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.
what tools are provided for teaching the stories?

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

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

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

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

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

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

❻ 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.

❼ 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.

❽ In each lesson students are provided with a reference to the volume from the Conflict of the Ages Series by Ellen White that corresponds with the week’s story. Students who choose to will be able to read the entire series in four years by following the reading plan.
1. Last Words and Witnesses
   Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles, chapters 1, 2, 3.

2. The Holy Spirit—Any Takers?

3. Jesus Only

4. Dying for a Buck

5. Power, Perseverance, Purpose.

6. The First Christian Martyr

7. Go the Distance

8. Peter Principles
   Scripture Story: Acts 12:1-23, 1 Peter; 2 Peter.

9. The Epicenter for Missions

10. Us and Them

11. Belief + Values = Action

12. Hope Against Hope

13. The Uncool Minority

1. Love Is Patient
   Scripture Story: 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians.

2. More Than a Job
   Scripture Story: 1 Thessalonians 2:6, 9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-12; 2 Corinthians 11; 1 Timothy 6:10-19; Colossians 1:25-29; Titus 2:6-8.

3. God’s Eye for the Gay Guy
   Scripture Story: Romans; Galatians.

4. That’s My Story and I’m Sticking to It

5. Faithful in the Kangaroo Court

6. Wearing Someone Else’s Clothes
   Scripture Story: Acts 28:11-31; Philemon.

7. A Good Report
   Scripture Story: Colossians; Philippians.

8. A Part. Not Apart
   Scripture Story: 2 Timothy.

9. Alone but Not Defenseless

10. Love Power
    Scripture Story: 1 John 1:5-10; 4:7-16; 2 John 1:7-11.

11. Stuck on an Island
    Scripture Story: Revelation 1:9.

12. Forever Faithful
    Scripture Story: Revelation.

13. Go Out Like a Light
    Scripture Story: Matthew 16:18; Revelation 7:9-17; Ephesians 2:19-22.
1. A High Price for Faith
Scripture Story: Matthew 24; 2 Timothy 3:12.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 1, 2.

2. Natural Laws
Scripture Story: Daniel 7:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7; Revelation 12:6.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 3, 4.

3. Guiding Light
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 5, 6.

4. Famous Faith
Scripture Story: Romans 1–3; John 15:19, 20.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 7, 8.

5. Great Humility
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 9, 10.

6. Everybody’s Doing It
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 11, 12.

7. Commitment Under Fire
Scripture Story: Romans 1:8-17.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 13, 14.

8. Can I Get a Witness?
(Two Would Be Nice!)
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 15.

9. Lift Up Your Head
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 16, 17.

10. X Marks Your Spot
Scripture Story: 1 Corinthians 12:4-28.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 18, 19, 20.

11. Final Warning!
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 21, 22.

12. Cleaning Up

13. The Imprisonment of Truth
Scripture Story: Matthew 5:17-22.

1. Know Yourself, Know God
Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 17.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 27.

2. Shut Door. Open Books?
Scripture Story: Genesis 7:6-23.

3. The SINdrome
Scripture Story: Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17; Revelation 12:7-9.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 29, 30.

4. Between Angels and Demons
Scripture Story: Mark 5:1-19.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 31, 32.

5. The Deadly Lie
Scripture Story: Genesis 3:1-5; Psalm 146:4; Isaiah 38:18, 29; Revelation 16:13, 14.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapters 33, 34.

6. Power Gone Sour
Scripture Story: 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Revelation 13.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 35.

7. The World’s Worst Terrorist
Scripture Story: Revelation 12:17; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 36.

8. Discovering Daily Disciplines
Scripture Story: Daniel 6:3-10; Exodus 20:8-11.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 37.

9. Run for Your Life
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 38.

10. The Time of Trouble
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 39.

11. The End of the World as We Know It
Scripture Story: Daniel 12:1, 2; Revelation 1:7, 7:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; John 14:1-4.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 40.

12. Wiping the Slate Clean
Scripture Story: 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20.
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 41.

13. Extreme Makeover Heaven Edition
Commentary: The Great Controversy, chapter 42.
October

4—Know Yourself, Know God [p. 11]
Only when we know ourselves and the person we are becoming through Christ’s working in us are we able to transform our lives into gifts to our families, friends, coworkers, and communities.

God will pronounce everyone who confesses their sin and claims the blood of Christ for their life “not guilty.” Forgiven. Pardoned. Restored. But now is the time to make that choice.

18—The SINdrome [p. 27]
One of the greatest mysteries in the human story has to do with understanding the origin of evil. Ultimately, what people think about God becomes the most important thought any human will ever have.

25—Between Angels and Demons [p. 35]
A spiritual war is taking place—a war beyond what human eyes can see. Thus, the question remains, How does God’s power over evil get fleshed out through His people in the days in which we are living?

November

1—The Deadly Lie [p. 43]
The subject of death is one of the most controversial issues in the church. Media portrays it, pastors preach about it. Is it that important to understand? See what God says about it.

8—Power Gone Sour [p. 51]
Headlines abound with stories of corruption and abuse. How can we Adventists live and give a message of uncompromising conviction for this generation?

15—The World’s Worst Terrorist [p. 59]
The evil one has launched an all-out terrorist attack, seeking to destroy as many as possible. Are you prepared for it?

18—Discovering Daily Disciplines [p. 67]
Few of us would say no to a lasting and meaningful relationship with God—at least not consciously. But what are we willing to do to make it happen?

29—Run for Your Life [p. 75]
Contrary to human speculation, the world is not getting better. Yet, as the world plunges deeper into peril, the good news is that God’s Holy Spirit will give us special power to proclaim His message to the world!

December

6—The Time of Trouble [p. 83]
The time of trouble is one of those phrases that fills Seventh-day Adventists and others who look for Jesus’ appearing with trepidation. Yet even though trying times are ahead, God has promised that His faithful followers will endure to the end.

13—The End of the World as We Know It [p. 91]
We oftentimes focus on the difficulty of the end-times and forget to focus on the power of God to deliver us. We need to remember that we are not alone, and we are truly safe with God!

20—Wiping the Slate Clean [p. 99]
God destroying the wicked is not a comfortable image. But we will have the opportunity to ask our questions, to see why God did what He did, and to let Him prove His goodness to the cosmos.

27—Extreme Makeover Heaven Edition [p. 107]
This chaotic world is not all there is. One day the great controversy between God and Satan will be over. The earth will be made new. And we will see our Maker face-to-face.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Being emotionally healthy and having an authentic spirituality are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is impossible to be spiritually mature and emotionally immature (Peter Scazerro, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality).

Often we hit a wall in our growth despite years of repeating the patterns of Christian disciplines, activities, and behaviors. This wall is the result of deeply rooted dysfunctional emotional habits from our past. This wall prevents us from savoring the sweet experiences of an authentically mature life in Christ.

Few of us make the time to reflect inwardly on how deeply (and subtly) outward influences affect our decisions, words, and feelings. Without this awareness of who we are and how our circumstances affect us, we are unable to tackle exposure to the pressures and forces at work against us. Socrates said, “Can we ever know what art makes a man better, if we do not know what we are ourselves?”

We end up living someone else’s life, someone else’s expectations. Like a boat without oars or rudder, we are tossed and turned by every which way the winds of approval blow at us.

Only when we know ourselves and the person we are becoming through Christ’s working in us are we able to transform our lives into gifts to our families, friends, coworkers, and communities.

Nurturing a growing and authentic spirituality requires intentional and purposeful planning. If we do not plan, we could end up saying, as one church member did, “I was a Christian for 22 years, but instead of being a 22-year-old Christian, I was a 1-year-old Christian 22 times! I just kept doing the same things over and over again.”

II. TARGET

The students will:
- Understand themselves better—their “new true” self. (Know)
- Realize that knowing the truth is only the first step; true spirituality is being able to choose to do the right, despite opposition and pressure. (Feel)
- Be challenged to begin the journey of relinquishing their “old false” self so that they can live authentic Christlike lives as their “new true” self. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Self-awareness
- Growth/transformation in Christ*
- Knowing God

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.
Before class starts, prepare stacks of six-inch-square pieces of aluminum foil (at least two per student), black and red indelible markers, and a mirror.

