s young people?”

Provide art supplies and plenty of space, and allow students to work in pairs, groups, or individually on their own representation of the Annunciation. Suggest that they might like to do a drawing, poster, or even a cartoon. But if you have space and time you might provide options for those who are less interested in visual arts. Perhaps a pair or small group might like to create a skit based on Gabriel’s visit to Mary, or on some other aspect of the story. Someone else might like to write a poem or dramatic monologue of what Mary might have been thinking during and after the angel’s visit.

After allowing 20 to 30 minutes for students to work on their projects, share them with the whole group.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 1:18–2:23.

Sharing Context and Background

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

As we look at the story of Mary and Joseph as related in Luke 1 and 2 and Matthew 1 and 2, it’s important to remember the role of “betrothal” in Biblical times. Unlike a modern-day engagement, which is simply an agreement between two individuals that they will get married at some later date, a Jewish betrothal at this time was a binding legal agreement. The bride-price, or dowry, was agreed upon by the prospective bridegroom (or his father) and the bride’s father. When the dowry was paid, the betrothal was
celebrated with a public ceremony that was considered more important than the actual marriage itself. After the betrothal ceremony, the bride-to-be still lived in her father’s house, but she was considered the legal property of her husband-to-be. If she was unfaithful to him, it was considered just as serious as adultery, and a divorce was required to break off the relationship. The marriage was formally celebrated with a procession in which the bride was brought to her husband’s house, where the marriage would be consummated.

So when the angel came to Mary, she was still a virgin, but in our terms she was legally married to Joseph, though still living in her parents’ home. Joseph was an older man, almost certainly a widower, who had at least six children from a previous marriage. It was common for an older man and a young woman to marry. Both of them were, of course, expected to remain pure and unattached through the engagement until the day when the marriage was formalized and they began living together.

According to the customs of the time, Joseph was justified in seeing Mary’s pregnancy as a terrible betrayal. Although marriage in ancient times was less focused on romance and attraction and more on making a beneficial match, Joseph was likely hurt and disturbed by the revelation that his betrothed was pregnant. He was a man of such good character, however, that he decided to keep the problem from public view and spare Mary much of the embarrassment she could expect if the scandal spread far and wide. Though another angelic visit convinced Joseph of the truth of Mary’s claims, there were no doubt many among her family, friends, and neighbors who were never convinced. Mary had to be prepared to suffer shame, public humiliation, and gossip in order to be obedient to God’s call.

**Teaching From . . .**

*Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.*

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

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

After looking at the variety of artwork (and perhaps drama and writing) produced by students in response to this story, say: “There are many different ways to view any Bible story. But the most important thing we can do is to place ourselves in the story. If we were in Mary’s place—being called by God to do something challenging, difficult, maybe even impossible—how would we respond?” Mary’s words: “I am the Lord’s servant... May it be to me as you have said” (NIV), illustrate the attitude we should all strive to imitate.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God requires human cooperation to get His work done. Or perhaps it’s better to say that He chooses to use humans who choose to cooperate with Him. Jesus could simply have appeared on earth, fully formed as a man, and announced that He was the Messiah. But He chose to be born in the ordinary way, to a mother and father who both were given the choice to agree to what was being asked of them. Both Mary and Joseph had a very challenging role to play in God’s work in this world, and they both chose to be obedient. Every day since then, God has been calling people—including teenagers, as Mary probably was—to respond to His challenges with courage and obedience. It’s not easy, but the rewards are great. Will you say to Him, “I am the Lord’s servant”?

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 4.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, 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.
“Angels attend Joseph and Mary as they journey from their home in Nazareth to the city of David. . . . But in the city of their royal line, Joseph and Mary are unrecognized and unhonored. Weary and homeless, they traverse the entire length of the narrow street, from the gate of the city to the eastern extremity of the town, vainly seeking a resting place for the night. There is no room for them at the crowded inn. In a rude building where the beasts are sheltered, they at last find refuge, and here the Redeemer of the world is born” (The Desire of Ages, p. 44).

“‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’”

(Luke 1:38, NIV)
If I were Mary and the angel came to me announcing I was going to give birth to God’s Son, my reaction would be:

- “Thank You, Lord!”
- “Are you crazy?”
- “Am I crazy?”
- “That is completely impossible.”
- “Wow. I must be pretty amazing!”

many religious traditions at the time of Jesus (and later) had stories about miraculous births. In these stories, a god usually came to a woman and mated with her, often in the form of an animal. In Greek myths, for example, the god Zeus turned himself into a swan to mate with a woman named Leda; the child born of this union was the beautiful Helen of Troy. The women in these stories seemed to have little choice in what happened to them.

By contrast, the story of Jesus’ birth contains no bizarre godlike animals, and Jesus’ mother is not forced against her will. Instead, an angel simply comes to Mary with news of the miraculous birth. Mary becomes a partner in bringing salvation to the world when she chooses to accept the angel’s news, saying, “I am the Lord’s servant.”

“In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’

“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.’ . . .

“How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’

“The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will over-shadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’ . . .

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’ Then the angel left her. . . .

“And Mary said: My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.’

“So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

(Luke 1:26-49; 2:4-7)
**OUT OF THE STORY**

What thoughts might have gone through Mary’s mind when she first heard the angel’s announcement?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

What does Mary’s song in Luke 1:46-55 tell us about Mary and the kind of person she was?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

When Mary was forced to give birth to Jesus in a stall where animals were kept, how do you think she felt about the angel’s prophecy? Do you think she was still glad God had chosen her?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Why do you think God chose to come to earth as the child of a family so poor they didn’t even have a place to stay? What does this tell us about God?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

**punch lines**

“This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. “But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit’” (Matthew 1:18-20, NIV).

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14, NIV).

“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2, NIV).

**other eyes**

“Mary is the lily in God’s garden.”—Bridget of Sweden, 14th-century Swedish nun.

“If I had been the Virgin Mary, I would have said ‘No.’”—Margaret Smith, current American comedian.

“[Mary is the] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ. . . . She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.”—Martin Luther, 16th-century German Reformer.
Sabbath

The angel Gabriel’s visit to Mary is traditionally known as the “Annunciation” (making an announcement). Go online, type “annunciation” into a search engine such as Google Images, and look at famous paintings from history in which different artists have tried to portray what that moment might have been like.

As you look at these pictures, how is Mary portrayed? ___________________________________________________________

How is the angel shown? __________________________________________________________

Is there one picture that looks most like you imagine the scene? If you were to draw your own “Annunciation,” what would you include?

How would you show Mary and the angel? Either draw your picture or write a brief description of how you’d imagine the scene.

__________________________________________________________

Sunday

The Did You Know? section of the lesson points out that there are many other stories of miraculous births, even virgin births, in other world religions. Critics of Christianity sometimes claim that the Bible’s story of Jesus’ birth is just another example of this kind of myth or legend. (If you’re curious to know more, do some online searches about virgin births and miraculous births. You’ll find that miraculous births are described for the Egyptian god Horus, the Roman god Mithras, Buddha, even Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor.)

As you read the story of Jesus’ birth in Luke 1 and 2, think about what parts of the story might be different from the myths and legends of other religions? What aspects of this story convince you that it is true? What does the story tell us about the kind of God we worship?

Monday

Read Mary’s response to the angel in the Key Text for this week. Then read Margaret Smith’s quote in the Other Eyes section.

What do you think you would have said to the angel? ____________________________

Was saying “No” ever a real option for Mary?

Why do you think she might have considered saying “No”? ____________________________

Tuesday

The Flashlight section of the lesson describes Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem—poor, alone, unwanted, and with no place to go. What kinds of people in today’s society might be able to relate to Mary and Joseph as they arrived in Bethlehem?

__________________________________________________________

For people living through these kinds of experiences, it’s meaningful to know that Jesus was born into a family who were very much like refugees. God the Son did not choose to come to the world as a prince in a royal family (unlike most of the other “miraculous births” we looked at in Sunday’s lesson). He is able to sympathize with people like His earthly parents—people who are desperate and have no place to go.

Wednesday

The passage from Matthew 1 in the Punch Lines section of the lesson tells the story of Mary’s miraculous pregnancy from Joseph’s point of view. As you read it, put yourself in Joseph’s place. Joseph had the right to publicly shame Mary and have her punished for what must have seemed to him like unfaithfulness. Even before he was visited by the angel, what does Joseph’s immediate reaction tell us about the kind of person he was?

__________________________________________________________

What kind of qualities might be needed in the man who would be Jesus’ earthly father?

__________________________________________________________

Thursday

Mary took on a vital role in the story of salvation because she said “Yes,” when God told her He had a special role for her. Although few of us will ever get miraculous visits from an angel, God has a special part in His plan for each one of us.

What is God asking you to say “Yes” to right now? What would it mean if you said, “I am the Lord’s servant. May it be to me as you have said”?

Friday

How important is the story of Jesus’ birth to your faith as a Christian? If these stories (Matthew 1; 2 and Luke 1; 2) weren’t in the Bible, what difference would it make to your beliefs about God and Jesus? What do we learn about God through the stories of Jesus’ birth?

__________________________________________________________

this week’s reading*

The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 4.

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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.
what you seek is what you get

Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 5.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Perhaps one of the most profound moments in the stories of Christ’s childhood is that of when Joseph and Mary had Jesus dedicated in the Temple. While this act was a normal part of the religion of the Jews, something very extraordinary occurred as Simeon recognized the Savior, and Anna responded with prophetic praise because she, too, had been waiting for the Christ to come.

In this week’s lesson there are several angles from which students may benefit from the study of Christ’s dedication. First, there is the picture of a small group of believers actively seeking the coming of Christ’s kingdom. Clearly, there is an image of a remnant similar to that which may be true of those waiting for Christ to come a second time. Second, there are images in the dedication itself that convey truths about Christ as our Redeemer. Bringing the firstborn son to be dedicated is an act connected to the deliverance of Israel during the Exodus. Ironically, the child who is the Redeemer is presented to the priest in a rite signifying redemption. Furthermore, as Ellen White observes: “The Shekinah had departed from the sanctuary, but in the Child of Bethlehem was veiled the glory before which angels bow” (The Desire of Ages, p. 52). And third, the people who witnessed Christ in the Temple that day were ordinary believers, much like God’s people today. Anna and Simeon are model believers for us today—ordinary people who have one prominent hope that is the theme of each day: the promised Savior will come. Young people today can live with the same hope and the same single-minded focus as Simeon and Anna.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• See the importance of having a seeking spirit. (Know)
• Witness a remnant of believers who remain focused on Christ. (Feel)
• Choose to live each ordinary moment with extraordinary expectations. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Remnant
• Priorities
• Second coming of Christ*

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 voting activity in the What Do You Think? section. How is the remnant waiting at Christ’s first coming like the remnant that will watch for Christ’s soon return?

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of a ranger in a national park leading a group of hikers to a fire lookout. The ranger became quite engaged with being a tour guide to the hikers, pointing out every flower and critter in the forest. As he guided the hikers through the forest, the constant communications on his radio distracted him and the wildlife he was so keenly in touch with; thus he turned off his radio so he could share the wonders of the forest uninterrupted. The people were excited to listen to the exuberant ranger, and some were even taking notes as they followed the evidences of wildlife in detail. What the ranger failed to notice was what was following them. As they made their way to the fire lookout, a frantic ranger caught up with him and the group. Trying to catch his breath he exclaimed, “Why isn’t your radio on? We have been trying to warn you for over a mile now that a grizzly bear has been stalking your entire group for the last half hour!” They were completely unaware that they were about to learn that the operative word in wilderness is “wild.” It is possible to be in touch with one thing and be completely out of touch with another.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

How might this be true for people who live at the time when Christ will arrive? Whether it be His first appearance or His second coming, is it possible to live with our radios off?

Simeon and Anna were among a small group of people tuned in to the hope that the day of Christ would come. And the only way to witness the Savior, or the Consolation of Israel, was to be waiting and watching for that day.

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 try to imagine the scene in your mind’s eye. Envision the sights of the Temple, the sounds, smells, and the story as it might have played out.
- Underline what you think are three key phrases in this passage.

More Questions for Teachers

How does the work of the Holy Spirit resemble the movement of the wind? After discussing this question, look up Acts 2:1-12 and Acts 2:36-47 and examine the specific ways in which the Spirit works on people.

In John 3:14 Jesus refers Nicodemus to an old story every teacher in Israel would know. Read Numbers 21:4-9 and explain how that story is connected to the mission of Christ on earth. How does the snake being lifted up represent Christ being lifted up on Calvary? Compare the two events and discover why you think Jesus made this comparison.

It is likely that John 3:16 is the most popular verse from Scripture, perhaps because it is so simple a child can receive it and so profound a scholar cannot fully comprehend it. Have you ever heard something again and again and it lost its meaning? Rewrite this verse in
Joseph would present the Savior of the world to be dedicated, as a sign of God’s merciful provision and their devotion to God.

If you could go to Jesus privately and in person as did Nicodemus, what would you say/ask? Why? In the same way that Jesus “changed the subject” on Nicodemus, what subject do you think Jesus would take up with you? Why?

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 highlights the dedication of the Christ child by Mary and Joseph, but the central event in the story has to do with the response of Simeon and Anna—two people waiting for the Messiah to appear.

Of the dedication service Alfred Edersheim notes: “It consisted of the formal presentation of the child to the priest, accompanied by two short ‘benedictions’—the one for the law of redemption, the other for the gift of a firstborn son, after which the redemption money was paid. Most solemn, as in such a place, and remembering its symbolic significance as the expression of God’s claim over each family in Israel, must this rite have been” (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database. Copyright © 1999, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved).

About 40 days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph would present the Savior of the world to be dedicated, as a sign of God’s merciful provision and their devotion to God.

Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the Temple in obedience to the law. Mary has to go through the rite of purification, and Jesus is to be dedicated. There are three different parts to their coming to this service. First is the rite of purification, which has to do with the mother. When a child was born, the mother was considered unclean for about 40 days—seven days for their male child and thirty-three days for the mother—to be able to come to the Temple, according to Leviticus 12:1-4. At this time the rite of purification could be done. This rite included an offering (a lamb as a burnt offering and a turtledove as a sin offering). During this time, only wealthy people could afford a lamb, which meant that poorer families could offer two pigeons or turtledoves instead (Leviticus 12:6-8). Clearly, Mary and Joseph were not wealthy.

Second, there is the dedication of the child. There were two parts to this dedication: if the child was a boy and born to the tribe of Levi, he would automatically become part of the priestly class. For the firstborn baby boys from other tribes, parents would bring a small offering for the service of the priests—this offering was usually about five shekels (Numbers 18:1-16).

The third part of the dedication was a consecration of the firstborn child to the Lord (Exodus 13:2, 12), a requirement of all Jewish families. Simeon, a faithful servant of God, and Anna witness this event and are your own words and do not use any of the words in the passage (except words such as: in, the, to, but, and, etc.) and share it with each other in the class.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. 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.
aware of who Jesus is, perhaps only because they are of a few people who believed it would happen and who were watching for the day of the Lord’s appearing.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Divide the class into two groups. Invite one group to scan the room and look for items that have the color blue in them. Ask the other group to examine the room looking for items that have red in them.

As the students report, ask: “When you walked into the room today did you think, ‘Wow, there are at least five items in this room that have red in them’? Probably not. As you scanned the room you were looking for something particular. How is that like the vision Simeon and Anna had for the coming Messiah? How do you think our lives would be different if we were to watch for Christ in a similar way? What would change?”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Mary and Joseph were probably still reeling and exhausted by the events of the birth of Jesus when they brought the baby to the Temple at the appointed time. Simeon, knowing his days were numbered but promised by God to see the Messiah, looked each baby in the eye, wondering, “Is this the One?” Anna spent day and night in the Temple serving the Lord, hyper-focused on the day when the Messiah would show up. Perhaps neither really knew if the Messiah would first appear as a baby, but the glory of heaven showed up—and only a few were watching.