Hold up the mirror and ask the class why we look into mirrors. (To check our hair, clothes, makeup, and so on.) Just like we regularly check to see how we look on the outside, we also need to examine ourselves on the inside.

Take out the prepared squares of aluminum foil. Invite students to come forward and take a piece of foil. Explain that this foil is like a mirror. With a black marker, write on their “mirror” the negative messages they have heard or think in their heads but don’t say out loud. Then on another piece of foil, with a red marker, write down a positive message they have heard or believe about themselves. Which one was easier to fill up? Why? Is there any truth to the black writing?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In his short story “The Necklace,” Guy de Maupassant tells about a young woman named Mathilde who was desperate to be accepted by high society. Her husband was a common worker but they were invited to a grand ball. Feeling that she had to make a good impression on the people at the ball, Mathilde borrowed a beautiful necklace from a wealthy friend. She was accepted by the aristocracy at the ball but the evening was far from a success because she lost the borrowed necklace!

Mathilde was too embarrassed and instead of just telling her friend, she convinced her husband to borrow 40,000 francs to replace the lost necklace.

For the next 10 years, Mathilde and her husband both worked two jobs to pay back the 40,000 francs. They ended up selling all they had and living in a slum.

One day, Mathilde ran into the friend who had loaned her the necklace. Mathilde looked so haggard from all those years of hard work and deprivation that her friend almost did not recognize her. She confessed to her friend what had happened and it was only then she found out that the original necklace had been made not with real diamonds, but with fake gemstones! It was worth less than 500 francs! Mathilde and her husband had worked so hard and suffered all those years just because Mathilde had tried to keep up appearances.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Do you ever feel that way about your spiritual life? That you’re always having to keep up appearances? You know just enough of the Bible to know how much you don’t know. You’re enough of a Christian to know the rules, but not good enough to know the joy of living them. It sounds like you’re enough of a Christian to make yourself miserable.

God doesn’t want you to settle for that! He wants to take you to the next level, where the real thrill of knowing Him lies.

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 the main characters in this story.
• What is the situation that David is in here? What is happening to him?
• Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.
• David faced criticism and unrealistic expectations when he wanted to fight Goliath. What are some criticisms and unrealistic expectations you have encountered when you shared your dreams or hopes?
• How did David manage to stand firm against the powerful pressures that were trying to force him to be someone he was not?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 18:14; Romans 4:5.

Sharing Context and Background

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

According to The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, when Saul rejected Samuel’s inspired counsel, God called for another to be trained according to His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). “David’s training, like that of Christ, was carried on in the face of jealousy and hatred. Although David sometimes fell into transgression of the law he revered and advocated, he always humbled his heart before that law as supreme. As a result of David’s cooperation with the principles laid down by God through Moses and
Samuel, Israel gradually subdued all her enemies” (vol. 2, p. 449).

In 1 Samuel 17:39 (NIV) David says politely, “I cannot go in these . . . because I am not used to them.” The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary explains that this is evidence of both his faith in equipment that he has previously tested, crediting God with his victories even over wild animals. His faithfulness in little things (i.e., tending his father’s sheep) prepared him for greater tasks (i.e., slaying Goliath). “The procedure he chose was determined by his own spiritual convictions rather than by the unsanctified judgment of others, irrespective of position. . . . David could not fight in Saul’s armor—he must be himself. God designs that every man shall work in his own harness. We see a man in public life who takes well with the people, and we copy his mannerisms, hoping to find success through them. But God wants men who will be themselves, men who will learn from each day’s experience what they need to know in order to solve tomorrow’s problems” (vol. 2, pp. 538, 539).

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary continues to elaborate that in 1 Samuel 17, David scored three victories:

The first is when he rose above Eliab’s taunting. He refused to be drawn into a petty exchange of verbal barbs, and showed he was in control of his emotions. Instead of retorting Eliab with an equally insulting comment, David simply asked disarmingly, “What have I done? . . . Can’t I even speak?” (verse 29, NIV). “Had he not learned patience with his sheep, he could not have been shown patience with his jealous brothers” (vol. 2, p. 539).

The second victory was attained by staying firm in his beliefs, even in the face of opposition from an authoritative figure. “Never dreaming of the possibility of a supernatural intervention, Saul planted seeds of doubt in David’s mind, and tempted him to wear the king’s own armor. But again with courteous deference David won the victory over doubt by adhering to his heaven-inspired purpose of maintaining faith in, and total dependence on, the Lord” (vol. 2, p. 539).

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

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

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
The final victory was the very public slaying of Goliath—the enemy that even Saul, the king who stood head and shoulders above his countrymen, was afraid of. “It was a victory of spiritual forces over material brute strength” (vol. 2, p. 539).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

If your class feels safe and comfortable enough, have them share what they wrote for Thursday’s Making It Real. Allocate about a minute for this section and let each student know beforehand that they just need to pick one of the questions and read aloud what they wrote. Resist the urge to give advice or dissect their answers. Simply let them share their innermost thoughts without hearing overt or implied judgment. If you detect an alarming problem (e.g., suicidal thoughts), you can address the issue prayerfully and privately when the class is over.

Summary

Share the following story in your own words:

The sixteenth president of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln, was attributed with saying, “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.”

We can try to hide who we are by conforming to the standards and acceptable behaviors that portray us to be someone we are not. However, sooner or later, the truth will come out. How we live, act, speak, and treat others will often make more of an impact on people’s perception of us (and of Christ) than our words do. We don’t run away from the culture we live in, but when people see us, they should see Jesus.

*Fundamental Belief No. 11.
know yourself, know God

“While the Christian’s life will be characterized by humility, it should not be marked with sadness and self-depreciation. It is the privilege of everyone so to live that God will approve and bless him. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that we should be ever under condemnation and darkness. There is no evidence of true humility in going with the head bowed down and the heart filled with thoughts of self. We may go to Jesus and be cleansed, and stand before the law without shame and remorse” (The Great Controversy, p. 477).

keytext

“You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.”

(1 Samuel 17:45, NIV)
what do you think?

Read the following statements:
- I am a mistake.
- I am a burden.
- I am stupid.
- I am worthless.
- I am not allowed to make mistakes.
- I don’t have the right to experience joy and pleasure.
- I don’t have the right to stand up for myself and say what I think and feel.
- I am valued based on my intelligence, wealth, and what I do, not for who I am.

Can you relate to any or none of these statements?

did you know?

Murray Bowen, founder of modern family systems theory, coined a new term: differentiation. Differentiation refers to a person’s capacity to “define his or her own life’s goals and values apart from the pressures of those around them.”

It is also the ability to disagree with someone yet remain in a relationship with them. The other person may disagree with you and vice versa, but you do not need to avoid them, reject them, or criticize them in order to validate yourself.

Bowen created a scale of differentiation. People on the lower end of the scale need continual affirmation and validation from others because they don’t have a clear awareness of who they are. They derive their own worth and identity from what other people think and feel. They may also avoid closeness to others for fear of losing their own identity. Under duress, they have little ability to distinguish between their feelings and thoughts.

INTO THE STORY

“David asked the men standing near him, ‘What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?’

“They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, ‘This is what will be done for the man who kills him.’

“When Eliab, David’s oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, ‘Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how concealed you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.’

“Now what have I done?” said David. ‘Can’t I even speak?’ He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

“David said to Saul, ‘Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.’

“Saul replied, ‘You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.’

“But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.’

“Saul said to David, ‘Go, and the Lord be with you.’

“Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,’ he said to Saul, ‘because I am not used to them.’ So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

“Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, ‘A m
OUT OF THE STORY

Using your own words, describe the objections, complaints and implied meaning behind the words that David hears from . . .

his family (verse 28)

Saul (the king) (verses 33, 38)

Goliath (the bully) (verses 41-44)

David was highly differentiated. He knew who he was and was not swayed by public opinion or the need for approval. From the passage, in what ways did David stay true to himself and not allow pressure and anxiety from others to control him?

In verse 45 David confidently exclaims: “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty.” Why was he so confident of God’s support? Find scriptural evidence to back your thoughts.

punch lines

“So here’s what” I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you” (Romans 12:1, 2, Message).

“What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, ‘Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well’—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?” (James 2:14-16, NLT).

“You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” (Matthew 7:16, NLT).

“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked. . . . But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do” (Psalm 1:1-3, NLT).

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16, KJV).

other eyes

“Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power.”—Laozi, ancient Chinese philosopher believed to have written the Tao Te Ching.
**Sunday**

As we grew up, we received many messages from our parents, our teachers, our friends; even the results of our choices are a type of message to us. These messages can be positive (“You’re wanted and loved even if you failed your algebra exam”) or they can be negative (“I can’t come to watch your game/play again. Work is more important than my relationship with you”).

Read Ephesians 3:17-19; Luke 15:11-20; John 15:15. What message is God sending you?

**Monday**

Read the Key Text. David exhibited a lot of confidence in God’s ability to conquer the enemy. How do you think David acquired such confidence in God?

David was able to stay true to who he was, while still remaining close to the people important to him. He was able to choose to do what was right without being controlled by the approval or disapproval of others. Are there times when you shrink back in fear or “wear armor” that does not fit you? What kind of pressures from circumstances or forces from people influence you to do so?

**Tuesday**

Read the Flashlight section. Ellen White differentiates between true and false humility. Many of us cannot tell the difference between our true self and a false self we enact just to fit in. Take some time each day this week to reflect on the words you said and the choices you made. With each situation, complete this sentence: When I did/said ______________, it revealed that I am _______________. (For more space, use the Notes pages in the back of your Bible study guide.)

**Wednesday**

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

**Thursday**

Make time to answer the following questions:

1. What makes you angry?

2. What makes you sad?

3. What are you afraid of?

4. What do you enjoy?

**Friday**

Write a prayer asking God to help you know who you really are, and who you are becoming, as you know God more and more intimately.

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**this week’s reading**

_The Great Controversy_ (or _Love Under Fire_), chapter 27.

*Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of _The Great Controversy_, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at [http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBo9s](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBo9s). By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
shut door. open books?

Scripture Story: Genesis 7:6-23.
Commentary: The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 28.
Key Text: Genesis 7:23.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This week’s lesson brings students to the sobering reality that there will be a judgment. In truth God is doing the work of judgment today and Adventists refer to this phase as the investigative judgment, the time before Christ returns and everyone’s life is accountable to God. Ellen White wrote about the judgment: “Every man’s work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness” (The Great Controversy, p. 482). Throughout the Bible the theme of accountability continues to emerge in direct and clear terms. Even the image of an open book conveys the courtroom atmosphere of the investigative judgment. Malachi wrote: “A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name” (Malachi 3:16, NIV). The world today is reticent to hear about this truth, and yet around the world the three angels’ messages cry out, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come” (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

One of the tasks for this lesson will be to remind the students that God will pronounce everyone who confesses his sin and claims the blood of Christ “not guilty.” Pardoned. Redeemed. Forgiven. Restored. Righteous—according to the eyes of heaven. Students need to be challenged with the truth that today is the time of judgment and they need to make the choice to follow Christ. The story of Noah is perfect because the antediluvians needed to make the decision to come in before the Flood came. It may appear to young people, and the rest of the world, that decisions about loyalty to God can wait. This attitude is pervasive and as old as the world, but it is foolish. This week is a crucial time to urge young people to confidently, but seriously, face the truth about the judgment.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Discover the reality and the rewards of the investigative judgment. (Know)
• Grasp the need to live each day with the knowledge that the books of heaven are open. (Feel)
• Choose to be faithful and loyal to God’s rule and reign in their life today. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Judgment
• Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary
• Experience of Salvation

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.

The What Do You Think? activity involves choosing key words that relate to the message of God’s judgment of all who have lived. As they share the
words that resonate with them, invite them to share the words they are unfamiliar with. Perhaps the students will be able to enlighten each other if some have different responses. It is likely that many students will respond to words such as “forgiveness” or “assurance” because they are more common, but probe them about what they know about the other words they might want to know more about.

Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

During the mid-1500s the Anabaptists were severely persecuted in Germany and the Netherlands. Hans Smit and Hendrick Adams were meeting in a home near the German-Dutch border for Bible study and prayer. Suddenly the entire house was surrounded and they were all arrested, brought before a judge, and sentenced to prison. The councilor Aix-la-Chapelle bitterly and viciously sought to put these two men to death for speaking against “the church.” They were both tortured and brought again and again before the judgment seat and pressed to recant. While the hateful leaders wanted to execute the Anabaptists, it was in their best interests to have the leaders recant and stop the revival. But Hans and Hendrick stood firm each time they were brought to face questions about their faith. The vindictive councilor screeched out a verdict shouting, “Away with them, away with them, to death and the fire . . . no pardon should be offered them anymore!” Clearly, Aix-la-Chapelle was out of control. Hendrick Adams looked him straight in the face and calmly prophesied, “You will not live to see my death.” Hans Smit sang joyfully as they led him through the streets and he walked deliberately to the stake, where the bloodthirsty church leaders ended his life and his body was burned. However, it was clear to all present that day that this man answered to a different judge and a higher court. Three days later, Hendrick Adams was led to the stake with the same brave enthusiasm for truth, and was executed. But the councilor who eagerly sought the deaths of these two men became stricken with an illness shortly after he pronounced their death sentence. He confessed in his final moments that he had sinned and God would judge him for his bloodthirsty behavior. He died before Hendrick Adams was led to the stake for execution, fulfilling the words that were spoken to him three days prior.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Throughout history there have been many sad moments when men stood in the place of God and passed judgments, condemning others to death. God alone is Judge, and His judgment is not only fair, but merciful.

Although mankind may pretend to deliberate truth and justice, there is only one Judge, and He has declared that the books are open! As you reflect on the story of Noah and the Flood, consider the awe-inspiring message and the opportunity for salvation that was freely offered to all. The same sobering message of judgment and salvation goes out today. How will people respond? Will it be like the days of Noah, where only a handful paid attention?

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

- Read every word and phrase carefully and underline the parts that you think are crucial to the story.
- As you read this story, what insights do you see in the account of the Flood that relate to people living at the time of the end?
- Read Matthew 24:39 and note the way the story of the Flood is likened to the judgment scene at the end of time. How is this story a perfect illustration of the judgment scene? How might it be different?
- Read Daniel 7:1-10 and note especially the judgment scene in verses 9 and 10. What is the connection between the judgment that came in the time of Noah and the judgment that is currently taking place today?
- In Matthew 25 there are three parables that describe the judgment scene at the end.
  - How is it that so few responded to Noah’s message? What might be different about “the end” that is before humanity today and the “then end” that was before Noah and the antediluvians long ago?
  - By the time the door shut and the floodwaters came, everyone had decided how they would stand before God—alone on their own merits, or like Noah, who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” When does the judgment take place? How does the day of atonement
and the heavenly sanctuary speak to this part of the last-day message to the world? Read Chapter 28 in The Great Controversy for a thorough explanation.

- On what basis can believers today be confident that God is declaring them “not guilty”?
- What other stories or events in Scripture remind you of the judgment scene depicted in this lesson?

More Questions for Teachers:
- Take a poll in your class about the attitude of people to the idea of a judgment. What are the sentiments of people today about being accountable to God about the truths He has revealed?
- How do you think the last-day message of Revelation 14:7 will be received?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: 1 Kings 18; Genesis 6; 11; Jeremiah 36; Exodus 5:2.

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 has a couple of different angles to discuss the judgment. 1. There is a personal approach for each student to be accountable to God, genuinely and purposively. 2. There is the big-picture approach to the judgment, looking at the prophetic view of the “investigative judgment” prophesied in Daniel and portrayed in the doctrine of the sanctuary.