It is possible to go through your day, your weeks, and even a lifetime busy and focused on many things, except the one thing that truly matters. Maybe you could find ways to put around you reminders of the one person, the one most important event that is in your future. It’s not graduation. It’s not marriage. It’s not a job. It’s the coming of the Messiah—the Savior, Jesus Christ. As sure as He came to earth 2,000 years ago, He promises to return again. What will be your focus prior to that day?

* Fundamental Belief No. 25.

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

A Variety of Senses

Clearly, we discover the world, ideas, and information through our five senses. Some would suggest intuition is also a sense to include. But when we teach, do we use methods that engage the senses? The closing activity in this lesson evokes the visual sense. Every human seems to favor one or two senses above some of the others; thus, variety becomes key in teaching. One teacher brought in a loaf of hot, fresh bread one morning to a Sabbath School class where students were able to see, taste, touch, smell, and some claimed to have intuitively “become one” with the bread. The lesson was on Jesus’ claim to be “the Bread of Life”—a bread that will never leave you hungry again. Think about the senses and how you might use them all.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 5.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.
“As Simeon enters the temple, he sees a family presenting their firstborn son before the priest. Their appearance bespeaks poverty; but Simeon understands the warnings of the Spirit, and he is deeply impressed that the infant being presented to the Lord is the Consolation of Israel, the One he has longed to see” (The Desire of Ages, p. 55).

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”

(Luke 2:25, 26, NIV)
**Voting**—Agree or disagree (explain your response):
The awareness of people about Christ at the time of His birth is likely to be similar to what people expect at the Second Coming.

In Palestine the place of Gentiles was low. However, Luke’s Gospel features the outcasts, the downcast, and those who are often overlooked, such as women, children, and widows. In fact, there are 43 references to women in Luke’s Gospel. Furthermore, 25 percent of all widows referred to in the entire Bible are referred to by Luke.

“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord’), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: ‘a pair of doves or two young pigeons.’

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ‘Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.’

“The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’

“There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

“When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.”

*Luke 2:21-39, NIV*
Read the story and try to imagine the scene in your mind’s eye. Envision the sights of the Temple, the sounds, smells, and the story as it might have played out.

Underline what you think are three key phrases in this passage.

With so little information about the childhood events of Jesus, why do you think this story is recorded in the Bible?

Examine the words spoken by Simeon to God, and his words to Mary. When you consider these prophetic statements, what can you discern about the kind of person Simeon was?

Consider also Anna’s response (although her exact words are not recorded). Think about whether Simeon and Anna were typical people with common expectations about the Messiah, or were they somewhat unique for their time? What do you think? Explain.

How do you think Anna’s lifestyle—always living at the Temple, fasting, and praying—affect her influence on others? The last phrase observes: “she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.” How do you think people responded to her words?

Since it was revealed to Simeon that he would not die before seeing the Messiah, imagine how eagerly he must have been looking at the end of his years, knowing any day he would witness God’s Son. How does this anticipation relate to those of us living in the present season of earth’s history?

“Lord, I wait for your salvation” (Genesis 49:18, NCV).

“In our sad condition our only consolation is the expectancy of another life.”
—Martin Luther, 16th-century German Reformer.

“There were many that saw the babe but did not see the salvation.”—Unknown.

“We need a baptism of clear seeing. We desperately need seers who can see through the mist—Christian leaders with prophetic vision.”—A. W. Tozer, 20th-century American pastor, author, and editor.
Sabbath
Read and respond to the voting question in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. To what degree do you think “the remnant” at the first coming will be like “the remnant” that are alive when Christ returns?

God declares in Jeremiah 29:13: “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart” (NASB). How common is it in your life to witness someone who lives by this passage? Why do you think seeking God “with all your heart” is such a challenge?

Sunday
As you read the Into the Story section and use the questions in the Out of the Story section to guide your study, you may notice the response that Simeon made to Christ as well as the response of Anna. Compare the two reactions and note how they are similar and how they are different. What do you think is the central lesson in this story for the church? What is the message you think God is trying to say to you in this week’s lesson?

Rewrite these two passages in your own words but try not to use any of the major words or phrases already in the text. (If you need more space, use the Notes section in the back of your book.)

Tuesday
Read the quote from The Desire of Ages in the Flashlight section of this lesson and imagine how Simeon and Anna must have lived each day. How would you describe their experience as they discovered that the Messiah had been born and was before their very eyes? What lesson is there in this passage for you today?

Wednesday
As you read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson, which verse speaks most prominently to you today? Which verse are you least familiar with?

What lesson is there in this passage for you today?

Thursday
Imagine if this story were to take place today, and based on the way you currently watch and wait for God to reveal Himself to you, would you be among those who recognized Christ, or those who were preoccupied with other things? Show where you would be on the continuum.

Friday
Reflect on the scene portrayed in Luke 2:21-39 and put yourself in the Temple that day. How would you respond to Simeon’s words? What would you think and say if you saw Anna’s reaction to the news? What can you learn from Simeon and Anna this week?

this week’s reading*
The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 5.

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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 our time, the Wise Men are icons of Christmas. We don’t know exactly who they were. There is no doubt that the Wise Men were wealthy, educated noblemen, but we don’t know if there were three of them, and we don’t know their names, place of origin, or ages. So how is it the Wise Men seem so familiar to us? Because they’ve become part of the lore that surrounds Christmas and have gained these attributions based on surmising, an understanding of the culture of the time, and the sparse record of them found in Matthew.

We do know it wasn’t really a star the Wise Men were following. Their navigation feat was aided by a divinely sent Global Positioning System that outshone the best technology available today. The angels guided them from their home directly to the birthplace of the Son of God.

They’ve been given names (Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar) and have the Feast of the Three Kings (also referred to as Epiphany or Twelfth Night marking the end of the Christmas season) celebrated in many cultures. But the real Magi (pronounced may-ji) were not extras in a Christmas play. They studied the Hebrew Scriptures and found the words of Balaam: “There shall come a Star out of Jacob” (Numbers 24:17, KJV). They probably also knew and understood the time prophecy of Daniel (Daniel 9:25, 26), and came to realize the Messiah’s coming was near.

They arrived in Jerusalem expecting to find excitement concerning the birth. Instead, they found general ignorance of the event and their words stirred passions within the Roman and Jewish leaders that would lead to the murder of untold numbers of innocent children and the eventual murder of Jesus.

In this lesson the Wise Men also serve as models for those who seek Jesus in the time of His second advent.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand how the Wise Men were led to Jesus according to divine plan. (Know)
• Sense the determination and excitement felt by the Wise Men as they travel to greet the Messiah. (Feel)
• See themselves as latter-day wise men and wise women who seek Jesus as did those Wise Men of old. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Politics
• Natural world
• Prejudice

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

Invite the students to share their thoughts about how Jesus was evident to them this past Christmas. Did they easily find Him in their Christmas observances? Were thoughts of Him part of their family time on Christmas eve or Christmas morning? As they experienced the Christmas season in your area, was He notable by His absence in things such as signs avoiding the word “Christmas,” advertisements, being usurped by Santa and other icons of commercialized Christmas; TV programs about Christmas that avoid the subject of Jesus’ birth; public Christmas events such as a tree lighting that skip any mention of Jesus; and other examples of Jesus being left out of Christmas.

Discuss with your students how today’s media would cover the arrival of the Magi if they were to arrive in your town.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

“The Gift of the Magi,” by O. Henry, is a classic short story about a girl who sells her hair at Christmastime so she can raise money to give a fob (a short chain for a pocket watch) to her beloved. Meanwhile, her beloved sells his pocket watch so he can raise money to buy her a set of combs for her beautiful long hair. In the end they realize their gifts of love surmounted the irony of their situation.

Here is the closing paragraph of the story: “The Magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the Magi.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

The story “The Gift of the Magi” is an affirmation of unselfish love. When a person is filled with selfless love for another, the happiness and well-being of that person is the highest priority. No expense is too great for a present to express that love.

Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus are the stars of the Christmas story—the ultimate story of unselfish love. Today, however, we’ll focus on the men who followed a star made of angels that led them to those central characters of the Christmas story. The Wise Men were devout seekers of truth, willing to leave their homeland to take a difficult journey that would be remembered through the ages. They brought gifts with them, gifts that spoke honor and respect for the recipient. They were not searching for a king to satisfy their curiosity. They came to present themselves to Him as a gift.

We will ask the question, Are we wise young men and women today? What are we looking for and why? What or who do we love the most? What are we willing to give?

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 Wise Men possibly came from Syria (north of Judah but still called “the East”) or farther northeast, perhaps as far away as the region of the Euphrates River. They may have traveled 400 miles (640 km) or more. Since they were following a “star” of angels moving in the night sky, they traveled at night. This would have made the trip at least three weeks long, and likely longer.

The men arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem. While their appearance may have garnered attention, their question for King Herod was what created a ripple effect in the community. They asked, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2).

• Why did King Herod not know about the Messiah prophecy or the place where He was to be born?
• Why was Herod disturbed about the idea of a king being born a few miles from his palace?
• The Wise Men did not perceive any kind of threat as they visited with King Herod. Why do you think that is?
• What does the Bible record (Matthew 2:11) indicate regarding where Jesus was when the Wise Men arrived? This would indicate He was out of the manger setting.
• Why were the Magi warned in a dream not to go back to Herod?
• What was the changed circumstance that made it safe for Joseph to take Jesus and Mary to Israel?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 2:1-20.

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

It seems that the Wise Men came to Jerusalem unaware that they were coming into a snake pit. King Herod was of Edomite ancestry, not a Jew himself, and he had become king of Judah by his friendship with Roman rulers. During his reign, he had brought Greek pagan worship into Judah, mixing it with worship of the true God. Although he was a smart politician and ruler, Herod became increasingly suspicious and jealous as he got older. He had his own sons executed for treason, along with many other relatives and former friends.

Herod had given religious authority to the Pharisees, a group who were something like a religious political party but with no real political power. To make the people of Judah happy, Herod had rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem into a magnificent building. He did not believe in or care about the religion or the God of the Jews, except as it served his desire to stay in power.

Herod was quite old when the Wise Men arrived and asked to see him. The Wise Men possibly did not know of Herod’s history of cruelty and his obsessive hold on power in Judah. In human terms, it could be considered that the Wise Men gave away the presence of the Son of God to a satanic, genocidal king. But God had His hand over the life of Jesus.

Although it is unknown precisely what area the Wise Men came from, areas considered to be east of Israel at that time included Persia and Media (both now within modern-day Iran) and Assyria and Babylonia (both now in modern-day Iraq).

The Wise Men undertook their remarkable journey because they believed in the prophecy they had studied in the Old Testament. They believed that the baby prophesied to be born was the true king of Israel. It didn’t matter to them that the “star” led them to a simple house in the little village of Bethlehem. No doubts entered their minds that this was truly the fulfillment of
what they had studied so carefully.

When they entered the house where Joseph and Mary and Jesus were staying, they bowed down on their knees and worshipped Him. They accepted that true glory and power did not reside with Herod in the palace at Jerusalem, or in the emperor’s seat at Rome, but in the humble place where the Son of God, the eternal Creator God, chose to enter the world.

III. CLOSING

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

Assign some roles to different students in the class and ask them to think for a few minutes about being that particular person in the story of the Wise Men. Designate students to be each of the Wise Men (you can assume there were three because of the three presents, but we do not know for sure), Herod, a teacher of the law, Joseph, and Mary. Have the students pretend they are that person and react to the things that happen in the story. Give prompts to get them started if necessary. Allow at least a minute or two for each person to give their perspective on what happened.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

“A friend of mine was called by his three young children to watch a Christmas play they had created. My friend entered the living room and surveyed the scene. Jesus was being played by a doll wrapped in a blanket. His oldest son was obviously Joseph wearing a bathrobe and holding a broom handle as his staff. His middle child was playing Mary. Her head was draped with a sheet and she looked intently toward the doll. His youngest child wore an aluminum foil crown and carried a box of gifts. The child felt it was necessary to explain herself and her mission. “I’m all three wise men,” she said proudly, “I bring precious gifts: gold, circumstance, and mud!” (From a sermon by Nancy S. Taylor, Old South church, Boston, Mass. Used by permission.)

What makes the Magi memorable? Is it that they’re mysterious, mentioned only in Matthew 2? They bore gifts? We all like to give and receive gifts. Is it that they are part of the Christmas story, bringing back childhood memories? Maybe it has to do with children. It actually has to do with the Child. We’d all like to believe we’d have been there to welcome the Christ child with gifts fit for a King.

The Wise Men did several things that make them memorable for us. They studied the Scriptures so carefully that they knew exactly what was going to happen. They accepted the prophecy not just as something interesting but as their destiny. As the prophecy became clear to them, the Wise Men committed their time and wealth to a journey to find the expected King. When they met God, they worshipped Him. And in addition to the material gifts they brought, they gave Him the greatest gift they could, which was themselves. We are called to be Wise Men and Women today, to follow their example.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 6.

“A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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.
following yonder star

flashlight

“The wise men had seen a mysterious light in the heavens upon that night when the glory of God flooded the hills of Bethlehem. As the light faded, a luminous star appeared, and lingered in the sky. It was not a fixed star nor a planet, and the phenomenon excited the keenest interest. That star was a distant company of shining angels, but of this the wise men were ignorant” (The Desire of Ages, p. 60).

keytext

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

(Matthew 2:2, NIV)
Imagine the wise men arriving in your town at Christmas in today’s world as if transported through time. These learned men have studied the night sky and the prophetic writings of old. They arrive expecting to find Jesus easily. To their amazement they find none who know about His birth.

As news crews converge, the visitors look about and see colored lights, repeated images of a large bearded man wearing red, people scurrying from store to store, and numerous signs declaring Happy Holidays. Although they deeply believe that a holy day has indeed arrived, they see no sign of Him.

“Who are you? Why are you here?” asks an excited reporter. “We are Magi. We have come in search of Jesus, to worship Him,” replies one of the regally robed travelers. “Do you know where we may find Him?”

How would you respond?

The precise number of wise men is unknown. Three is presumed because they presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Those items were the most valuable of that day, all gifts literally fit for a king yet also holding symbolic value. Gold, an always highly valuable commodity throughout history, was an appropriate gift for a king. Frankincense was used in making incense, a gift appropriate for a priest. Myrrh was an embalming agent, used by the Egyptians with their mummies. These gifts symbolize Jesus was King, Priest, and Savior who would die to save us from the consequence of sin.

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.’ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. . . .

“He sent them to Bethlehem and said, ‘Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.’ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. . . .

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. . . .

“When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.’

“After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.’ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: ‘He will be called a Nazarene.’”

(Matthew 2:1-3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16-23, NIV)
Why was Herod disturbed at news of the birth of Jesus?

Herod attempted to deliberately deceive the wise men by stating he wished to worship the Child himself. Instead, warned by God in a dream, they headed home after finding Jesus. Herod felt they had outwitted him. Do you think they did? Explain.

Have you ever had a dream you thought was a divine communication to you? If so, explain.

“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6, NIV).

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?” (Luke 15:4, NIV).

“Wise men still seek Him.”
—Author unknown.