Personal angle: Throughout Scripture there are many passages that describe being accountable to God personally about our decision to repent and receive the provision God has made, or trust in our own way. As a result, there tends to be three classes of people described in Scripture, as noted in the book Seventh-day Adventists Believe:

“Human beings belong to one of three classes: (1) the wicked, who reject God’s authority; (2) genuine believers, who trusting in the merits of Christ through faith, live in obedience to God’s law; and (3) those who appear to be genuine believers but are not” (p. 361).

There are various parables (Matthew 6:25; 7:23; 13; 20, and especially chapter 25) that depict a judgment scene where individuals have to face the results of their own choices.

The investigative judgment angle: The message of the sanctuary is not simply an afterthought of the Exodus, but is an earthly portrayal of a heavenly reality. The ministry and message of the sanctuary captures God’s plan of salvation, which includes the work of judgment. This topic will take more time than can be achieved in a Sabbath School class, and it is suggested to use The Great Controversy as a key resource. You might consider breaking the topic up in three parts, mirroring the outline given in the book Seventh-day Adventists Believe:

“The events of the Day of Atonement illustrate the three phases of God’s final judgment. They are (1) the ‘premillennial judgment’ (or the ‘investigative judgment’) which is also called the ‘pre-Advent judgment’; (2) the

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

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

- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Great Controversy. 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 who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life.”

(The Great Controversy, p. 483).

"Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark."

(Genesis 7:23, NIV)

“millennial judgment”; and (3) the ‘executive judgment’ which takes place at the end of the millennium” (p. 352).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Invite the students to respond to the question: “Which would be easier to do, make a list of the good things you have done this year or compose a list of the bad things you have done this year?” They can draw a line down the center of a piece of paper making two columns and begin making a list. Just have them make a mark when they remember events and acts that were either good or bad (O for good, and an X for bad) so as to protect their privacy. On the Day of Atonement (judgment) everyone who wanted to be pardoned placed their hands on the lamb, and they leaned on it so as to represent putting their sin on the lamb. This was an act of confession and repentance.

Then in groups of two or three, invite the students to make a list on another piece of paper of all the things they can remember that Christ did that would be considered “righteous acts” of obedience to God. Have the students report what they compiled. The key issue of the judgment is: do you want to answer by your own works (good and bad) for yourself, or do you want God to judge you based on Christ’s righteousness?

You can have the students press their folded papers down on the table and then cover all of the papers with the pages that have the works of Christ, as a symbol of God’s pronouncement of their redemption.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

We need to convey a sobering message to young people today, not by guilt or by fear, but by the clear and pressing truth that we are living in the hour of God’s judgment. It is through our hope in Christ’s righteousness that we can bravely face each day knowing that as God looks at the list of our deeds, the word “PARDONED” is written. You could say something like this: “If there is one thing that I want more than anything else, it is that all of you will choose to have God pardon you and write your names in the book of life. It doesn’t happen just because you want it, you must deliberately choose it. Confess that your list is not good enough to cover you. Lean fully on the work that Christ has done for you. And claim the truth that God has judged you ‘not guilty.’”

1Fundamental Belief No. 24
2Fundamental Belief No. 10

Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 28.
“All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life” (The Great Controversy, p. 483).

(Genesis 7:23, NIV)
what do you think?

The following is a list of words that describe an aspect of the last-day message of judgment to the world. Which three words immediately resonate with you? Which words do you feel unfamiliar with?

- Intercession
- Reconciliation
- Forgiveness
- Repentance
- Restoration
- Assurance
- Righteousness
- Judgment of sin
- Substitution
- Atonement

Why do you think certain words resonate with you? What are some questions you have about the words that are unfamiliar to you?

did you know?

In Daniel 7:22 the King James Version of Scripture says that “judgment was given to the saints of the most High.” This phrase may be misleading people to think that the saints are the ones doing the judging. Any lawyer can tell you that when “judgment is given” to someone it actually means that judgment is passed in favor of the saints. If you look you will find most translations describe the judgment scene as a time when those who are “in Christ” are declared “not guilty.”

INTO THE STORY

“Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

“On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut him in.

“For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.”

(Genesis 7:6-23, NIV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Read every word and phrase carefully and underline the parts that you think are crucial to the story.

As you read this story, what insights do you see in the account of the Flood that relate to people living at the time of the end?

Read Matthew 24:39 and note the way the story of the Flood is likened to the judgment scene at the end of time. How is this story a perfect illustration of the judgment scene? How might it be different?

Read Daniel 7:1-10 and note especially the judgment scene in verses 9 and 10. What is the connection between the judgment that came in the time of Noah and the judgment that is currently taking place today?

Matthew 25 contains three parables that describe the judgment scene at the end.

How is it that so few responded to Noah’s message? What might be different about “the end” that is before humanity today and “the end” that was before Noah and the antediluvians long ago?

On what basis can believers today be confident that God is declaring them . . . “not guilty”?

What other stories or events in Scripture remind you of the judgment scene depicted in this lesson?

punch lines

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16, NKJV).

“And he said to me, ‘Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still’” (Revelation 22:10, 11, NKJV).

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name” (Malachi 3:16, NKJV).

“He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; . . . A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened” (Daniel 7:9, 10, NKJV).

“Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is” (Mark 13:33, NKJV).

(Other texts: Daniel 7–9; Daniel 4; Matthew 13:28–30; Leviticus 23; Hebrews 8; 9)

other eyes

“My greatest thought is my accountability to God.” — Unknown.

Daniel Webster, 18th-19th-century American statesman and orator.

“Many who plan to seek God at the eleventh hour die at 10:30.” — Unknown.
Sabbath
Read and respond to the activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. Which words seemed to resonate with you? Why? In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus describes a scene at the end where some will believe they are going to heaven, but are informed that they are not. How does this passage impact you? On what basis can you know confidently that when God judges you, He is judging you “not guilty”? 

Sunday
As you read the Into the Story section and answer the questions in the study section of this week’s lesson, it takes you back to a judgment scene on earth. The story of Noah and the Flood mirrors a similar climate and a similar question that needs to be answered: when judgment comes, what will be the outcome for you? By the time the water fell it was too late to decide. Judgment had been passed. When Christ comes again it will be too late to choose—judgment already will have taken place.

What do you think is the message God is trying to say to people today when He says: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:37, NIV)? What do you think God is trying to say to you today?

Monday
The Key Text in Genesis 7:23 seems harsh, but when the Bible says that only Noah and his family were safe in the ark, it describes those who have chosen to be faithful to God. Compare this verse to the verse in Revelation 22:10, 11, where God draws a line for those who are in, and those who are out. While everyone has a choice to make about which side they will stand on, how do you see God’s loving character displayed in such a severe setting? How would you answer the question, “How could God be seen as loving in a judgment scene?”

Tuesday
Read the amazing quote from The Great Controversy that shows the grace of God in His judgment of people. Do you want to have your name written in the books of heaven? According to this statement by Ellen White, how do you become ready or “worthy of eternal life”?

Wednesday
As you read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson, how would you organize these verses if you were to use them in a Bible study? Which verse would you start and end with? Why? What verse is speaking to you personally today? What do you think God is trying to say to you today?

Thursday

Friday
Effect and imagine what the judgment scene looks like in heaven today. Replay in your ears and before your eyes the work of Christ, your Mediator, standing before His throne announcing: “This one is a child of God” (see John 1:10-13). Can you think of anything more important today than making your decision about who will represent you in the judgment? How will that decision change how you live? Will it?

this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 28.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

One of the greatest mysteries in the human story has to do with understanding the origin of evil. Compared to other topics in the Bible, there is very little revealed about how sin began and what elements fostered the disease of sin in the heart of Lucifer, the glorious angel in the throne room of God. The three passages that tell the story of the birth of sin are found in Revelation 12, Ezekiel 28, and Isaiah 14. The mystery of sin’s starting point is complicated by why it was even possible. The answer is typically, “Because God gave His creation the power of choice.” While this is true, the presence of sin opens the door to so much pain and destruction that it is hard to see the enduring value of such freedom. But God could not govern the universe any other way. Ellen White claimed that in order for sin to be eradicated, “evil must be permitted to come to maturity” (The Great Controversy, p. 499). It is this topic that paints the big picture of salvation’s story, and the same story is really central to the highest purpose in the universe: saving God’s children and certifying His character to all.

In The Great Controversy chapters you will discover that the human problem with sin extends far beyond Adam and Eve, but to every creature who waits to see how God responds to the claims that Lucifer has made. In Genesis 3 the evil one draws Adam and Eve to disobey God and to aim for the same target that Lucifer made for his mark. The essence of the lie misdirects what people and angels think about the Creator. Ultimately, what people think about God becomes the most important thought any human will ever have.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Discover the origin of sin in the fall of Lucifer. (Know)
• Experience a renewed sense of confidence in God’s approach to the problem of sin. (Feel)
• Resolve to respond to God’s appeal rather than stubbornly resist. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Sin
• The nature of man
• The great controversy

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

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

This week the students are invited to defend a line of thought. Both statements are defensible, but as students choose a theme to illustrate, support, or explain, they are challenged to think. Evidence of extreme evil and extreme good make it hard to deny the existence of God and Satan. In other words, do you think about God’s goodness because you see evil looming in stark contrast, or are you more likely...
to celebrate God’s character when you see people exemplify it in acts of goodness?

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

The story is told of a husband and wife who discovered their toddler had quietly meandered into the storeroom in the house and commenced to explore. When the parents finally discovered his whereabouts, they knew immediately he had ingested something poisonous. Their child’s coloring was wrong. His behavior was lethargic. They called the poison control center and described what they thought the little boy had put in his mouth. The parents were urged to hurry and get their child to an emergency room and under no circumstances were they to let the child lose consciousness. To do so would be deadly.

They placed the child in the car seat and drove anxiously to the hospital. Along the way the little boy’s eyes began to droop and he started to fade off to sleep. As the father drove, the mother cried out to her son to stay awake. She tried everything. After a while the only thing that would keep her son awake was to pinch him. She pinched him hard enough to bruise him at times. But he remained awake because of the pain. With tears in her eyes and only a few minutes from the hospital she was forced to drastic measures again. When her child no longer responded to pinching, she slapped him. Not out of anger, but out of desperation to keep her child awake. Never before had she ever had to do something so agonizing, and yet it was the only thing she could do to save her child’s life. When they arrived at the hospital they were met by the emergency team and had the child’s stomach pumped. When their son’s life was out of danger they debriefed with the nurses and the doctor about how awful they felt hurting their child, just trying to keep him awake.

The nurses nodded but affirmed the couple, saying, “We know that must have been painful, but once they go to sleep we rarely ever save them without permanent damage. Just last week we lost a little girl because the parents couldn’t keep the child awake. The pinches and the slaps will heal. But your son will live.”

What do you think other travelers might have thought if they observed the mother in the back seat pinching and slapping a child? Knowing so little of the big picture, what conclusions could be made? How wrong are those conclusions?

How does this story depict the way people perceive God, the presence of sin, Satan, and the reign of evil in the human experience?

What are some comparisons of this story to the plan of salvation? How does our perception of God in the way He deals with sin shape our relationship to Him during the hard times?

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

It is likely that God would do “whatever it takes” to get humanity to know Him and dwell with Him for eternity. God would even take us to the horror of sin coming to its full fruition if it was the only way to take us home with Him. Knowing the bigger picture enables us to see the way sin works and how our perceptions of God are crucial. As you read the following sections of Scripture, consider how they tell the story of the beginning of sin. Answer the questions provided and consider how God’s plan for dealing with the problem of sin is the only way.

**Out of the Story for Teachers**

- As you read the portions of Scripture that depict the birth of evil, what do you think is the most important verse in the story? Why?
- What key words and phrases are used to describe Lucifer’s nature before he fell?
- What does the Bible say that caused Lucifer to become corrupt?
- In this story of Lucifer’s fall, how would you explain God’s apparent inactivity? Why didn’t God cut the work of sin short? (Read *The Great Controversy*, chapter 29.)
- In what way does this story deepen your view of God’s love and expand your hatred of sin?
- Who, in the Bible or in history, seemed to fall the same way Lucifer fell?
- What warnings or examples can you take from observing the way sin began in Lucifer? How does knowing Satan’s story help you live differently?

**More Questions for Teachers:**

- How would you distinguish the difference between sin, evil, and suffering?
- What would you like to know more about? Why?
- The details of what happened in heaven with Lucifer?
- More insight on the incident in the garden with
Satan (the snake) and what God did to respond to their disobedience?
• Thoughts in God’s mind about why He allows this world to continue in sin?
• How would a broader understanding shape your view of God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 4; Job 1; Genesis 3; Revelation 21; Mark 5:1-20.

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

This week’s lesson story about the origin of evil is gathered from several parts of Scripture. The portions of the story from Isaiah and Ezekiel are similar in that they describe the internal workings of sin at its inception in one being created by God. As these two sections in the Old Testament reflect the poetic style and genre of the Hebrew literature, they posit Lucifer as “the king of Babylon” or “the king of Tyre.” The book Seventh-day Adventists Believe (p. 114) claims that “the kings of Tyre and Babylon are figurative descriptions for Lucifer.” This is made clear when the one who is being described is:
• a covering cherub
• residing in the presence of God
• perfect, wise, and beautiful
• present in Eden

Furthermore, both Isaiah and Ezekiel describe the source of Lucifer’s fall in the same way:

“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, NIV).

“You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. . . . Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor” (Ezekiel 28:15-17, NIV).

Clearly, these passages tell the story of the internal work of sin in Lucifer (who becomes Satan) that is revealed in no other place in Scripture. We see Satan at work, but the awful work that brought Lucifer to rebel is mentioned in only a few places.

The context of the third story is almost at the very center of the book of Revelation, and many scholars have discussed chapter 12 as the centerpiece or the central theme of the book. In other words, what happened in heaven with Lucifer, sin, and God’s provision in Christ are the essence of what the revelator saw when he wrote the apocalypse. Those who overcome do so by “the blood of the lamb,” “the word of their testimony,” and because “they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” These three qualities are directly opposite the attitude and behavior of Lucifer/Satan. Those who overcome are mentioned again at the end of this chapter and are described as people “who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus” (Revelation 12:17, NIV).

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

• Punch Lines
Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Object Lessons**

An object lesson is a convincing demonstration of a principle or ideal. Object lessons are extremely valuable teaching tools provided they are simple, clear, and memorable. When Jesus used the object lesson of the farmer and the different types of ground in Matthew 13:1-23, He achieved all three objectives. The simplicity is obvious to anyone who lives in an agricultural world that the environment determines whether growth is effective or not. The lesson was clear in that there are no distractions or complicated nuances to the simple work of planting and growing seeds. The exercise is memorable because people daily were engaged in farming. But even as the students can learn and remember objective lessons well, it may be better to invite them to think of their own ways to offer a convincing demonstration of a principle or ideal. Inviting them to develop their own heightens the learning experience.

Although the story of the Fall (Genesis 3) is not included in the story, it is another passage that depicts the sly and selfish way Satan tricks God’s children to follow the same path.

**III. CLOSING**

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

An object lesson that works well for describing the origin of evil and how Lucifer fell can be used with a simple broom handle, a long, straight stick, or even a baseball bat. Try balancing the broom handle upright in your hand and have the students time how long you can keep the stick balanced. You might even get a dexterous young person to serve as a volunteer. In order to balance the pole you must look at the top of the pole as a reference point. As soon as you look down at your hand where the bottom of the stick is resting, it is only a matter of seconds before the pole will fall. Invite various students to try, first looking at the top and being able to balance the pole for a time. Then have the students shift their focus to their own hand. You might ask: How is this experience like what happened to Lucifer? How does our focus/reference affect the way we stay balanced and upright in our walk with God?