“As in Paradise, God walks in Scripture, seeking man.”—St. Ambrose, 4th-century Bishop of Milan.
**Sabbath**

Matthew 2:3 notes that Herod and all of Jerusalem became alarmed at the words of the Magi. Had they truly accepted the fact that Jesus had come as prophesied, that would mean their lives would be affected, their plans impacted. So, too, our lives and plans are affected by His coming, then and soon-to-come. The fictional modern-day reporter, and the stunned millions who saw the report, would doubtless be just as vexed as were the Jewish priests at His first coming who simply could not conceive that the time had come for deliverance. Do you see the Child Savior at Christmas and each day of your life? Do you share the viewpoint of many that Christ is increasingly being removed from Christmas and from the national culture in general? Explain your answer.

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**Sunday**

As you read the account of the birth of Jesus, much happens in a very short time that directly and strikingly fulfills prophecies that had been given long before.

First advent prophecies fulfilled:
- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).
- Slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem (Jeremiah 31:15).
- Coming from Egypt (Hosea 11:1).
- Messiah to come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).

We’re counseled by Ellen White that “the end will come more quickly than men expect” (The Great Controversy, p. 631). With spiritual eyesight, and an eye toward those who failed to realize His first advent, we’ll see the signs of His coming. We’ll be the wise men and wise women seeking His second advent. Will you be among the wise? How have you sought Him today?

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**Monday**

The wise men were looking for Jesus, led by their study, the Holy Spirit, and an angelic beacon specially provided to show them the way. Convinced they were on the right path, they incredulously realized they were virtually alone in their awareness that the fulness of time had come. What lessons can be learned today from that scenario?

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**Tuesday**

The Flashlight quote in which Ellen White reveals that the Christmas star was actually a band of angels presents a wonderful opportunity for Seventh-day Adventists. However, there are stories each Christmas that suggest the star was a comet, an alignment of certain planets, or a supernova. This opens up a natural opportunity to talk about the role of a modern-day prophet. Many people seem especially attuned to spiritual discussion at Christmas and can readily see the plausibility of angels being involved, given their involvement with the shepherds when they proclaimed His birth. Have you ever interjected the knowledge you have into such conversation? How do you seek Jesus today? Do you find Him in the words of the Bible? the embrace of a loved one? the smile of a parent? the expectant eyes of a child? the beauty of a glorious sunset?

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**Wednesday**

Our Other Eyes section reminds us that we not only seek God, but He also seeks us. Is there a connection between the idea of people searching for Jesus and the knowledge that He is even more interested in seeking us? One day we will seek Him no more for we shall behold Him face-to-face.

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**Thursday**

Do you actively seek Jesus yourself? Where do you look for Him? Are you in places where you’d expect to find Him? List several ways in which you believe Jesus can be found.

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**Friday**

In the game “hide-and-seek,” children often place themselves where the seeker can’t help finding them! How are you positioning yourself so God can find you? What changes can you make in your life so that you can be found by God more easily?

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**this week’s reading**

The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 6.

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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
Jesus grew up in Nazareth during a period of about 30 years that the Bible summarizes in a handful of verses. Except for Luke including the single incident of Jesus’ visit to the Temple at age 12, the Gospel writers possibly didn’t know a great deal about Jesus’ childhood and youth and were not prompted by the Holy Spirit to record it.

The little we do learn creates a picture of a boy who was obedient and teachable, but also had a strong will and an independent spirit. Jesus grew physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Luke 2:52 may be intended to suggest that Jesus was not a prodigy who developed in one area of life at the expense of all others. Rather, He was a well-rounded person, liked and respected by those around Him, respectful of His parents but not afraid to tell them when He needed to get on with the work of His heavenly Father.

Joseph was most likely a carpenter, and Jesus certainly became a carpenter as He grew up. This was His trade until He began His public ministry of proclaiming the gospel at the age of 30. The people of His hometown saw Him as just that, a local carpenter, son of a carpenter, nothing special.

It may be difficult to grasp, but as a child and a teenager Jesus never once committed a sin. He was never selfish or impure or cruel or dishonest. The traditions of the Jewish rabbis decreed that a young man must begin to observe all the commandments and ceremonial obligations of their religion at the age of 12, but Jesus didn’t wait until then. By the age of 12 Jesus was so familiar with the law of God, in both theory and practice, that He could teach the teachers of His time. The childhood and youth of Jesus show us that we as human beings can be controlled by the Holy Spirit at any age.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Know that Jesus faced many of the challenges and trials of youth but remained sinless. (Know)
• Imagine Jesus as someone they might like to know and associate with as a young person. (Feel)
• Ask God for the grace to be like Jesus as they mature. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Maturity and independence
• Relationships with parents
• Extra-biblical writings about Jesus
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.

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Tally the responses to see how many people chose each of them. What was the predominant feeling in the group about Jesus as a teenager? Discuss why this might be.

Ask people to share why they chose the answers they did. For those who feel they would be uncomfortable around Jesus as a teenager, explore a little. Is this because of how they perceive Jesus (judgmental, too “holy,” not able to relax and have fun?) or how they perceive themselves (too sinful, not good enough, not serious/smart enough?).

Say: “We often like to picture Christianity as a friendship with Jesus, and in fact He told His disciples that He would not call them servants, but friends. If we think we wouldn’t be comfortable with a teenage Jesus hanging around in our peer group, can we really be friends with Him? What would need to change—in you, or in your image of Jesus—before you could feel comfortable calling Him a Friend?”

**Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

As a 5-year-old, Jonathan got lost in a department store while shopping with his parents. He was terrified, and so were they. While his mother alerted store security, Jonathan wandered around looking for friendly faces and crying until he attracted the attention of a kindly adult who helped reunite him with his mother. For many years Jonathan vividly remembered the fear that accompanied that experience.

Ten years later, Jonathan, now 15, sneaked out of his house to attend a party his parents had forbidden him to go to. This time, instead of feeling frightened, he was excited and proud of getting away with it. Fear didn’t come till later—when he got into a car to ride home with a friend’s older brother who was obviously drunk. Jonathan was terrified the whole way, and began to wonder whether his parents might have had a point after all.

Meanwhile, Jonathan’s mom was just as frantic and worried as she had been when Jonathan was lost in the store at age 5—but now there was anger along with her fear. She knew Jonathan had deliberately chosen to disobey. She prayed he would get home safely, but she also intended to ground him for three weeks as soon as he walked through the door.

Jesus’ parents left Jerusalem after the Passover and began the journey home. They were with crowds of people going the same direction and did not miss Jesus at first. After two days, they realized He was not anywhere in the crowd headed for home. They returned to Jerusalem and found Jesus in the Temple. Rather than apologizing to His parents, He said to them that He needed to be attending to His Father’s business.

Was either of Jonathan’s experiences similar to Jesus’ experience of being left at the Temple? Why or why not?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

Share the following in your own words:

Every young person goes through a period of distancing themselves from their parents and establishing their independence. This is one of the normal developmental tasks of adolescence. According to the Bible, Jesus wasn’t rebellious or difficult, yet He did cause His parents worry. To a certain extent, it’s normal for parents to worry about their children’s independence. But Jesus had the ability to grow into the young adult He was destined to be without having to create conflict with His parents.

Mary and Joseph were always aware that Jesus was a special child, different from any other human being in some ways. However, they were conscientious parents who felt the obligation to set boundaries and expectations as though Jesus were like any other child. They raised Him to be respectful and to obey them. They may have sometimes felt inadequate when raising a child who never sinned, but they remained steadily faithful to the parenting task.

Jesus had a normal human family upbringing, with the usual tensions and sibling conflicts. He grew up with older brothers and sisters who must have seemed less than ideal compared to their Brother. However, we do not have a situation like Jacob’s son Joseph and his jealous brothers. Jesus did not draw attention to Himself and always treated His siblings with kindness and fairness.

**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.

- Discuss the Out of the Story questions from the student lesson.
- Go around the class (or divide into small groups
if you have a large class) and ask each student to share about a time when they got lost or separated from their family when they were younger. Ask how they think their experience compares with Jesus’ experience of being left behind at the Temple at age 12. How did they feel? How might Jesus have felt? Was He even aware that His parents had left Jerusalem? Did their parents react as Mary and Joseph did? Discuss: Was Jesus deliberately worrying His parents here? Was He concerned about how they would be affected by His disappearance, or did He just forget about them altogether?

• Talk to the students about Jesus never committing a sin as a child. Ask for reactions to the idea that it is possible for human beings to obey God at a very early age. Students may express doubts. Be prepared to talk about how God works in a person’s life to help them let go of sin.

• Ask: “What can we learn from this week’s Bible passage that can relate to the challenges young people face today as they’re growing up and becoming a little more independent from their parents? How can we use Jesus as our example for how to live as a teenager?” On a chalkboard or flip chart at the front of the room, write suggestions from the class.

Sharing Context and Background
Use the following information to shed more light

Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Introducing Controversial Topics
The passage from the “Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” and the Context and Background section above, provide an example of how to introduce controversial topics to students. Some students may be completely unaware that such things as “noncanonical gospels” exist, and that the early church had to select those they believed were truly inspired, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Other students in your group (perhaps having read or seen The Da Vinci Code or been exposed to similar material) may already have questions about such issues. Introducing them in the context of a biblically based class, raising the relevant questions and giving accurate information will prepare them to meet challenges to their faith later on. If you think you may have young people in your group whose interest will be piqued by a quotation such as the one provided in the lesson, do a little background research yourself so that you can talk briefly but competently about such issues as apocryphal writings, the early church, and the formation of the biblical canon, in case such questions arise in class.

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

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

• Flashlight
Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. 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.
on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The Other Eyes section of the student lesson contains an excerpt from the “Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” an apocryphal work probably from the second or third century. Monday’s lesson asks students to critically examine this text and compare it to the biblical picture of Jesus in Luke 2. You may also want to draw their attention to this passage in class and discuss it with them.

The passage may be a little shocking to readers coming to it for the first time. The infancy gospels, like many of the noncanonical Gospels, were written some time after the time of Jesus and the original apostles, to fill in gaps in the canonical Gospels and often to promote particular agendas. The passage quoted in the lesson presents a Jesus who, as a boy, is seen as a danger to the community. He appears to be hot-tempered and to use His divine powers to curse those who defy Him—something the Jesus of the Gospels explicitly refused to do. The author of this infancy gospel (not, of course, the actual apostle Thomas in whose name it was written) appears to want to promote a vision of Jesus that emphasizes His power and divine judgment rather than His love and mercy. Remembering our focus throughout the Gospels—that Jesus came to reveal what God is like—this passage promotes a particular view of God that seems at odds with the way Jesus speaks and acts in the canonical Gospels.

While the Bible has almost no detail about Jesus’ growing-up years, Luke 2:52 tells us that Jesus had a good reputation as He grew up. The events of His ministry years, so carefully narrated in the Gospels, reveal Jesus’ character. He never used His divine power for His own use, even though Satan tried his hardest to break Jesus on this point. Jesus never succumbed to attitudes of selfish anger or pride, in spite of the rampant evil-mindedness around Him. No amount of negative peer pressure or temptation could change His mind about obedience to the Father in heaven. The single most important qualification for Jesus to be our Savior was that He be a human being and remain sinless throughout His life. He succeeded in His mission for our sake because He did not commit sin even as a child.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Pass out cards on which you have preprinted this week’s key text, with the phrase: “I want to grow __________________” below it. Say: “The Bible passage we’ve been studying this week tells us that Jesus grew into a well-rounded person, with His development appropriate to His age—physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. In what area do you feel you most need to grow? In a few words, write on this card how you would like to grow at this point in your life. As we pray, ask God to help you become more like Jesus.”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus faced the normal growing-up challenges of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Even though His time and culture were very different from ours, there’s still a lot we can learn from Him. We too can increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and humanity, if we take Jesus as our example. We can learn the principles of God so well that they become who we are. We can learn to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and learn to obey Him at all times. And like Jesus in the Temple, even though we have to move apart from our parents and establish our own independence, we can do that while still being obedient and respectful—becoming our own individuals while still maintaining that close relationship with the people who love and care for us. Jesus did it, and by His grace we can do it too.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 7, 8, and 9.

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**CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS**

**FEBRUARY 09 2013**

**STUDENT LESSON**

**growing up**

**Scripture Story:** Luke 2:39-52.
**Commentary:** *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 7, 8, 9.

**flashlight**

“Jesus did not ignore His relation to His earthly parents. From Jerusalem He returned home with them, and aided them in their life of toil. He hid in His own heart the mystery of His mission, waiting submissively for the appointed time for Him to enter upon His work. For eighteen years after He had recognized that He was the Son of God, He acknowledged the tie that bound Him to the home at Nazareth, and performed the duties of a son, a brother, a friend, and a citizen” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 82).

**keytext**

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

(Luke 2:52, NIV)

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If Jesus were a teenager in my school or neighborhood, I think I’d probably

____ want to hang out with Him, because He’d be really cool.

____ admire Him but not be all that comfortable around Him.

____ think He was weird and maybe even pick on Him a little.

____ ignore or avoid Him.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke each dedicate a little less than two chapters telling the story of Jesus’ birth. Each of the Gospels gives several chapters to Jesus’ death and resurrection, with most of the pages in between telling the stories of Jesus’ ministry—the stories He told, the sermons He preached, the people He healed. Only Luke spends any time at all on Jesus’ childhood and youth. From about age 2 to age 30, the young Jesus gets only 13 verses—most of those being about His trip to the Temple at age 12.

Except for that one story, we know almost nothing about Jesus as a child, as a teenager, and as a young man. We can make guesses based on the descriptions given in Luke 2: He “became strong” and was “filled with wisdom”; He grew “in favor with God and men” (NIV). In other words, He was everything He was supposed to be, appropriate for His age. At 6 He probably didn’t have the same kind of understanding of His heavenly mission and message that He did at 26. He had to grow, learn, and discover who He was, just as we do.

“Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.’

“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

“Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

(Luke 2:49-51, NIV)
punch lines

“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12, NIV).

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7, NIV).

“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck” (Proverbs 1:8, 9, NIV).

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

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right . . . Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1, 4, NIV).

Do you think Jesus did “typical toddler” things when He was 2 or 3—like throwing His toys, yelling when He wanted something, or running away from His parents? Are those things sins, or just a normal part of a child’s development?

How might Mary and Joseph have taught Jesus when He was a child? Do you think they raised Him differently from how they raised their other children?

Was Jesus being rebellious when He left His parents in the Temple? Was it thoughtless of Him not to tell them where He was? Explain your answer.

How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when Jesus said, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?”

When Mary “treasured all these things in her heart,” what do you think she was thinking about?

[Editor’s note: Book cited for discussion purposes. See Monday’s section.]

“Another time Jesus went into the street and a boy running by rushed into his shoulder; at which Jesus became angry and said to him, You will go no farther. And he instantly fell down dead: Which when some persons saw, they said, Where was this boy born, that everything which he says presently comes to pass?”—From the Second Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, a Syrian apocryphal book written about 200 years after the time of Jesus.
Sabbath

Because Jesus never sinned, we know that He didn’t go through a “rebellious teenager” phase. But the story of His visit to the Temple (Luke 2:41-49) shows Jesus at age 12 doing something most young people do as they enter their teens: establishing His own identity, independent of His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph. Jesus was finding His own path and discovering His destiny. Even though He wasn’t rebellious or rude, His new independence caused Mary and Joseph some worry and stress.

What does this tell us? That it’s normal for everyone, even Jesus, to move apart from their parents and become a little more independent in their teens. And it’s normal for every parent—even Mary and Joseph!—to worry about their kids. But it’s also possible as a teen to go through that search for independence without rebelling against or getting angry with your parents. The story in Luke 2 ends by telling us that Jesus went back home and “was obedient” to His parents during His teen and young adult years, even as He was growing up into the person God had planned for Him to be.

What can you learn from this story that you can apply at this time in your life?

Sunday

Why do you think the Bible tells us so little about Jesus’ early years?

Early Christians obviously wanted to know more about the young Jesus, and in later centuries some people made up stories about what Jesus might have been like as a boy (one of these is quoted in Other Eyes above, and we’ll discuss that tomorrow). But the inspired words of the Gospels contain only one story about Jesus’ youth.

For each of the following phrases from Luke 2, write an example of something you think Jesus as a child or teen might have done that would fit with that description:

He became strong
He was filled with wisdom
The grace of God was upon Him
He was obedient to His parents
He grew in stature
He grew in favor with God
He grew in favor with man

Monday

Read the Key Text summing up Jesus’ early life, then compare it to the story from the “Infancy Gospel” in the Other Eyes section of the lesson. The “Infancy Gospel” is a book that the early Christian church decided was not inspired and should not be included in the Scriptures. Why do you think they decided this? How does the picture of the boy Jesus in this story differ from the Jesus we see in Luke 2 and in the rest of the Gospels? Does this seem like the “real Jesus”? Why or why not?

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight section of the lesson, which talks about the time between Jesus’ visit to the Temple at 12 and the time He began His ministry at age 30. Why do you think Jesus waited for so long before He started preaching and teaching, if He already knew what God wanted Him to do? What valuable lessons do you think Jesus learned during those years in Nazareth?

Wednesday

All the verses in the Punch Lines section contain biblical advice to parents or to children. From that list of Bible texts (or other Bible verses you know of), is there something you wish your parents would follow that they don’t follow now?

Thursday

Jesus spent 18 years, between ages 12 and 30, learning what God wanted Him to do—and only about three years doing it. Action is important, but so is waiting for God’s timing and learning the lessons He wants us to learn. Think of Moses, who spent 40 years in the wilderness preparing to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Maybe this is your time of preparation. God is getting you ready for the work He wants you to do in the world. What’s one practical thing you can do today to help discover God’s will for your life?

Friday

As you pray today, ask God to make you more like Jesus as a young person—learning about Him and growing in a way that’s appropriate to your age and in keeping with His will.

Is there something you could do differently in relating to your parents, based on the Bible’s advice?

and teaching, if He already knew what God wanted Him to do? What valuable lessons do you think Jesus learned during those years in Nazareth?

this week’s reading*
The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 7, 8.

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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
Ellen G. White summed up the importance of John the Baptist’s ministry best when she stated that the responsibility given him was the greatest ever entrusted to a human (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 100). Is there any work on earth more important than preparing the way for the first advent of the world’s Savior?

The birth of John the Baptist was orchestrated by God. An angel was dispatched from heaven to deliver the news to Zacharias as he ministered in the Temple. The angel noted: “He will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15, NKJV).

This pivotal verse in the story of John the Baptist points the way to truths that are relevant for our youth today. For instance, John’s birth was no afterthought. God created him for a holy purpose, and He did the same with each of us. Also, John’s diet and manner of dress were prescribed by God. As you teach this lesson, note that, as Ellen White writes, John’s diet and manner of dress were meant to draw a distinct contrast with the intemperance and rampant materialism of his day. Teenagers today are struggling greatly in these two areas. Standing for God will cost them much, as it did John. But isn’t Jesus worth it?

Finally, you must emphasize the power and clarity of John’s call to repentance. This is the same message that will herald Jesus’ second coming, and we are called to give it. We have the unique privilege of doing a special work for God and we, like John, must seize the moment.

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Discover that God calls each of us to a special ministry for Him. (*Know*)
• Sense the blessing of the Holy Spirit as they accept God’s call to service. (*Feel*)
• Dedicate themselves to living a life that points to the soon return of Jesus Christ. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE
• Simplicity
• Gift of prophecy
• Baptism
• Confession, repentance

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

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

After the students have had an opportunity to write in their answers to the What Do You Think? questions, give them an opportunity to share their responses with the class. The emphasis of this activity

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was on its way in the form of Jesus, but before the Truth was made manifest, God called people to confess their sins, repent of them, and reform their ways. God spoke this message through John. This message was part of the preparation needed to receive Christ into their hearts and lives.

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.

• Consider this: Why didn’t God tell John the Baptist to go and preach to the people in the cities and towns where they lived? Why did John preach in the desert of Judea? Did the distractions of the city have anything to do with this?
• Your students will get a kick out of the fact that John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey. What is the diet of God’s end-time people? Does one’s diet affect their spirituality?
• John the Baptist seemingly understood his calling while he was still in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:41). What does this tell us about how God fashions the purpose and destiny of each child?
• Are we ever called to “sugarcoat” the truth? Is everyone called to preach the message of repentance in the same strident way in which John the Baptist did, or does God call different people to minister for Him in unique ways?
• Why was baptism such a central focus in the ministry of John? How did this fit the message that he came to give? What is the role of baptism in the Christian’s life?
• Why was Jesus baptized by John and not someone else? Was John the only person who could’ve baptized Christ?
• Why did God allow John the Baptist to die in such a grizzly manner (Matthew 14:1-12)? How does Jesus’ response to John’s death deepen our understanding of God’s love for us?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 14:1-13; 1 Kings 18:20-40; Isaiah 40:3; Acts 3:19; James 1:21-25.

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. Repentance Now. The first call of God’s king-
dom is repentance. This is the starting point of any walk with God. The love of Christ draws us (Jeremiah 31:3), but the closer we get to God, the more our spots begin to show. When they do, we are confronted with a dilemma. Biblical repentance has three distinct parts: (1) a renunciation of all sin, a reversal in the direction of our lives; (2) submission to God’s divine leading in our lives; and (3) a continual willingness to be shaped and molded by God through the process of sanctification.

Acts 3:19 (NIV) states: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” Notice the prerequisite for the times of refreshing. In a very real way, John’s message of repentance was a prerequisite for the outpouring of God’s refreshing through Jesus Christ. We can be filled with the life of Jesus—through the Holy Spirit—only to the degree that we give up all for Him.

2. The Kingdom Is Here. Matthew 3:1, 2 (NIV) states: “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’” The phrase “kingdom of heaven” is recorded some 137 times in the New Testament—more than 100 of those happened during the ministry of Jesus. The kingdom of heaven was the central focus of the ministry of Jesus. In His sermon on the mount (Matthew 5–7) Jesus lays down the constitution of His kingdom to draw a distinct contrast between the kingdom of this world that is ruled by Satan and the kingdom of heaven that is ruled by God.

When John refers to the kingdom in Matthew 3:1, 2, he is talking specifically about the coming of Jesus, the Anointed One who would
break Satan’s hold on fallen humanity. The kingdom was near, because the King of the kingdom was near. Death, disease, and all such maladies were about to meet their end in Christ. John felt the pull and power of the kingdom.

3. **Far From the Madding Crowd.** Consider the following quote from Ellen G. White and its implications for us today.

> “In the natural order of things, the son of Zacharias would have been educated for the priesthood. But the training of the rabbinical schools would have unfitted him for his work. God did not send him to the teachers of theology to learn how to interpret the Scriptures. He called him to the desert, that he might learn of nature and nature’s God.

> “It was a lonely region where he found his home, in the midst of barren hills, wild ravines, and rocky caves. But it was his choice to forgo the enjoyments and luxuries of life for the stern discipline of the wilderness” (The Desire of Ages, p. 101).

John’s simple upbringing sharpened his perception of sin. He was not desensitized by sin.

**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

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

Distribute pencils and 3” x 5” cards to your students. Ask each student to make a list of people in the Bible who suffered because they obeyed God. Some examples are Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, the disciples, Paul, etc.

Ask one or two of the students to share the people they chose and how they suffered for God. After the students have finished sharing, lead the class in a prayer of dedication to God—even when that dedication may cause us to be unpopular.

Allow one minute for silent individual prayer; then, close the activity with prayer.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jesus uniquely understood the ministry of John the Baptist. We know this because He told His disciples that of those born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John (Matthew 11:11).

From his miraculous birth through his public ministry, John the Baptist modeled what it means to be a servant of God in the way that he lived his life and in the power and clarity of his message. He was called by God to swim against a tide of sin and self-destruction, and he accepted this calling willingly. It was not without a cost, however.

John’s message was a constant rebuke to the Pharisees who plotted his death, and to the political elite of his day, led by Herod. The power of the Holy Spirit that filled him harkened back to the anointing resident in the life of another man of God who was called to give a difficult message—Elijah. As was the case with Elijah, some listened and changed when they heard the message while others continued in sin.

Whether greeted by well-wishers or detractors, John remained faithful. Jesus began His ministry among a people who were prepared to receive Him. We must herald the coming of Jesus so faithfully that men and women will be prepared when He comes again.

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1 Fundamental Belief No. 18.

2 Fundamental Belief No. 15.
one of a kind

flashlight

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.’ Before the birth of John, the angel had said, ‘He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.’ God had called the son of Zacharias to a great work, the greatest ever committed to men” (The Desire of Ages, p. 100).

keytext

“I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Matthew 11:11, NIV)
Describe below the weirdest person you have ever seen. How did they look (face, facial expression, etc.)?

How were they dressed?

How did they speak?

How did the way that the person looked, dressed, and spoke affect your perception of them?

**Did you know?**

John the Baptist took a lifetime vow never to drink any strong drinks, such as alcoholic beverages (Luke 1:15). There are other people in the Bible who also took a similar vow, most notably Samson (Judges 13:3-7). The foods John the Baptist ate and the clothes he wore were also specially chosen by God to maximize the special message he was to give (Matthew 3:4).

produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’

“Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented.

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lightening on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”

(Matthew 3, NIV)
"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong" (1 Corinthians 1:27, NIV).

"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20, NIV).

"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13, NIV).


"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

"In character, in manner, in style, in all things, the supreme excellence is simplicity."—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 19th-century American poet.

"Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed."—Thomas J. Watson, Sr., founder of IBM.
Sabbath

By any measure, John the Baptist was one of the most interesting figures in the entire Bible. He looked weird, dressed differently, and preached a unique message. Read Matthew 3:4 again.

Wouldn’t it have made more sense for God to dress him up like everyone else so that he could blend in with the local people and share his message? Why did God set him apart in the way that he looked, and even in what he ate?

What does this tell you about how much God cares about how you look and what you eat?

Sunday

Read the Into the Story section, then complete the Out of the Story questions. What sins did John the Baptist rebuke the Pharisees for committing?

Why did John’s message focus so much on confessing one’s sins and repenting of them?

Why did John aim such harsh words at the Pharisees?

Monday

Read this week’s Key Text. As compliments go, this is one of the best ones in the Bible. Jesus recognized the special role that John the Baptist played in preparing the way for His ministry.

Write down something that you would like Jesus to say about the way that you live your life for Him.

Tuesday

In today’s Flashlight quotation, Ellen White notes that John the Baptist grew up far away from the city—actually, in the desert. He was a country boy.

Why do you think God chose to raise John the Baptist in this way?

How did John’s simple upbringing help him recognize sin?

Wednesday

Read the Punch Lines for this week. Focus on 1 Corinthians 1:27. What do you think are some of the foolish things that God uses to confound or confuse the wise?

Explain how the meaning of this verse relates to the life and ministry of John the Baptist.

What was it about John the Baptist that made people travel long distances to go see and hear him?

God can use anyone who is willing to be His vessel. God has called you to ministry for Him, perhaps not in the same public way as John the Baptist. Even if you are ridiculed for this, know that God will be with you.

Thursday

This week you have been studying about the life and ministry of John the Baptist, the man chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus’ public ministry. Why do you think it was necessary for John to baptize Jesus publicly?

Friday

Ellen White wrote of John the Baptist: “John was to go forth as Jehovah’s messenger, to bring to men the light of God. He must give a new direction to their thoughts. He must impress them with the holiness of God’s requirements, and their need of His perfect righteousness” (The Desire of Ages, p. 100).

What impression are you leaving on those who know you?

Have you been baptized? If you have not, what’s stopping you?

this week’s reading*

The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 10, 11.

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**PREPARING TO TEACH**

I. SYNOPSIS

Temptation. It is the bane of every Christian’s existence. Yet, through the example of Jesus we learn how to meet every temptation and emerge victorious from the scrum.

Jesus faced powerful temptations throughout His sojourn on Planet Earth. For instance, Satan attempted to misdirect Jesus through the harsh treatment He received at the hand of His siblings. Jesus refused to yield then. When Jesus met Satan in the wilderness, He was familiar with His wily foe. They had been skirmishing since His birth.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was “led” into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan. Many are uncomfortable with the idea of God leading us into a trying situation, but faith that is not tried is not faith at all. Your students must know that all who follow Christ will be led into situations that will test their fidelity to God. It is in these moments that our spiritual muscles grow. We should be encouraged by the promise that all such meetings with the enemy are weighed carefully, and a way of escape is made for us to be victorious (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Jesus met each of Satan’s temptations with a clear “It is written.” Emphasize the importance of God’s Word in our day-to-day struggles with Satan. Jesus overcame Satan because He had studied the writings of the prophets that were available to Him. Jesus was a disciplined follower of God. He prayed, He studied, and He fasted—the latter was His preparation for this moment of trial.

Make the point that through the Holy Spirit we can overcome any temptation, even as Jesus did.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn that temptation is a natural part of every Christian’s journey. *(Know)*
- Experience the power to overcome all temptations through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. *(Feel)*
- Adopt the spiritual disciplines that help bring victory in the Christian life. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

- Spiritual disciplines
- Temptation (dealing with)
- Fasting

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.

Allow the students some time to come up with the top five temptations that they believe teens face. (Feel free to add other temptations that you feel may have been overlooked.) As the teens begin to share their
before. Then, ask if they know the events that preceded Jesus’ temptation (His baptism and fasting in the wilderness).

• Read 1 John 2:16. Ask the class if they see any similarities between the three areas of temptation mentioned in this verse and the temptations offered to Jesus.

• Jesus went into the wilderness filled with the Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be “filled” with the Holy Spirit? Is it possible to be filled with the Holy Spirit while remaining in sin?

• What were the stakes in the wilderness that day when Satan tempted Jesus? What did Satan stand to gain? What did Jesus stand to lose? What was our role in the battle? Are the same stakes that high when we face day-to-day temptations?

• What were Jesus’ keys to victory over Satan in the wilderness? What were His tools of battle? (i.e., God’s Word, prayer, infilling of the Holy Spirit).

• Fasting is an often overlooked spiritual discipline. What are its benefits physically and spiritually? Make the point that when Satan approached Jesus, though He was hungry, Jesus’ spiritual powers were in a heightened state. He was ready.

• Luke 4:13 says that after the temptation, Satan left Jesus until a more opportune time. Is there ever a time when we can let our guard down with Satan?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:12-17; Romans 7; John 15.

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. Ready and Waiting. Ellen G. White states: “At the birth of Jesus, Satan knew that One had come with a divine commission to dispute his dominion. He trembled at the angel’s message attesting the authority of the newborn King. Satan well knew the position that Christ had held in heaven as the Beloved of the Father. That the Son of God should come to this earth as a man filled him with amazement and with apprehension. He could not fathom the mystery of this great sacrifice!” (The Desire of Ages, p. 115).
We may not prepare ourselves to meet Satan in battle, but he certainly prepares himself for us. Like the soldier who goes to battle without the armor they so desperately need, we are left helpless when we fail to ready ourselves through fasting, prayer, study, and service to God.