**Summary**

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

That sin began is troubling enough, but that God let it reign has caused many to wonder about God’s character. God doesn’t mind people who have questions, but when we see such a small window into what God is doing to save humanity and His name, it doesn’t hurt to handle the topic with some humility. When we press God to explain Himself before we are willing to surrender, we stymie the work of faith in our lives and miss the mark on how we participate in the plan of salvation. Lucifer fell because He chose pride instead of devotion—selfishness instead of worship. As this sin made it into our world through Adam and Eve’s disobedience, we tend to lean toward selfishness without even thinking about it. But the more we think about it, the more we become aware that there is another way. The message of Revelation is “the accuser . . . has been cast down,” and we overcome the evil one “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of [our] testimony, and [because we do] not love [our own] lives to the death” (Revelation 12:10, 11, NKJV). The story of Lucifer’s fall tells the story of a God who longs for us to serve Him out of love instead of fear, which is why God did not immediately eradicate the fallen angel or anyone else for that matter.

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1Fundamental Belief No. 7.
2Fundamental Belief No. 8.

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 Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 29, 30.
“Even when it was decided that he could no longer remain in heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. . . . The inhabitants of heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity” (The Great Controversy, pp. 498, 499).
Choose one of the points to defend and explain your choice.

Which do you think is easier to illustrate, support, or explain:

Acts of extreme evil committed by ordinary people are compelling evidence of a supernatural conflict between Christ and Satan.

Or

Acts of extreme goodness by ordinary people are compelling evidence of a supernatural conflict between Christ and Satan.

Which do you think more vividly responds to the question people have about the goodness of God and the origin of evil?


did you know?

Sindrome.” It’s not really a word, but it combines the words syndrome and sin; notice how they describe the birth and life of evil.

The word “sin” actually means “to miss the mark.” It is a target-shooting word that conveys the idea of aiming wrong.

The dictionary defines a syndrome as “a group of signs and symptoms that together are characteristic or indicative of a specific disease or other disorder” and “a group of things or events that form a recognizable pattern, especially of something undesirable.”

If you put the two words together, we have a condition in which we aim wrong, miss the mark, and the result is a disease that continues to destroy.

“Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you.’”’

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

(Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17; Revelation 12:7-9, NKJV)
**OUT OF THE STORY**

As you read the portions of Scripture that depict the birth of evil, what do you think is the most important verse in the story? Why?

What key words and phrases are used to describe Lucifer’s nature before he fell?

What does the Bible say that caused Lucifer to become corrupt?

In this story of Lucifer’s fall, how would you explain God’s apparent inactivity?

Why didn’t God cut the work of sin short? (Read The Great Controversy, chapter 29.)

In what way does this story deepen your view of God’s love and expand your hatred of sin?

Who in the Bible or in history seemed to fall the same way Lucifer fell?

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**punch lines**

“Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:18, 19, NIV).

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15, NIV).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8, 9, NKJV).

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14, 15, NKJV).

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:9, 10, NIV).

“When asked why God created man when He knew he would sin, Martin Luther replied, ‘Let us keep clear of these abstract questions and consider the will of God such as it has been revealed to us.’” —Martin Luther, 15th-16th-century German Reformation leader.
Sabbath

Read and respond to the either/or activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson. What do you think more effectively exposes the reality of good and evil? It is clear that there are two sides. In Genesis 3:14, 15, God draws a line in the sand and pits two sides against one another. Adam and Eve, and all the children of God, stand opposed to Satan in the conflict between good and evil. Enmity. Hostility. Opposition. What does God promise about how this conflict will end?

Sunday

As you read the Into the Story section and answer the questions in Out of the Story, notice that the three passages form a composite story of the origin of evil. Even though there is little information in Scripture about how sin began, there is ample evidence of the effects of sin on people and the world. How does reading the story of Lucifer’s fall affect the way you see God’s character revealed in the Scripture? How does knowing how it all began help you understand how to make choices today? If God is speaking to you in these snapshots of sin’s birth story, what message do you think He is trying to convey to you?

Monday

The Key Text from this week’s lesson is found in Revelation 12:7–9 where we see a battle that begins in heaven—a rebellion that ensues in the very presence of God’s throne and ends up here on earth. Which phrase speaks to you?
• “and war broke out in heaven”
• “Michael and his angels fought with the dragon”
• “the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail”
• “there was no place found for them in heaven any longer”

Tuesday

Read the Flashlight quote for this week’s lesson and consider the questions this passage from The Great Controversy answers for people today. God’s plan to answer the presence of evil had to result with sin being “fully destroyed” and “utterly eradicated.” How does God’s decision to deal with sin differ from the way the human mind works? How does God’s approach to the sin problem stand in contrast to the way Satan fulfills his goals? As you look more fully at the truth of how sin began and where it is going, God’s way of love is by far the most supernatural thing anyone will ever see. Think of all the things in life today that are considered “supernatural.” What does that mean? How might you connect the way God solves the problem of sin to the world you live in today?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson, which verse speaks to you today about where you stand in reference to the war that rages between Christ and Satan? How might these verses speak to some of the questions people have about the character of God in a world that seems to be full of evil?

Thursday

In Romans 16:20 Paul says, “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (NKJV). How does this work? In what way does how we live “crush” Satan? How do our acts of love, kindness, mercy, and justice serve to strike devastating blows to the kingdom of evil? Do such demonstrations of God’s loving ways dispel the perceptions and lies Satan has told about God? As you serve God this week, think about how Satan’s deadliest tool is to get people to think something wrong about God. The devil’s primary tool is deception. What are some things you can do to tell the truth about God’s character to others?

Friday

Think about how your perceptions of God have changed over the years? What did you know about Him as a little child? How has your understanding of who God is and His plan for your life transformed over time? How is our understanding of God’s character important in making it impossible for sin to return after Christ puts a final end to it?

this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapters 29, 30.

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.U7i5f1yB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The spiritual war between Christ and Satan is not some isolated contention between two equal superpowers in the heavenly realms. First, God is supreme, all-powerful. Satan has already been sentenced and his end is inevitable. Second, angelic beings created by God are at work with the tasks of the kingdom of God. Fallen angels who sided with Lucifer are also working furiously to inflict damage as their own doom draws near. Clearly, fallen humanity senses that something is going on beyond what the eyes can see. Christians know from Scripture that God has claimed victory over sin, but Satan still works to deceive and undermine the plan of salvation by seeking to “devour” and “steal” and “kill” those who would choose to claim their place as heirs of God’s kingdom. This battle for souls is so clearly depicted in the story of the demoniac, possessed by thousands of demons and banished into Satan’s domain. In Mark 5 and Matthew 8 the work of Satan’s forces is revealed in the desperate plight of a man who, compelled by what must have been a mustard seed of faith but more prominently a band of demons, runs at Jesus.

The storied event is rich with a visceral look at the reality of evil angels and the ultimate victory of Christ’s powerful hand of grace. Also emerging from this story is the way God’s power goes with us when we testify of His great acts of salvation and His mercy. In fact, this lost and despised young man becomes perhaps the first Christian missionary sent to the Decapolis, a region of 10 cities bankrupt of true religion. What seems unavoidable is the question in this study: how does God’s power over evil get fleshed out through His people in the days in which we are living?