2. This Bread. “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, NIV) is a scripture that many of us know, but may scarcely understand. The Greek word for word mentioned by Jesus in this verse is rhema. It means that which is said or spoken, an utterance. This “word” is different from the term logos, which refers to all the words of God. Jesus is a revelation of the logos, as John notes in John 1. If the logos is the Bible, rhema would be one verse.

When Jesus used rhema He was sending the message that we must hear and obey the specific, proceeding word of God each day and in every situation we face. To hear God in this way will require that we listen carefully to His voice, which is revealed primarily in His Word. Yesterday’s word (rhema) will not do. We need today’s word to meet today’s challenges.

3. An Inside Job. In his much-read and respected book, Celebration of Discipline, Richard J. Foster writes: “The grace of God is unearned and unearnable, but if we ever expect to grow in grace, we must pay the price of a consciously chosen course of action which involves both individual and group life. Spiritual growth is the purpose of the [spiritual] Disciplines” (p. 8).

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**The “Minutia”**

Making your Sabbath School class a success can rise or fall on issues that may seem minor. Here are a few simple do’s and don’ts that make for an effective learning environment.

- Remember your students’ names and try to involve each in some aspect of the class’s activities.
- Be sure that no one has an obstructed view of you. If they do, rearrange the class.
- Try to go behind the questions that teens may ask. What are their reasons for asking that question? What is the deeper issue? When you look deeper, you’ll find teachable moments in areas where other students may also need an answer.
- Do a recap of specific points that were learned in Sabbath School today. Ask students at the end what they will take away from this week’s study. This helps your students focus on the lesson that is most important, and it helps you to see whether your teaching and methods are effective.

**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

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

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
All disciples of Christ must be disciplined. The inward disciplines, as Foster discusses in his book, of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study place us in a position to receive the infilling of God’s presence through the Holy Spirit. It is this abiding presence that gives us victory. As Jesus noted: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV).

Jesus used the spiritual disciplines to bring heaven near to Him. We too have the privilege of making God our constant companion. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is liberty—and victory.

III. CLOSING

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

Ask the students to think introspectively for this activity. Ask them to think of a temptation that they would like to overcome. It needn’t be some deep, dark sin. They may be struggling with a penchant to talk when their teachers are talking, for instance.

Once the kids have the temptation on their minds, ask them to do the following:
1. Imagine that the temptation they struggle with is in their hands. Have them close each hand tightly in a fist.
2. Ask them to close their eyes, sit up in their chairs, place their fists facing upward as the back of their forearms rest on their thighs.
3. Ask them to pray silently to God, asking Him for strength to overcome this temptation. Ask them to open their palms and release the temptation into the waiting hands of Jesus.

Close with a prayer, thanking God for victory through Jesus Christ.

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Satan’s temptation of Jesus and Jesus’ victory over that temptation show us how we must meet the devil’s sophistries. When Jesus met Satan on his turf, He was led there by the Holy Spirit. Many times we “fall” into temptation because we are not being led by the Holy Spirit. This episode at the beginning of Jesus’ public earthly ministry reminds us that there is no substitute for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The wilderness temptation also teaches us the importance of personal spiritual preparation for the challenges we face. During His battle with Satan, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 6:16, and Deuteronomy 6:13. He read and studied the Bible that He had—the writings of Moses, Isaiah, and the other Old Testament prophets. Jesus prayed earnestly and fasted regularly. These disciplines gave shape and power to His life because He was always in the presence of God.

Finally, the fact that Jesus won the victory over lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life means that we do not have to be bound by these sins. If we follow the path laid down by Jesus, we too will experience victory over the power of sin, until God removes us from the presence of sin.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 12 and 13.

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

“Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in Adam’s position; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured” (The Desire of Ages, p. 117).

**keytext**

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”

(Luke 4:1, 2, NIV)
From the list below, check the top five temptations that you believe most teens would struggle to overcome.

- Saying something “nasty” to someone
- Buying clothes you don’t need
- Visiting X-rated Web sites on the Internet
- Eating junk food
- Lying to your parents
- Procrastinating on your homework
- Cheating on a test at school
- Stealing your friend’s MP3 player.
- Other ______________________

Luke 4:1 tells us that Jesus was “led” by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. In the original Greek, the language in which these verses were written, the verb “led” doesn’t only mean that Jesus was directed to go into temptation in the wilderness and left there to fight Satan alone. The Holy Spirit was leading Jesus when He was fasting, and the Holy Spirit went into temptation with Him.

“The devil said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’

Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone.”’

“The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.’

Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.”’

“The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”’

Jesus answered, ‘It says: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’

“When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ‘the Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’”

(Luke 4:1-19, NIV)
“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8, 9, NIV).

“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6:13, NIV).

“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12, NIV).

“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” (Revelation 22:12, NIV).

“The virtue of achievement is victory over oneself. Those who know this can never know defeat.” —A. J. Cronin, 20th-century Scottish novelist and dramatist.

“Some temptations come to the industrious, but all temptations attack the idle.” —Charles H. Spurgeon, 19th-century English preacher.

“Affliction is the wholesome soil of virtue, where patience, honor, sweet humility, and calm fortitude take root and strongly flourish.” —David Mallet, 18th-century Scottish dramatist and poet.
Sabbath
Look again at the temptations in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. How do they compare to the temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness? Explain.

Think of one of the three temptations that Satan tried to get Jesus to succumb to. Are there any temptations on the What Do You Think? list similar to the ones that Jesus faced?

Read Genesis 3:1-7. Do you notice any similarities between Adam and Eve’s temptation in the garden, the temptations we face, and the ones aimed at Jesus?

Sunday
After reading the Into the Story section, complete the Out of the Story questions. Satan attacked Jesus after 40 days of fasting. Do you think Satan wanted to try to make Jesus fall while He was in a weakened state? Explain your answer.

What do you think are some of the benefits of fasting?

Jesus met each of Satan’s temptations with a clear “It is written.” What Bible do you think Jesus was quoting from?

Jesus had a deep knowledge of the Old Testament writings of people such as Moses and Isaiah. He knew God’s Word and that was why He was so successful in defeating the devil.

Monday
This week’s Key Text states that Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” when He entered the wilderness to be tempted. What do you think it means to be full of the Holy Spirit?

Read John 16:13. What role does the Holy Spirit play when we face temptation?

The Holy Spirit didn’t leave Jesus when He faced a trying time; the Holy Spirit was right there inside of Jesus, keeping all His faculties sharp to fend off Satan’s attacks.

Tuesday
Read this week’s Flashlight quotation again.

Now read James 1:13. If God cannot be tempted with sin, and He doesn’t tempt humanity with sin, how do we explain the fact that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness?

When Jesus came to pay our penalty for humanity’s sin, He had to give up some things. For instance, Jesus never called on His awesome power to get Him out of trouble, not even when He faced Satan himself.

What does the Flashlight quotation tell you about how much God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit love us?

Wednesday
Take a look at this week’s Punch Lines. Which one of the verses speaks to you right now?

Did you know that Isaiah wrote his verse about Jesus almost 700 years before Jesus was born? Jesus’ victory over the temptations of Satan was predicted centuries before Jesus walked the earth.

Do you think Satan knew of Isaiah’s prophecy about Jesus? Explain.

Since Satan was unable to overcome Jesus, to whom has he turned his attention (1 Peter 5:8, 9)? Choose and memorize a Punch Line scripture that will help you stand against Satan’s temptations.

Thursday
On the lines below, list three practical steps that can help you overcome temptation.

Now read James 4:7, 8. What tips can you take from these verses to help you stand for God at all times?

Friday
Is there an area of your life in which you feel powerless to resist Satan? Is there a temptation binding you? Why not pause right now and ask God to help you overcome that temptation.

*The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapters 12, 13.

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

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson surveys the chain of events that led individuals to choose to follow Christ as disciples. The ministry of John the Baptist prompted many to pay attention to Jesus. The first disciples, Andrew, John, Philip, and Nathanael responded to the call to “come and see” for themselves. There is a certainty in this saying that suggests, “I can testify for hours, but the way to know whether Jesus is the real thing is to come and see for yourself.” Sometimes we think we have to package Jesus in a way that is appealing, nonoffensive, and relevant. The disciples in this story will testify that all you need to know you will discover when you meet Jesus.

The dramatic incident with Philip introducing Nathanael to Jesus is significant because it captures the coordination between the human and the divine as Christ makes disciples for His kingdom. Some seek out Jesus while others are sought out and found by the Lord. The word find or found appears five times in this story. Clearly people were searching for something or someone, and in need of the promise Jesus makes to Nathanael, saying, “You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51, NIV).

It is fascinating to watch the “getting to know Him” stage, where disciples come to Jesus with their ideas and even some misconceptions about Christ and discover firsthand who Jesus is. Learning about Christ is the first work of discipleship, and this story is filled with vivid examples for young people.

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 ranking activity in the What Do You Think? section. What methods do you think effectively draw people to Christ? What are some memorable stories you have heard about people finding or being found by Christ?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• Circle all the people mentioned in this section and identify who they are and why they are mentioned.
• As you read this story, what do you think are the key events or moments portrayed in the text?
• Why do you think this scene was mentioned in the Bible?
• In this passage, is there . . .
  • A truth to believe?
  • A challenge to accept?
  • A prayer to pray?
  • An example to follow?
  • A decision to make?
• What words or phrases are repeated in this story?
• How does the challenge “Come and see” contribute to the meaning of the event? What is significant about this saying?
• How does Nathanael’s skeptical response to learning that Jesus came from Nazareth impact his perception of Christ?
• What do you think it means when Jesus says, “you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man?”
• What do you think is the message God has for you in this passage?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 4:27-29; Matthew 28:1-7; John 1:6, 7, 14, 15, 29, 34; 1 John 1:1-4; Revelation 1:1-3.

Sharing Context and Background

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

As you teach this story it helps to have a sense of where John is coming from when penning this story. First of all, John has chosen only the stories that he believes will draw people to receive Christ:

“Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Perhaps the only way to capture something so great is to witness it firsthand. When the disciples asked about where Jesus was going, He replied, “Come and see.” When Philip urged others to meet Christ he simply said, “Come and see.” As followers of Christ, we need that firsthand experience with Jesus, which will likely prompt us to say the same thing to prospective seekers.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then an encounter is worth a million. Backpacking through Yosemite National Park one can view lakes and glaciers and sights that are breathtaking. Of course books, paintings—even video footage—capture the scenery and anyone viewing it would say, “Wow, that’s amazing!” On a backpacking trip several young people were setting up the tents and the fire pit, while others were gathering wood and doing various duties to set up camp. A couple of other wood-gatherers made their way higher and higher up the side of the rocky slope until they reached the crest where they witnessed a sight that arrested them. The crystal-blue lake looked like a giant sapphire set against the forest-green trees with silvery-black granite rocks randomly cropping out. A glorious white snowpack cascaded down the opposite side from the top of the range to the water’s edge. The explorers remained for a moment, but the metallic tapping sound of hammers and tent stakes and the muffled noise of chopping wood and the busy work of their companions awakened them from the vision—they had to see this. They yelled down the side of the mountain, “Stop what you are doing and climb the mountain! The view is amazing!” Annoyed that they were working at the setting up of the campsite and that the firewood-gatherers found time to sightsee, they replied, “Just tell us what you see and bring the wood for the fire!” Frustrated, those on the ridgetop cried out, “Just come up here and see for yourselves.” Clearly words would not work. So, leaving their hatchets and hammers and campsite rope lying on the ground they climbed the ridge and witnessed the sight. And to any other backpackers who came through they could only say, “You have to climb the ridge and see for yourself.”

How is this story like finding Christ? How is this story like introducing others to the Savior?
(John 20:30, 31, NASB). And the last verse of John’s Gospel reads: “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25, NASB).

Second, John values the whole concept of being a personal witness—someone who has seen, heard, and experienced firsthand knowledge of Christ. Note the visual/experiential language in the first chapter alone of John’s writings:

- John 1:6, 7
- John 1:14, 15
- John 1:29
- John 1:34

Even 1 John 1:1-4 and Revelation 1:1-3 capture John’s visual/experiential approach to Jesus.

And finally, John takes particular interest in verifying “who Jesus is,” even if it is a surprising twist of ideas. Consider how he records Nathanael’s response, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Whether this statement is one of cynicism or innocent surprise, the common preconception of Galileans was unfavorable. John 7:39-52 records the board meeting of the Sanhedrin to discuss what to do with Jesus, and throughout their conversation they describe Galileans as a “mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them” (7:49, NIV). So as people come to “see for themselves” they “witness” the One they have been waiting for—but Jesus is surprisingly and controversially not what they expected. In fact, Jesus alludes to seeing and doing “greater things than that” in this story (John 1:50, NIV) and later when He challenges His disciples in the future (John 14:12).

One final note of context on the Gospel of John has to do with how this story captures the magnetic impact Jesus had on the people that witnessed Him. Have the students scan through the book of John and meet the people who met Christ and “see” how they were trans-

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**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. 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.
formed. It is possible to jigsaw the book by chapters, giving each student a section and seeing what they see. If they report what they see—they are witnesses!

III. CLOSING

**Activity**

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

Find a picturesque image and have two or three students volunteer to view it. However, they can describe the picture in only 20 words or less. Give them a few minutes to prepare their 20-word description and report. After the students report, ask the class: “Do you think you have an accurate description of the picture (the rest of the class has not yet seen)?” Invite the students who conveyed their 20-word description to share how they felt as they tried to capture the picture in so few words. Show the picture to the class and discuss how seeing firsthand for themselves is the only way to have a relationship with Christ.

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Paul said in Philippians 3 that nothing compares to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. But first you have to meet Him. The disciples’ first encounter with Jesus reveals some of the dynamics of human relationships. Initial apprehension. Curiosity. Suspicion. Mystery. But as the disciples spend the day with Jesus they claim: “This is the Messiah, the One we have been waiting for.” But do you ever feel shortchanged because you were not there with Andrew and Philip and Nathanael? Jesus would say: “Blessed are those who have not seen but still believe.” In fact, Peter says these words about us: “You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy” (1 Peter 1:8, NLT).

The only way to become a disciple of Christ is through a firsthand-come-and-see-for-yourself encounter with Jesus Himself. Those who do are never the same. If you choose to do so today, your witness may bring someone else to Christ.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 14.

*A special adaptation, *Humble Hero*, 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.
“Philip said to Nathanael, ‘Come and see.’ He did not ask him to accept another’s testimony, but to behold Christ for himself. Now that Jesus has ascended to heaven, His disciples are His representatives among men, and one of the most effective ways of winning souls to Him is in exemplifying His character in our daily life. . . . Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 141, 142).
What do you think?

Which of the following do you think has the greatest power to influence others for Christ? Rank them (1 being the most, 5 being the least) according to the influence you think they have over others?

- To have their questions answered in a biblically clear and coherent manner
- To observe joy and contentment in the way someone else lives their life
- To receive help and compassion in a time of need from a believer with no strings attached
- To discover the truth about Christ through a quality media form
- To be invited to participate in the social and spiritual activities of a community of faith (church, small groups, socials, etc.)
- To witness a believer endure faithfully through serious trials and still praise God

Which do you think would compel you to follow Christ? Why?

Did you know?

"Guile" is a Greek word that means "deceit, duplicity (two-facedness), and dishonesty." The word was also used to describe fish bait. When Jesus refers to Nathanael as a "true Israelite" in whom there is no "guile" He offers a rare moment of high praise. Perhaps this is one of the higher compliments anyone can receive.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

"Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas’ (which, when translated, is Peter).

"The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, ‘Follow me.’

"Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’

"‘Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?’ Nathanael asked.

"‘Come and see,’ said Philip.

"When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, ‘Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.’

"‘How do you know me?’ Nathanael asked.

"Jesus answered, ‘I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.’

"Then Nathanael declared, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.’

"Jesus said, ‘You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.’ He then added, ‘I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’"

(John 1:35-51)
“I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me” (Proverbs 8:17, NASB).

“He settled on twelve, and designated them apostles. The plan was that they would be with him, and he would send them out to proclaim the Word and give them authority to banish demons” (Mark 3:14-16, Message).

“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light’” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT).

“Every person the Father gives me eventually comes running to me. And once that person is with me, I hold on and don’t let go. I came down from heaven not to follow my own whim but to accomplish the will of the One who sent me” (John 6:37, 38, Message).

“Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?’” (John 11:40, NASB).

“The men who followed Him were unique in their generation. They turned the world upside down because their hearts had been turned right side up. The world has never been the same.”—Billy Graham, current American evangelist.

“Jesus promised His disciples three things: that they would be entirely fearless, absurdly happy, and that they would get into trouble.”—W. Russell Maltby, 20th-century British Wesleyan minister.
Sabbath

Read and respond to the activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. Which do you think causes people to become interested in following Christ?

Scan through the four Gospels or think of three people who were motivated to follow Christ by different means. Even though everyone responds to different aspects of who Jesus is, Christ in Matthew 11:28 calls everyone to “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (NLT). What kind of rest do you think Jesus brings?

Sunday

As you read the Into the Story section, use the questions in the Out of the Story section to prompt your study of the text, pay attention to the different types of people who are drawn to Christ. What does Christ do to endear Himself to would-be disciples? Why do you think Jesus said, “Come and see”? Why does Philip repeat the appeal when Nathanael raises the question of where Jesus is from?

What is the message you think God is trying to say to you in this week’s lesson?

Monday

The Key Text from John 1:45, 46 conveys the conversation between Philip and Nathanael about whether Jesus could be the Messiah. What do you think Philip was certain about when he said that if Nathanael would just meet Jesus (come and see) that he would be compelled to follow? When in your life have you found preconceived ideas about a person turned out to be wrong? When have they been correct? Whom do you know that models the simple way in which Andrew and Philip are found bringing people to Jesus?

Tuesday

Read the quote from The Desire of Ages in the Flashlight section of this lesson. Think about the effectiveness of a person’s personal story. When have you been touched by someone’s story about how they came to know Christ? If you were to tell one story from your own life about what God has done for you, what story would you tell? Why?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson, which verse speaks most prominently to you today? Why do you think this verse is particularly relevant to you today?

Thursday

Ruminate on the interactions Jesus had with the many different types of people throughout the Gospels. Why do you think people were so drawn to Him? If Jesus were here on earth in the same way today, what would draw people to Him? How would He be received?

Friday

Whom do you know that is not a disciple of Christ but you sense it may be the right time in their life to respond? Begin to pray for that person specifically each day and be ready to share your story about why you have chosen to follow Christ. Your testimony has power! Look for an opportunity to invite them to “come and see” for themselves.

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*This week’s reading*

The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 14.

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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

As Jesus’ public ministry began, He performed His first recorded miracle almost, it seems, against His will. He attended the wedding at Cana as a friend of the family, accompanied by His disciples. He seemed to have no intention of making a public display of His power at this point. But when His mother approached Him with the news that the wedding party had run out of wine for the feast, she seemed to expect He could do something about it.

Jesus at first said the time wasn’t right. Did He change His mind after thinking about it? For whatever reason, He worked His first miracle at a wedding feast, blessing the joyful celebration with His power. It might seem like a frivolous reason for a miracle. But the water-to-wine miracle at Cana not only provided a dramatic, faith-building moment for Jesus’ disciples and friends—it also conveyed two very important messages. First, it demonstrated—as Jesus would do again and again throughout His ministry—that He enjoyed being with people in times of feasting and celebration. Second, it illustrated Jesus’ power to transform ordinary things into extraordinary—not just water to wine, but ordinary human lives into lives changed by His Spirit.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Recognize that they serve a God who rejoices in our times of celebration. (Know)
- Feel that they can enjoy the presence of Jesus and celebrate with Him. (Feel)
- Invite Jesus into their lives as a Friend who can share the good times and the bad times with them. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Miracles
- Transformation
- The Holy Spirit

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Discuss how students responded to this question and to the lesson title “Partying With Jesus.” What would a party with Jesus be like? What kinds of things do they imagine Him doing at a party?

Are there things we can’t imagine Jesus doing at a party? Why or why not? How do these images fit with the pictures we normally have of Jesus? What are these pictures based on?

Ask students to brainstorm about a party they could invite Jesus to if He were on earth now. Where would it be? What types of activities would take place? Who would be invited? Write responses on a chalk-
board, whiteboard, or flip chart at the front of the room. Ask how many people would want to attend the party with Jesus—and discuss why they answered yes or no.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

Read the lyrics of the song “Wine Into Water” by T. Graham Brown, quoted in the *Other Eyes* section of the student lesson. Before class, find the complete lyrics online and share them with your class. The song tells the story of a man struggling with alcoholism who asks God to change his “wine into water”—to take away his desire for alcohol so that he can live a whole and healthy life. The songwriter takes the image of transformation in this story and turns it around to demonstrate another way in which God’s power can transform a human life. In what other ways can Jesus’ power transform lives?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

*Bridge to the Story*

*Share the following in your own words:*

Jesus’ miracles were all about transformation—Jesus’ life was all about transformation. He made sick people well, dead people live, hopeless people hopeful. His power can still transform lives—and that includes breaking addictions such as the one the song “Wine Into Water” talks about. We may claim that we don’t live in the age of miracles anymore and that we don’t see things like Jesus turning water into wine, but we can see the miracle of His transforming power in lives all around us every day.

**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.*

Ask: “Why did Jesus perform miracles? What did miracles accomplish?”

Brainstorm responses and list the students’ suggestions on the board. Then guide the discussion using some of the following questions:

- Did all Jesus’ miracles accomplish all these purposes? For example, one purpose might be to relieve suffering. Jesus’ healing miracles certainly fulfilled this purpose, but what about the miracle at Cana? If anything, that relieved only inconvenience, not real suffering.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Large-group Versus Small-group Discussion**

This week’s teaching activities are mainly discussion-based, as are many of our teaching strategies. While group discussion should not be the only teaching tool we use, it does form an important basis of any Bible study.

How you handle discussion will depend largely on your class size. In a class with fewer than 12 people, most discussions will probably be held with the group as a whole, though you may occasionally want students to talk in pairs or smaller groups. For classes with more than 12 people, breaking off into smaller groups of four to six people for discussion works well, perhaps with a spokesperson from each group reporting back to the larger group after they’ve talked for awhile.

Larger groups can sometimes have whole-group discussions, but it’s important to watch out for those one or two talkative people who dominate the discussion and don’t give others a chance to speak. While you’ll want to avoid interrupting someone, it’s OK to jump in when a “talker” pauses and say, “Thanks for sharing that, Sherry. Now, who else has some thoughts about this. Justin, what do you think?” Without being rude to Sherry or putting Justin too much on the spot, try to broaden the discussion to include more people.

- Did Jesus use miracles to build people’s faith in Him? Read John 4:48 and John 20:29. What does Jesus seem to suggest here about faith that’s based on miracles? If a faith inspired by miracles is weaker than one that hasn’t seen miracles, why did Jesus perform so many?
- Today we live in an era in which we don’t see the kind of miracles described in the Bible very much. Why do you think this is? Do you think it’s harder or easier to have faith in these days? Based on the passages we just read, what do you think Jesus would say about that?
- By performing His first major miracle at a wedding party, what message was Jesus sending? (Remind students of the message in John 1:
Jesus came to reveal what God was like.) How did Jesus react when people accused Him of enjoying parties too much, or going places with the “wrong crowd” of people? Do you think Jesus went to weddings, parties, and feasts only to convert people, or did He genuinely enjoy celebrations and social gatherings?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 11:18, 19; Luke 5:30-32.

Sharing Context and Background

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

When discussing Jesus in connection with parties and celebrations, particularly in the context of this story in John 2 and the passage in Matthew 11:18, 19, the question of alcohol and substance abuse is almost certain to come up. Quite apart from the question of what kind of “wine” Jesus miraculously created at the wedding feast, students may want to discuss how Jesus would feel about parties where alcohol is consumed, people get drunk, and other drugs such as marijuana are used.

How frankly your students talk about this will depend largely on their backgrounds and their comfort level with you and with each other. But some young people—even in your Sabbath School class—may feel that a party with Jesus would be no fun because it would be a party without drugs or alcohol. Even if that’s not their own personal experience, they may submit that their friends would feel this way.

Young people who have used drugs and alcohol, especially if the use is frequent, often find it hard to adjust to a normal, “nonhigh” level of fun. The levels of dopamine in the brain that are released through everyday, enjoyable activities are artificially enhanced by substance abuse, so that an evening of playing games with friends seems “boring” by comparison if no mind-altering substances are involved. As you discuss “partying with Jesus,” be sensitive to this question and address it as seems appropriate with your group. Youth should get the message that they can enjoy lots of “good, clean fun” with God’s approval, and that if Jesus were here on earth He would be right there having a good time with them—not passing out under the pool table or driving home under the influence.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

One of the student lesson activities asks students to think about a party they could plan that they’d be comfortable inviting Jesus to. Based on the ideas and discussion generated in the “Getting Started” section of this lesson, talk about some future social activities your group has planned. Discuss how they can focus...
on activities that demonstrate their joy at being friends with Jesus and sharing His joy with others.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Jesus chose to perform His first miracle at a wedding. He performed many miracles of healing and mighty acts of power, but His first public act was to make people happy at a simple celebration. Our image of God as someone distant and disapproving is shattered by the picture of the Son of God enjoying Himself at a village wedding, by a miracle saving the host and hostess from embarrassment.

Jesus wants to be involved in and transform every part of our lives—not just the few hours we spend in church each week, but the time we spend with our friends, hanging out, having fun. What would change in your life if you took Jesus everywhere—even to parties?

* Fundamental Belief No. 5.
partying with Jesus

“Jesus did not begin His ministry by some great work before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. At a household gathering in a little Galilean village His power was put forth to add to the joy of a wedding feast. Thus He showed His sympathy with men, and His desire to minister to their happiness. In the wilderness of temptation He Himself had drunk the cup of woe. He came forth to give to men the cup of blessing, by His benediction to hallow the relations of human life” (The Desire of Ages, p. 144).

Scripture Story: John 2:1-11.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 15.
what do you think?

If Jesus showed up at a party with me and my friends, I would

___ invite Him to come in and have fun with us.
___ ask Him to perform a miracle.
___ stop the party and have a Bible study.
___ start hiding things that I know He wouldn’t approve of.
___ leave quickly.
___ ask Him to leave.

did you know?

At Jewish weddings, the bride is veiled and the groom checks to make sure it’s really his bride under the veil, as a reminder of the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah in Genesis 29. The bride often circles the groom seven times to show that he is central to her thoughts and her life, and seven blessings are recited. These wedding customs developed over many years. We don’t know how many of them go back to Bible times, so we can’t know for sure what the wedding that Jesus attended at Cana with His mother and His disciples would have been like. We do know that it was an occasion for feasting and celebration, possibly lasting more than one day and involving family, friends, maybe even the whole community.

INTO THE STORY

“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’

‘Dear woman, why do you involve me?’ Jesus replied. ‘My time has not yet come.’

‘His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

“Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim.

“Then he told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’

“They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’

“This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

(John 2:1-11, NIV)
**OUT OF THE STORY**

Why do you think Jesus chose to perform His first miracle at a wedding?

Jesus told Mary, "My time has not yet come." What do you think He meant by this? Why do you think He went ahead and did the miracle anyway?

Why do you think Mary told the servants to do whatever Jesus told them, even though at that point Jesus had said He wasn't going to get involved? What does this suggest about the relationship between Mary and Jesus?

The Bible doesn't record Jesus' answer to the master of the banquet. What do you think Jesus might have said?

How did this miracle reveal Jesus' glory?

**punch lines**

"John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners'" (Matthew 11:18, 19, NIV).

"The Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' Jesus answered them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'" (Luke 5:30-32, NIV).

"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,' Jesus told him, 'you will never believe'" (John 4:48, NIV).

"Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John 10:37, 38, NIV).

"If Christians are forbidden to enjoy the wine of the spirit they will turn to the wine of the flesh."—A. W. Tozer, 20th-century Protestant preacher and author.

"Tonight, I'm as low as any man can go/I'm down and I can't fall much farther/And once upon a time, You turned the water into wine/an' now, on my knees, I'm turning to You, Father/Could You help me turn the wine back into water?"—Song lyric, "Wine Into Water," by T. Graham Brown.
Sabbath
Read the Into the Word section of the lesson and think about the questions that follow it. According to this Bible passage, what effect did this miracle have on Jesus’ disciples?

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Why do you think the disciples reacted this way? How would you have reacted if you had been there and seen Jesus do this?

What impact do miracles have on our faith? Have you ever seen a miracle? If so, how did it affect you? If not, do you think you need a miracle in order to really believe in Jesus?

Sunday
Look back at the What Do You Think? section of the lesson. Imagine Jesus coming into a party where you are enjoying yourself with your friends. Would He join in the fun, or would He be unhappy with what was going on? How do you know? What does the story of the wedding feast tell you about how Jesus feels when people are celebrating and having fun?

Write a paragraph in which you describe what you think Jesus might do if He showed up at one of your parties.

Monday
Read this week’s Key Text. It tells us that this first miracle helped build up the disciples’ faith in Jesus. Look in John 4, Luke 4 and 5, and Mark 1 to see what some of Jesus’ other early miracles were. List five in the chart below, and for each one write what you think the disciples might have thought after seeing it.

Tuesday
Read the Flashlight section. This passage contrasts the suffering Jesus went through when He was being tempted in the wilderness (see Matthew 4 or Luke 4) with the joy and happiness that He brought to others when He performed His first miracle at the wedding feast.

Why do you think that going through a difficult time Himself made Jesus able to bring joy and blessings to others?

How could you use a difficult time in your life to help and bless other people?

Wednesday
The first two texts in the Punch Lines section talk about how Jesus was criticized for going to parties and hanging out with sinners. Some people thought Jesus didn’t take His mission seriously enough—they were angry that He enjoyed eating and drinking and being with people.

Jesus performed His first miracle at a party—not to save a life, but to help people have a good time. What do you think this tells us: about Jesus? ____________ about His mission on earth? ____________ about the kind of miracles He could do?

Thursday
Some people think God doesn’t want us to have a good time, that He disapproves when people are having fun. Jesus’ life—especially the miracle at Cana—shows how untrue this is. It’s true that some things that go on at parties are definitely not God’s will. But Jesus enjoyed a good time. He celebrated life with His disciples and friends. And He enjoys watching us celebrate in healthy, positive ways too.

Think of an activity that you and some friends—or perhaps you and your Sabbath School class—can plan to help demonstrate the fact that God likes to see His people having a good time together. After you brainstorm some ideas, discuss them with a friend.

Friday
Jesus’ miracle of turning the water into wine suggests that He can take ordinary things in our lives and transform them into something special. What needs to be transformed in your life today? How can you ask Jesus to turn your “water” into “wine”?

*The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 15.*

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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

Isaiah 56:7 says: “Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (NASB).