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Open their eyes to the world of evil and angelic forces. (Know)
• Sense that the power over death and evil is sure. (Feel)
• Choose to align themselves overtly and eternally with God and His kingdom. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Angels
• Spiritual warfare
• Prayer

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

As students discuss how people perceive the reasons why demon possession seems less frequent today than in New Testament times, invite them to add other reasons that might not have been mentioned. It
is also helpful for the discussion if they share where they are in regard to the question. Take a poll and see which answer is most prominent and which is least. Affirm everyone who participates and acknowledge those who may not answer out loud but may have thought and answered the question in their mind.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of John Paton, a missionary in the New Hebrides Islands. Late in the evening a large band of hostile natives encamped and besieged the local mission station where Paton served. The goal was to burn out the missionary family and their collaborators. When they emerged, the natives were to take them and kill them. Possessed by an outright hatred for the Christians, they surrounded the compound. The Patons and the others waited and prayed throughout the terror-filled night for God to protect and sustain them. When daylight came they stood in amazement as their would-be attackers left. A little over a year later, due to the continued faithful work of the Patons, the chief of the tribe was converted to Christ. The same chief who a year previous had prepared an assault on the Patons made a decision to follow the living Christ. Remembering the event, Paton asked the chief what kept him from burning down the compound house and murdering all of them. The chief replied in surprise, “We almost attacked but were surprised to see that we were outnumbered. Who were all those men guarding your house?” What a good question! Paton knew that no men or contingent of human guards stood watch outside his house that night. The chief feared to attack and decided to run when he saw hundreds of large men with swords circling the mission station.

Is it possible that we go through our days unaware of the angelic presence protecting us? To what degree do you think God still promises to support and defend His people with sword-bearing angels today?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

This story teaches us at least two things: (1) God protects us against demons and evil in ways that we are not aware; and (2) our devotion and prayer to God about this unseen world open our eyes to the possibilities of extending the gospel to others when we might be afraid to launch out in faith. Read the story and answer the question given about this amazing event that took place in a region of the world that desperately needed someone to testify to God’s mercy and power.

Out of the Story for Teachers

• As you read the story of the demoniac, what are some of the key sentences/phrases that are central to this story?
• Why do you think this story is included in the Gospels? What purpose does it serve? Why would the message in this event be important?
• How is the demoniac described?
• According to the text, how do villagers—even the disciples—relate to this man who is known to be “demon-possessed”?
• What is demon possession? How would you describe it? How do you think it happens?
• Are people who are demon-possessed really completely out of control?
• What are some other examples in Scripture that discuss this phenomenon?
• What is the reaction of evil angels when Christ is near?
• Why do you think the people reacted the way they did? Is it because they did not want people disturbing life with the forces of good and evil? What was their motivation in asking Jesus to leave the region?
• Why do you think the man who had been freed of the demons did not want to part company with Jesus? Why do you think Jesus gave this man the command to tell others what God had done for him? Why would this task be helpful to the man healed of the evil spirits?
• What does this story tell us about the nature of evil and its real presence in the human experience? Why do you think the obvious presence of demons seems rarer today than it seemed to be in the time of Christ?
translated “demoniac.” One of the key conversations that may be helpful to have is how Satan enslaves in a way that controls individuals in contrast to God’s angels who convey truths, protect, encourage, and guide.

The context of the story occurs after Christ has miraculously fed thousands of people and they seek to take refuge from the crowds by boat to the region of the Gadarenes. This area is populated by Greek-speaking people who are not Jewish in their practice of faith. One evidence of this is that they were keeping herds of pigs, whereas no Jews would defile themselves in that manner. Also, the inhabitants of this region urged Jesus to leave when such a profound demonstration of spiritual power had been displayed. While the deliverance of this man is covered in the story and study portion of the lesson, it is critical to note that he goes to the Decapolis (10 cities) and declares what Christ has done. It is likely that Jesus gave this man the missionary task to build his confidence that he was restored and the demons would not return, but also to prepare a witness for their return, which is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels:

In Mark 5:20, 21 the story reads: “So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake” (NIV). A couple of chapters later the impact of the formerly demon-possessed man is noted:

“Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the

Sharing Context and Background

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

The story of the demoniac opens up an important discussion for the church today, and especially for young people, on the nature of angels and demons and their work on behalf of the kingdoms they serve (Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8).

Two words are used in the New Testament that refer to demon possession. First, the Greek word, daimonizomai, usually translated “to be possessed by a demon,” is used to describe the effect of agents of Satan at work in people. How that happens and to what degree people are “possessed” or “controlled” completely is debated. When referring to a person, it is

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

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

- **Flashlight**
  
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book The Great Controversy. 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.
"Were not miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles? The same compassionate Saviour lives today, and He is as willing to listen to the prayer of faith as when He walked visibly among men. The natural cooperates with the supernatural. It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask" (The Great Controversy, p. 525).

Scripture Story: Mark 5:1-19.

Commentary: The Great Controversy, (or Love Under Fire) chapters 31, 32.

"Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid." (Mark 5:15, NKJV)

region of the Decapolis” (Mark 7:31, NIV; also echoed in Luke 8:26-40).

Initially, the people that were nervous about how Jesus manifested such spiritual power of evil forces was resisted, whereas after the man tells his story throughout the 10 cities, they receive Jesus gladly and the gospel does great work against the kingdom of Satan.

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Divide the class into groups of two or three and give them each a piece of paper and a pen. Ask the students to write any angel sightings they can remember in Scripture. Urge them to think of examples in which heaven and humanity collide and the supernatural forces that are unseen are unmistakable. The goal is to try to get them to collectively exhaust the list of examples from Scripture. As the students report their lists, write them on the board. Ask the students: “When angels and demons show up in the stories in the Bible, consider what is at stake. How real is the battle between heaven and the agencies of evil? To what degree do we need to pay more attention to this war in our world today?”

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

A friend once told me that “80 percent of snake venom is made up of protein.” Even though we all need a daily source of protein in our diet, it does not follow that snake venom is an appropriate source for protein. The 20 percent will kill you. Yet many have given a foothold to the enemy of souls thinking that the unseen world either is not so dangerous or they are smart enough to outsmart Lucifer.

God will send His angels to help us. Hebrews 1:14 tells us that they are “ministering spirits” (NIV) sent out to give service to those who belong to God. The Bible has plenty of other instances in which angels aided believers in times of need. (See Ps. 34:7; 91:11; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 John 5:18; Acts 12:5-11; 1 Kings 19:5-8; 2 Kings 6:8-17.) Angels even ministered to Christ after His temptation by Satan (Mark 1:13). And they are there for you. Know that it is true.

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 Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapters 31, 32.
Were not miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles? The same compassionate Saviour lives today, and He is as willing to listen to the prayer of faith as when He walked visibly among men. The natural cooperates with the supernatural. It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask” (The Great Controversy, p. 525).
What do you think?

Why do you think demon possession seems more prominent in the New Testament era than it does today? (Rank the following answers.)

- People are less aware of the presence of angels and demons.
- Satan has chosen a more subtle form of demonic control—apathy.
- People today are so inundated with the supernatural through media and entertainment that they are desensitized to the angelic agencies of good and evil.
- After the cross, Satan’s power over humanity has changed.
- Other

Is it your opinion that people today are more aware of the demonic angels of the enemy than they are of the angels that are sent to help, guide, and protect God’s children? Why do you think this is so? What evidence do you know of in Scripture that conveys the idea that God sends His angels to help us?

Did you know?

Consider some recent research that reports the percentage of adults who have encountered the supernatural:

- 55 percent claim they have been protected from harm by a guardian angel.
- 45 percent felt called by God to do something.
- 23 percent reported that they have witnessed or experienced miraculous, physical healing.
- 20 percent heard the voice of God speaking to them at some point in their life.

(Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky; source: Alejandro Gonzalez, “Angels and God,” USA Today 9-18-08, based on a 2007 survey of 1,700 U.S. adults by The Institute for Studies of Religion [Baylor University].)

“Then Jesus asked the demon, ‘What is your name?’”

“My name is Legion,” he replied. ‘There are many of us.’ And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

“A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, ‘Send us among the pigs. Let us go into them.’ Jesus allowed it. The evil spirits came out of the man and went into the pigs. There were about 2,000 pigs in the herd. The whole herd rushed down the steep bank. They ran into the lake and drowned.

“Those who were tending the pigs ran off. They told the people in the town and countryside what had happened. The people went out to see for themselves.