The money changers in the Temple completely disregarded this verse. They went against everything it said. Instead of having reverence for the house of the Lord, they sought to corrupt people with their lust for material gain. Pride is also an issue here. The money changers knew that it was a sacred place to worship God, yet in their arrogance they became blinded to what God wanted. Their greed and thirst for gain, as well as their blatant disrespect for His Father, is what angered Jesus. Think about it: if one does corrupt business dealings in any form it’s considered wrong. Yet to do these sorts of things in a place of prayer seemed to be the last straw.

In this story we learn about how frivolous materialism can be. We also learn about the importance of reverence to our God. Some Jews were using the Temple for their own ends, turning it into a place of greed and materialism. Some even justified their greed in the name of God and religion. When Jesus came and drove them out, it was not because He hated them, but because He was angry that they disrespected the place of worship.

Help the students understand the importance of reverence and respect in all things related to the Lord.

Just like some of these people turned a place of worship into a den of thieves, we can be guilty of the same thing but in different ways. We may not do exactly what the people did in the Temple, yet we may give in to our greed and try to justify it. Ask the students how they would feel if they had a certain place that they went to, or if they owned something that was special to them and that they treated with the utmost respect. Then ask them how they would feel if someone took it and defiled it or laughed and scorned it. This is probably how Jesus felt when entering the sacred Temple. God is the Creator of all things, yet many times we look past His amazing greatness and power and commit acts of irreverence.

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Realize the importance of reverence to Jesus Christ. (Know)
- Understand that the things of this world are not of importance and that they will all pass away. (Feel)
- Have a desire and seek to eliminate materialism from their daily lives. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Anger
- Worship
- Christ (life of)

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

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Just as in the story of the young man and the pastor, that illustrated how we can look at other people and give them more importance than we should, many times we look at the things of this world as of great importance. Objects can take over our lives with such ease we might not even be able to notice at first. Like the business dealers in the Temple we may put material things in front of holy things. Just as some in the Temple tried to justify their actions, we may do the same as well. Yet we should remember that no matter what happens throughout our lives, we must always put God before material gain.

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.

- In what way did the money changers in the Temple show their greed and materialism?
- Jesus told the Jews: “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” What do you think He meant when He said this?
- What do you think caused the Jews to react to Jesus in the way that they did?
- As we read the passage that talks about how Jesus made a whip out of cords and then drove the people out of the Temple, were you shocked at Jesus’ anger?
- Describe some of the ways that materialism appeared in this story.
- What do you think went through Jesus’ mind when He came to the sacred Temple, which was devoted to worshipping His Father, and found people buying and selling and doing business?
- In what ways can we keep from getting caught up in all the materialism that is in the world today?
- What does reverence mean? Give some examples of how reverence can be expressed?
- Have you ever displayed irreverence toward God? Was it something you thought, or something you did?
- Many of the money changers in the Temple tried to justify their irreverent actions in the name of God and religion. Are there ways that we can be guilty of the same kinds of things today?
Do you think that church leaders today should give more attention to the topics of irreverence and materialism? Do you think these things are overlooked?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 6:19-21; Psalm 5:7; Ephesians 5:21; Proverbs 28:25; Proverbs 15:27; Psalm 10:3.*

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

In the Temple, the money changers were using forms of a religious service to exploit the poor. Many commentators say that when Jesus said they had turned His Father’s house into a den of thieves, He was referring to these exploits.

Isaiah 56:7 says: “Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (NASB).

This story most likely took place in an area known as the Court of the Gentiles, a location in the massive Temple complex used specifically for the purpose of purchasing sacrificial animals, and the place where Jewish pilgrims could exchange their foreign coinage for the appropriate local currency. They had to pay with special currency; they could not use foreign money to buy the animals needed for the sacrifices. Roman money was very common at that time, but the Temple authorities would not allow for any of it. They had to use only Hebrew money. This gave them the opportunity to use whatever exchange rate they wanted and, thus, could exploit the poor.

Another important point is that the salvation offered by Jesus, as symbolized by the animals, is free. Jesus paid for salvation with His blood. For the animals, which symbolize that freedom, to have been sold was one thing, but for them to have been sold at prices that were ripping off the poor was a whole other matter. No wonder Jesus acted as He did. The Bible warns against exploiting the poor (Isaiah 10:1-3; Isaiah 56:7).

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

*“Brainstorming”*

Brainstorming can be a great technique to help students generate more creativity because there are no right or wrong answers. Make sure you allow everyone to contribute their ideas. Also be sure you let them know that no answer can be wrong. Be aware not to criticize or demean anyone’s answer, but seek to look at it objectively. When finished, evaluate their responses and discuss them as a group.

The closing activity in this week’s teacher’s lesson in which they brainstorm examples of materialism and how they can lead them away from God is an example of this technique.

**Teaching From . . .**

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Desire of Ages. 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.
James 5), and for this to be happening right at the sacred Temple was too much. On top of that, for it to be happening at the center of the plan of salvation, which is free (Romans 5:15), and which we cannot buy for any price, was a great sacrilege in the eyes of God.

This story wasn’t just about Jesus going after people trying to make a fast dollar. It was about Jesus going after those who were taking the most wonderful part of the Gospel—that is it free—and making it something that has to be purchased.

Sadly, later Jewish historical sources show that the practice continued even after Jesus died. Some see the same principle at play in the work of buying indulgences, as practiced in certain churches even today.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Have all the students name at random a few things in their lives that may be tearing them away from God. Tell them to work through the next week to try to slowly take these things of either irreverence or materialism and put them away from their lives. Just like the money changers’ greed drove them away from God, make sure the students know that they should not let their daily struggles drive them away from their Creator.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God will always remain faithful to us. Even if we turn from Him and stray far away He will never be absent when we call out to Him. Ephesians 2:4, 5 says: “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (NIV).

Even if we eliminate all materialism and irreverence from our lives, that is not what saves us. Nothing we can do on our own can save us in the end. It is what God did at the cross that rescues us. But because of what He did and because of His undying love for us, we should give Him honor and respect, and our lives if necessary.

Psalm 111:10: “Reverence for the Lord is the foundation of true wisdom. The rewards of wisdom come to all who obey him” (NLT).

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 16.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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 designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts” (The Desire of Ages, p. 161).

Scripture Story: John 2:12-22.
Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 16.
If you were to come to church on Sabbath and find that the sanctuary was being used as a market, with different tables set up and people selling their goods, how do you think you would react?

Define the word “materialism.”

Write down five different materialistic traits people can have.
1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________
4. ____________________
5. ____________________

Because the temple had been turned into a place of greed and materialism, Jesus had to cleanse it completely. He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’

His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’

Then the Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous

INTO THE STORY

“After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

“In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, ‘Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!’

“His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’

“Then the Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous
**OUT OF THE STORY**

Was greed a factor in this story? Explain.

What do you think Jesus meant when He said “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”?

Why do you think the Jews reacted as they did to Jesus’ actions?

When Jesus made a whip out of cords, were you surprised to see Him demonstrate anger? Why or why not?

In what ways did the people demonstrate materialism?

What do you think Jesus was thinking when He saw the most holy place turned into a place of business and profit?

In our materialistic world in which we live today, how can we refrain from becoming immersed in it?

Define the word “reverence.”

Think of how easy it could have been for these people in the Temple to justify their materialism and greed in the name of God and religion. In what ways can we be in danger of doing the same thing?

**punch lines**

“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1, NIV).

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe” (Hebrews 12:28, NIV).

“Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:30, NIV).

“Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth and honor and life” (Proverbs 22:4, NIV).

“To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech” (Proverbs 8:13, NIV).

“Increase of material comforts, it may be generally laid down, does not in any way whatsoever contribute to moral growth.” — Mahatma Gandhi, 20th-century Indian political and spiritual leader.

“It is preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, that prevents men from living freely and nobly.” — Henry David Thoreau, 19th-century U.S. author.

“As there is no worldly gain without some loss so there is no worldly loss without some gain.” — Francis Quarles, 17th-century English metaphysical poet.
Sabbath
Take a few moments to write down a few ways in which you can slowly eliminate materialism from your life.

After writing everything down, read through today’s lesson of John 2:12-22 and highlight the parts from which you think you can learn the most.

Sunday
When you realize how big God is in contrast to how small we are, we should realize that the things of this world don’t matter much. Remember that God is your Creator and He created you in His own image. Realize that such a great love should call for reverence. Go about your day trying to think of different ways in which you could show your reverence, respect, and love for God. Remember, everything in your life, whether insignificant or monumental, means something to God. You may think the little things you do don’t make a difference, but they do. God sees all things; He sees your small sacrifices as well as your large ones. Read through Psalm 104. Remember that if God can set the earth on its foundations, He can surely hear every little prayer, and see every secret thing. He will never forget you.

Monday
Believe it or not, just as it was mentioned in the Key Text, there are still many examples of materialism inside church leaders today. You hear stories about church leaders stealing money from their flocks. People sometimes can’t comprehend the ways in which their irreverence shows disrespect to their Creator. In the Temple Jesus showed His anger in His attempt to get the people to understand that all the sacrifices were sacred and were pointing to His great one on the cross. Think of what went through His mind when He saw people turning their place of worship into a place of thievery, materialism, and corruption. How can this story make us more aware of how we should show reverence to our Creator and Savior?

Tuesday
One day you might be in a situation in which you must choose between a materialistic life or one in which money isn’t so supreme. God knows where each choice you make is going to lead you, even if it seems innocent and worthy. Always remember that in every choice we make, we are temples of God’s Spirit, and God should be present. Don’t think that praying over the little things won’t make a difference. Before taking any steps forward, pray and seek God’s will. Write down three different situations that can seem harmless, yet could also possibly end in irreverence to God.

1. _______________________________
2. _______________________________
3. _______________________________

Wednesday
Remember that many people in this world have lost much and suffer immensely. Some don’t have enough food to eat and/or can’t even afford to put clothes on their backs. In our society, many of us may not be considered rich compared to many famous people, yet if we were to visit some of these countries, we would be seen as having the wealth of kings and queens. We should remember how blessed we are and realize how much we really have compared to so many others.

Thursday
In the Other Eyes section we saw the quote from Gandhi about how an increase in wealth doesn’t mean an increase in morals. Think about some rich people you hear about in the news (or maybe even know) who seem to live very immoral lives. In fact, there have been stories about hardworking, honest people who after gaining wealth get greedy, nasty, and hateful. Their money made them worse people!

Why do you think that is so? Why does money sometimes do that to people? How can tithing and giving away money to charity and other causes help to prevent money from ruining people morally?

Friday
Many wealthy people, including celebrities, are so rich and yet are so miserable. Many people think that money will make them happy; they think that if they become famous and rich all of their problems will be solved. Yet many of the rich and the famous have been immersed in suffering and misery. Remember how Solomon acquired so much wealth that it eventually started to steer him away from God. We should remember that no matter how much material things we can acquire on this earth, they don’t guarantee happiness.

*This week’s reading*
The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 16.

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www.cornerstoneconnections.net
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Nicodemus, although enmeshed in the hierarchy of Israel’s elite religious leaders, had a soft spot for the voice of God. Ellen White comments about how he was sensitive to the harsh reactions toward Jesus because that is what previous generations of leaders did to the prophets. With a teachable spirit and a careful approach he came to Jesus at night and engaged the Savior in an unforgettable evening of instruction.

This week’s lesson can feature the “conversion experience” process and students may learn that conversion is a lifelong journey, as it was for Nicodemus. This lesson can also foster discussion about the nature of knowing—theoretical knowledge versus the kind of transformation that Ellen White describes as “regeneration.” Throughout this incident Jesus offers several metaphors or illustrations that are pivotal to the transformation of Nicodemus: (1) birth and being born again; (2) the work of the Spirit like blowing wind; (3) the duality of flesh and spirit; (4) the image of Calvary portrayed by the Old Testament story of the way Israel was saved by fixing their eyes on the snake on a stick. And, of course, if the metaphors and images don’t convey the essence of the mission of Christ on earth, then there is always John 3:16.

Many young people don’t feel converted because they don’t have the Damascus Road experience. This is a perfect opportunity to remind them that Saul was already a believer in God before his “conversion”—he was just wrong about a few important things. Nicodemus was a slow burn instead of an explosion. If students can have their journey validated perhaps they will not feel so self-conscious about their role as disciples of Christ.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand the ongoing nature of conversion. (Know)
• Feel confident that God is transforming them, as they allow Him to. (Feel)
• Choose to live boldly for the kingdom of God. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Salvation1
• Baptism2
• Spiritual growth

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 ranking activity in the What Do You Think? section. Where did you register your conversion experience? Why do you think people resonate with dramatic con-
to convince people they were wrong. Over time and thousands of meaningless deaths later, the world finally figured it out. But the words and work of Christ burned slowly and steadily in Nicodemus. And it all started with the following encounter.

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 each word in this narrative carefully and patiently and see if you notice something you had not seen before.
• Highlight or underline every question that Jesus asks. What are the questions you think are the most difficult to answer?
• What can you tell about the character qualities of Nicodemus by looking at this story (positive and negative)?
• What are the key verses in this storied encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus?
• As Jesus seeks to communicate the essence of kingdom life to Nicodemus, what metaphors or illustrations does He use to teach this lesson? (Read also John 7:40-53 and John 19:38, 39.)
• What do you think is the central message that God has for you in this passage?
• In what way do you resonate with the story of Nicodemus? In what way is his experience different from yours?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: John 1:10-12; Romans 6:1-6; Acts 9; Numbers 21:7-9; Philippians 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 setting of this exchange between Christ and Nicodemus is late in the evening, at a time and place where their conversation would be undisturbed. Some suggest that Nicodemus was being secretive because of fear or cowardice. But this is unlikely in that he speaks up on behalf of Jesus directly to the Sanhedrin later in chapter 7. Perhaps the teacher is being discrete because he is truly seeking to understand the mission of Jesus and he could ascertain better who Jesus is without the controversy or crowds. There is, already, plenty of controversy because, just prior to
this meeting, Jesus turned the Temple upside down. The religious leaders were already planning to take action against Jesus for His overt attack on what seemed to be their jurisdiction.

One of the key talking points had to do with birth and rebirth, flesh and the Spirit, and the inward change versus the external appearance. When Jesus told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again in order to even see the kingdom of God, it must have shocked the honest seeker. The Jews believed that baptism was solely for non-Jews seeking to convert to the faith of Israel. Baptism, or the rite of water purification, was the only way. But they believed in the ritual so much that when a heathen or Gentile converted and was baptized, they were reborn to be a child of Abraham in the fullest sense. Jesus was not teaching Nicodemus something foreign—what was foreign was that it was being applied to Nicodemus—someone who was already considered a child of Abraham by blood. But Jesus would say, “Flesh gives birth to flesh and Spirit gives birth to Spirit,” meaning the only way to be truly a child of Abraham is to be reborn by faith.

Furthermore, Jesus is referring to the internal renewal that is not foreign to the Old Testament either. Jeremiah 31:33, 34 and Ezekiel 36:26 refer to the inward regeneration so prominent in the New Testament.

It is not a coincidence that Jesus also used the story in Numbers 21:4-9 as an analogy of His mission and authority. Even as people chose to fix their eyes upon the snake on the staff, as Moses lifted it up, they were saved. But the same disobedient, hostile attitude that endangered Israel existed in the ranks of Israel during the time of Christ. The meaning of this analogy is unpacked throughout verses 16-21. Clearly, the overwhelming message of this event is that there is only one way to salvation—never make the mistake of thinking otherwise.

Nicodemus ultimately made the choice that everyone must make about Jesus.

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Honest Affirmation**

Honest affirmation will move young people to feel more inclined to respond. One of the reasons youth hold back from conversation or offering their ideas is because their insights at this stage are tightly tied to who they are. They are at the stage of development where they seek to personally own their faith. So as they share in class, give a note or a word of encouragement, citing specific things they said, thus affirming their response. One of the key attributes of an effective learning environment is a positive feeling about the place, the people, and things students say.

Teaching From . . .

*Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.*

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

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

Have the students divide into groups of two or three. On a piece of paper have them write out the stages of growth that a simple plant goes through to maturity. Invite them to report and discuss the commonalities of their responses. Now, to extend this activity, ask them to discuss in their groups the stages of regeneration or the new birth experience. In the same way they mapped out stages of plant growth, have them describe the conversion process of people and share their ideas with the class.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Nicodemus got what he was looking for. His heart was open and his sensibilities were softened to the leading of God’s Spirit in Christ. But he loved Israel and longed for the new day when Christ would come. Perhaps he was the eternal optimist and thought the religious leaders could also receive Jesus as the Messiah. Over time, this would be impossible to see. But the good news is that Nicodemus became a part of the new church after Christ had risen from the dead, which tells us that sometimes it takes time to come around. Consider the many people in Scripture who matured over time. There are moments that can seem monumental—baptism is one. But this story teaches us that while baptism or rebirth is essential, it is better thought of as a mile marker rather than a monument. If you were to scan your life and choose the key moments that caused you to grow, what would they be? Maybe you need to take the step toward baptism because you recognize that you too need to be born again. Perhaps you have been baptized but you long for the inward transformation of the heart. Now is the time to respond.

1 Fundamental Belief No. 10.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 15.

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 17.

*A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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.
“It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart. You must receive a new life from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, making all things new, it will result in no saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission” (The Desire of Ages, p. 171).

“"I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

(John 3:12-15, NIV)
If you were to describe your conversion to Christ with a type of weather, which would you choose? Explain.

____ Sunny ____ Overcast
____ Rainy ____ Stormy
____ Cloudy ____ Icy

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**INTO THE STORY**

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.’

“In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’

“How can a man be born when he is old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!’

“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.” The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.’

“How can this be?’ Nicodemus asked.

“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, ‘and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

(John 3:1-18, NIV)

**did you know?**

*John 3:16, the most popular verse in the Bible, came from Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus, a guy who took three years to fully turn His life over to Christ. How did John get his hands on the detailed story? Nicodemus must have told John as he became a pillar of the New Testament church. How many other stories came by the Gospel writers in a similar way?*
**OUT OF THE STORY**

Read each word in this narrative carefully and patiently and see if you notice something you had not seen before.

*Highlight or underline every question that Jesus asks. What are the questions you think are the most difficult to answer?*

What can you tell about the character qualities of Nicodemus by looking at this story (positive and negative)?

What are the key verses in this storied encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus?

As Jesus seeks to communicate the essence of kingdom life to Nicodemus, what metaphors or illustrations does He use to teach this lesson? (Read also John 7:40-53 and John 19:38, 39.)

What do you think is the central message that God has for you in this passage?

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**punch lines**

“He was in the world, the world was there through him, and yet the world didn’t even notice. He came to his own people, but they didn’t want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, he made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves” (John 1:10-12, Message).

“In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures” (James 1:18, NASB).

“Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?” (Isaiah 40:13, 14, ESV).

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him” (1 John 5:1, ESV).

**other eyes**

“We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions; much machinery but few results.” —Reuben Archer Torrey, 19th-20th-century American preacher and evangelist.

“A baptism of holiness, a demonstration of godly living is the crying need of our day.” —Duncan Campbell, 20th-century Scottish minister.
Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the "Punch Lines" section of this week’s lesson, which verse speaks to your life today? In what way do you resonate with Nicodemus and his experience with Christ?

Thursday

Make a list of five spiritual moments in your life that were key turning points in your relationship with Christ. Briefly describe how you were impacted each time. Take time to pray and thank God for each specific event as it drew you closer and closer to God.

Sabbath

Read and respond to the activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. Metaphors can capture our experiences and convey them in creative ways. Young people who grow up in a community of faith often feel like they have no conversion story because their journey seems spread out over the years. But Nicodemus was in fact a teacher/leader in the Jewish faith before he discovered the kingdom as Christ taught him. Read Philippians 1:6 and reflect on the seasons of spiritual awakening in your life. What “good work” are you confident of Jesus completing in your life?

Sunday

As you read the Scripture story of Nicodemus, use the questions in the Out of the Story section to guide your study. What parts of the story are new to you? Why do you think this story is included in the Gospel of John?

Nicodemus is an example of someone who was religious, and his heart was open to Jesus, but it took time for his devotion to become resolute. Who do you know that has been close to the faith but over time became genuinely passionate for Christ? In what way is their story an inspiration to you?

Monday

The Key Text from John 3:12-15 connects with the Old Testament event that was a forecast of Calvary. Read Numbers 21:6-9 and compare that story with the Key Text for this week. How can you keep your eyes focused on Christ throughout the course of a normal week?

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It’s Your Turn

Preparation to Teach

I. Synopsis

Imagine what it must have been like for John the Baptist. He and Jesus were cousins, although they had no direct contact with each other during their childhoods (see The Desire of Ages, p. 109). As they grew into adulthood, Jesus spent more time in His father’s carpenter shop, while John the Baptist went out preaching. Jesus watched from a distance as John the Baptist “prepared the way” for the coming Messiah.

Then the time came for Jesus to take center stage. He started preaching and baptizing—just like John. As the people flocked from John to Jesus, John had a choice to make: to be jealous or to be excited for Jesus. John chose the latter. He chose to take a step back to the sidelines.

This is a decision that we all face at one point in our lives. The real question is, which will we choose? Human nature and society combined tell us to be jealous, but as Christians what should our choice be?

II. Target

The students will:

- Understand the importance of humility in a Christian’s life. (Know)
- Sense the closeness of God when they allow Him to control their thoughts. (Feel)
- Commit to being humble and doing unselfish acts. (Respond)

III. Explore

- Self-denial
- Humility
- 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.

Invite the students to share how they ranked the people in the What Do You Think? section. Ask students why they chose the one they did as their first choice.

Humility is usually not a top choice in the most desirable characteristics (as evidenced in the Did You Know? section). But how close does it follow with other desirable characteristics? Have students discuss the importance of humility in a relationship.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

- Scripture Story: John 3:22-36.
- Commentary: The Desire of Ages, chapter 18.
- Key Text: John 3:29, 30.
Grades were never Derek’s strongpoint. He’d rather be out playing baseball or buried in a good book. His mother tried everything to get Derek to study harder—even paying him for good grades. Derek changed schools in the middle of high school and found himself in a class of academics—nearly every student had good grades. This motivated Derek to do better, and for the first time he received straight A’s—no matter that it was the final quarter of his senior year. It motivated him to do better in college. But his first semester of college Derek found himself on familiar ground when he received a D in his U.S. History class. That first year, Derek even received an F in a Bible class. Throughout college, his grades never improved much, he never achieved straight A’s again.

It was seven years before Derek attempted graduate school. That first quarter, Derek studied hard. He did all the reading requirements—sometimes 300 pages a night—and turned his assignments in on time. In one class he felt defeated as he learned he had a D after the first exam. Here we go again, he thought to himself. In that class the professor offered the students a choice between writing reaction papers and doing a project. Derek chose the project. Imagine his surprise when he received his final grade report for that quarter: three A’s and one A-. Derek was proud of himself. It made him feel good that he had accomplished something that he had done only once before. He was sharing this with a friend when she commented, “It’s all God.” Derek felt the air go out of his balloon. He wanted to receive congratulations for his achievement, yet at the same time he knew he should praise God.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Has there been a time in your life when you have accomplished something that you didn’t think you could do? Climbed a mountain? Rode a bike 50 miles? Confronted a friend? Achieved good grades? How did you feel when that happened? Pride or humbleness? Think about Derek’s story. Was there any part of him that had achieved success, or was it all God? Is it wrong to take pride in one’s accomplishments? Where is the line between pride and humility? And how does that connect with John the Baptist’s line: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

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 the students read through the Into the Story section. As they read, have them underline what they find new and interesting in the story. Also have them write down at least one thing that made them think about the story. Then have volunteers discuss what they underlined and wrote.

• John’s followers were jealous that Jesus was so much more popular. They looked for anything to nitpick about so they could complain to John. They argued over the issue of the purpose of baptism and the language to use when baptizing people. Why do you think that people argue over simple religious practices? (In some churches the deacons practice the Communion service before they actually do it.) What are some issues that your church argues over that really do not make sense to you? Why do you think the adults argue over these practices?

• John refused to be pulled into this petty jealousy act. He knew he could hinder the work of Jesus if he allowed himself to be pulled into their web. He knew he had been called to direct people to Jesus. Sometimes the biggest deterrent to Christianity is Christians themselves. What are some ways that we can show non-Christians what it really means to be a Christian?

• What does the phrase “He must increase, but I must decrease” mean to you?

• John was truly a humble person. John’s attitude showed humility to his disciples and ultimately to everyone who left him to flock to Jesus. John could have been upset because no one wanted to listen to him anymore. He knew that his job was over and it was time for someone else to finish the work. Why is it so difficult to be humble? What can one do to become more humble?

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

2 Samuel 11; 12; Ruth; Psalm 25:9, 10.

Sharing Context and Background

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

www.cornerstoneconnections.net
1. John the Baptist was different in an odd sort of way. He wore strange clothes, and ate even stranger food. Today we judge people by how they look and what they wear; not so with John the Baptist. Despite his appearance, people still wanted to hear what he had to say. He preached one message and one message only—Repent.

John wasn’t concerned with what people thought of him, only that they listened to what he had to say. He knew that he had a special task—to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. He knew the Messiah would come soon, and his job would be done. He was content with that.

When his disciples came to him bitter with jealousy over the multitudes who were flocking to hear Jesus, John didn’t get upset. He was happy and filled with joy. His job was done. Over. Finished. He was no longer needed. In fact, soon after that he went to prison.

2. In biblical times the “friend of the bridegroom” was the one who made arrangements between the families of the bride and the groom. When the arrangements had been agreed upon by both families, the friend received joy from completing the task well. Just so, John was filled with joy at completing his task of preparing the way for Jesus. John rejoiced in the popularity of Jesus. He could not regret that the people were attracted to Jesus and leaving him to go listen to Jesus. He had fulfilled his task and he had no greater joy.

“He must increase, but I must decrease,” are probably the last recorded words of John before his imprisonment. His words show us John the Baptist’s true character as humble, submissive, and unselfish.

Discuss with your students the differences to Jesus. He had fulfilled his task and he had no greater joy.

“He must increase, but I must decrease,” are probably the last recorded words of John before his imprisonment. His words show us John the Baptist’s true character as humble, submissive, and unselfish.

Discuss with your students the differences
between being humble, submissive, and unselfish. Are there any differences? What are the drawbacks, if any, in our society of being humble, submissive, and unselfish? Then challenge your students to do at least one humble act, one submissive act, and one unselfish act this week.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Give the students colored index cards and markers. Have them write on the index card: “I will do one unselfish act this week.” Have them leave space so they can write what they did that week. Share with them that the reason you have them write this down is that the act of writing is like making a commitment or a contract to actually put this week’s lesson into action in their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

John the Baptist may have preached 2,000 years ago, but his message is still relevant today. Just as Jesus came into this world, He wants to come into our lives. Not only is His message relevant, so is His story. John stood against the crowd and was humble. He didn’t try to stay in the limelight, he didn’t bad-mouth people, he didn’t argue over semantics. He simply said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” The ultimate act of humility, John stepped out of the limelight and let another take over. His acts of humility and selflessness are the character traits of a true follower of Christ. Ellen White reminds us that as we let God take complete control of our thoughts, we are made full in Christ. We naturally become humble, like John.
"John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy. He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way" (The Desire of Ages, p. 179).

"That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less."

(John 3:29, 30, NIV)
Rank the following people in the order of who you think should be the most humble.

- Politicians
- Wal-Mart cashiers
- Parents
- Movie stars
- Sports stars
- Business people
- Teachers
- Prisoners
- Teenagers
- Pastors
- Astronauts

Which of the following characteristics matter most to you in another person: compassion, consideration, friendliness, generosity, honesty, humbleness, humorous, integrity, intelligence, sensitivity, or thoughtfulness?

A survey was recently taken at Ekamai International School in Bangkok, Thailand. The majority of students at this school are Buddhist. On the survey, students from grades 9-12 had to rank 11 characteristics they most desired in another person. Humility was one of those characteristics. Across the board—whether Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, or Christian—humility ranked low on the desirable characteristics. Only 10 people ranked it as number one. That’s only 0.032 percent of the respondents. The score is only marginally better for those who put humility in the top five – 0.43 percent.

One respondent wrote: “A humble person is charming . . . and that’s what I would like to be like. This kind of person is really hard to find.” Another one commented, “To be humble is the beginning of everything.”

Interesting is that the number one choice was honesty. Forty-three percent of respondents chose honesty as the most desirable characteristic.

"After [Jesus had met with Nicodemus, he] and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—well, he is baptizing and everyone is going to him.’

“To this John replied, ‘A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.

“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.’”

(John 3:22-36, NIV)
“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:5-9, NIV).

“The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:11, 12, NIV).

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (James 1:19, 20, NIV).

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:18, NIV).

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-45, 48, NIV).

“I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps.” —Mahatma Gandhi, 20th-century Indian philosopher, internationally known for his doctrine of nonviolent protest.

Sabbath
In the What Do You Think? section you were asked to rank a list of people as to who should be the most humble. Unfortunately, humility is not a characteristic that we show too often. We are quick to anger when things do not go our way. Think about the people you encounter on a daily basis: teachers, parents, teenagers, cashiers. In the last year, which one has shown the most humility? Briefly write the circumstances and why it stands out in your memory.

Tuesday
In the Flashlight section we see that John’s task was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. That was the only task that God called John to do. John delighted in the task and was a witness to its successfulness as people flocked to Jesus. John had a deeper understanding. Surrounding as he was by human nature, he understood his part in God’s work. And it was time for his job to be over. Instead of letting his disciples pull him in to hindering Jesus’ work, he expressed his joy at working with Jesus, and then slowly step back and let Jesus take over completely.

Wednesday
Being meek and merciful is closely related to being humble. But people often mistake a meek or merciful person for someone who is submissive to others. What do you think? Read through the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 and write what you think meek, merciful, peacemaker, and pure in heart really mean.

Thursday
Take another look at Mahatma Gandhi’s quote in the Other Eyes section. In nearly all Asian countries, including India where Mahatma Gandhi lived, saving face is most important. To admit that you made an error would be to lose face. For Gandhi to admit to errors was a big thing in Asia. Because of his humbleness he was instrumental in bringing India into its own country.

People in other countries are not that different. While they may not have the same saving/losing face philosophy, no one likes to admit they make mistakes. But admitting to mistakes and stepping back to correct or apologize is a form of humility. Someone who can admit their errors shows true character, and is often well thought of. What can you admit to today that will allow you to become a more humble person?

Friday
John experienced joy when he allowed Christ to be in charge of his life.

Read Romans 12:10 and Ephesians 4:29. Post those verses somewhere where you will see them every day. Building others up and honoring them above yourself is part of decreasing yourself. This week pray for humility to become second nature to you. Find ways to show humility to those you meet on a daily basis. Encourage your friends to show humility. You never know what may happen. Your classroom may become a better place.

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this week’s reading*
The Desire of Ages (or Humble Hero), chapter 18.

A special adaptation, Humble Hero, 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.