“Then they came to Jesus. They saw the man who had been controlled by many demons. He was sitting there. He was now dressed and thinking clearly. All this made the people afraid. Those who had seen it told them what had happened to the man. They told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to beg Jesus to leave their area.

“Jesus was getting into the boat. The man who had been controlled by demons begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him. He said, ‘Go home to your family. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how kind he has been to you.’”

(Mark 5:1-19, NIRV)
OUT OF THE STORY

As you read the story of the demoniac, what are some of the key sentences/phrases that are central to this story?

__________________________________________________________

Why do you think this story is included in the Gospels? What purpose does it serve? Why would the message in this event be important?

__________________________________________________________

What is demon possession? How would you describe it? How do you think it happens?

__________________________________________________________

What are some other examples in Scripture that discuss this phenomenon?

__________________________________________________________

What is the reaction of evil angels when Christ is near?

__________________________________________________________

Why do you think the people reacted the way they did? What was their motivation in asking Jesus to leave the region?

__________________________________________________________

Why do you think the man who had been freed of the demons did not want to part company with Jesus?

__________________________________________________________

punch lines

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, NIV).

“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation” (Matthew 12:43-45, NIV).

“So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me” (Romans 7:21-23, NIV).

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:16, 17, NKJV).

other eyes

“If man is not rising upwards to be an angel, depend upon it, he is sinking downwards to be a devil.” —Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 18th-19th-century English poet.

“Angels cannot preach the gospel, only beings such as Paul and you and I can preach the gospel.” —Oswald Chambers, devotional writer.

Men of Integrity, vol. 1, No. 1.
Sabbath
Read and respond to the activity in the What Do You Think? section of this week’s lesson.

What do you think is the biggest reason you don’t see demon possession as is witnessed in the Gospels? On one hand, the world we live in seems too comfortable with the notion that there may be supernatural forces at work in relationship to humanity. On the other hand, there does not seem to be a healthy respect for the war that is raging beyond what the human eye can see. Read Ephesians 6:10-12 and note how real the struggle between good and evil is. The question is, How important is it? How much different would your daily life be if the curtain of spiritual battle were pulled back and you could see what is really going on?

Tuesday
Read the quote from The Great Controversy; page 525, that makes what might be the boldest claim in the entire book, saying: “It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.” Reflect on this idea for a moment and imagine what Ellen White is saying. Is it true that there are things God is “waiting to do” but is not going to do until we ask prayerfully and faithfully? Is it possible that we think too small or pray too little? Consider what bold things you need to be praying for in your life. With your mind on this spiritual war, begin praying boldly for God to do what He won’t do unless you ask. Perhaps you might keep a notebook or a journal devoted to praying for such an outpouring of God’s power in your life.

Wednesday
Read the verses listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson. Put them in order as if you were preaching a sermon on those four texts or using them for a Bible study on the spiritual battle taking place with angels and demons and people. What are some other stories you would add or verses you can recall that might be helpful in sharing what the Bible says about the agencies of good and evil. Take some time to write out an outline or list the texts in the back of your Bible and pray for an opportunity to share what you are praying for or even give a Bible study in the coming week to someone who is struggling with a spiritual battle. Be ready for God to answer your prayer.

Thursday
As you make your way through the coming week how might you live confidently, but purposefully aware of the spiritual friends and enemies that are at work? Some have placed artifacts of angels or reminders written on note cards to stay aware of the unseen helpers and enemies that are close by. It is not insane to talk to God about angels whom God has placed in charge of caring for you nor is it inappropriate to be mindful of the reality that evil angels seek a foothold in the lives of people. What are some “footholds” that you want to surrender and relinquish today? It could be a habit or a form of entertainment. Perhaps it is a relationship that urges you to forget that you are a child of God. Find a tangible way to release your connection to that temptation and cling to the promise of God’s plan for your life.

Friday
Take some time to reflect on how important the angels are in the plan of salvation. Ruminate for a while on how they are sent from God’s throne room to assist and protect and fight for the rights of humanity to know their Creator and receive the salvation provided by heaven. It is likely the whole of heavenly forces are busy beyond our mind’s imagination with moving humanity toward a decision about where they will spend eternity. What is your choice regarding this plan?

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-compion-book#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
I. SYNOPSIS

The subject of death has been one of the most controversial issues in the church. Many people view the soul as immortal; some don’t believe in an afterlife at all; some believe in the end-time resurrection; and some aren’t quite sure what they believe.

Today’s lesson will give us more insight on what the Bible says happens at death. It will also show how belief in an immortal soul can lead to cultic things such as spiritualism. Death is not limbo, hell, heaven, or purgatory. It is, simply put, “nonexistence.” The soul does not live on outside the body; it does not have thoughts or a personality; it is simply disintegrated. Bodies don’t have souls, bodies are souls. All throughout the Bible we have seen examples of this. Nowhere in the Bible does it attribute the soul to anything that is conscious after death. Many believe the idea of the immortal soul was thought up by ancient Greek philosophers. Plato was definitely a big believer in this teaching. He referred to the body as a husk, the shell which the soul leaves upon death. However, the Bible clearly contradicts this belief. “For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, KJV).

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand what happens when death occurs. (Know)
• Be more conscious of the fact that the majority of Christians don’t share the same belief and need to hear it. (Feel)
• Be willing to share this truth with others. (Respond)

III. EXPLORER

• Death and resurrection*
• Occult
• Heaven

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.

The idea of the immortal soul is constantly circulated through our society today. You see it in movies, hear about it in music, pastors preach about it, and even some nonreligious people have tended to lean toward the idea of soul immortality because it’s been so engrained into their minds from the media.

Have the students use note cards and pens to
write down all of the examples they can think of, even specifying particular popular movies as well as popular songs that make this false belief sound true. After they finish, have everyone compare what they've written down. There will probably be a lot more examples than you think.

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

A young woman had been in a terrible accident; taken to the hospital, she was in critical condition. While in the emergency room, she actually died, in the sense that her heart stopped beating and her breathing stopped, too. The doctors worked furiously in order to try and revive her. After about two minutes it worked. She started breathing again and her heart started pumping. The crisis was over. Though severely injured, she would survive.

What’s fascinating, however, is that after she left the hospital she talked about what she believed she experienced while “dead.” She said she went through a kind of tunnel, and at the end she met a being of light, who spoke to her kindly. He asked her to review her life, and then told her that she was going back. The next thing she knew, she found herself in the hospital bed.

Her story is not uncommon. In recent years there has been a phenomenon known as near-death experiences (NDEs), in which people die—the heart stops beating, they stop breathing, and are assumed dead. Yet they are revived and tell fantastic stories about an afterlife. Accounts like these have made many believe that NDEs are “proof” of an immortal soul.

Yet why do most come back from NDEs with no sense of a need for Christ or for His saving grace? If these people were really taken to heaven, or were talking to God’s angels, or to other dead (as some have claimed), or even to God Himself, then why didn’t the angels, or the dead, or even the Lord tell them about the need for Christ to cover their sins, the most basic biblical teachings? Many of these folks were not professing Christians when they “died,” and they rarely come back as ones either. Why? Because, in most cases, nothing happened during their NDE that prompted them to accept Christ.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

The Bible tells us in clear and direct terminology that the “dead know nothing.” Nowhere in the Bible will you be able to find a verse that espouses the doctrine of immortality directly at death. In fact, the word “immortal” is used only once in the Bible and it is in reference to God. Also, in 1 Timothy 6:15, 16 the word “immortality” is used to describe God, saying that He alone is the one who has it.

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

**What is a soul?** Mankind did not receive a soul at Creation. When God breathed into mankind’s nostrils the breath of life, mankind became a living being (Gen. 2:7). The formula is as follows:

\[
\text{Dust of the earth} + \text{the breath of life} = \text{a living being, or soul.}
\]

Actually, this breath of life is not limited to humans. The Bible attributes the breath of life to animals as well (Gen. 7:15, 22).

There is no text that indicates that the soul survives the body as a conscious entity. Scripture teaches that immortality of the soul was conditional on mankind’s obedience (Gen. 2:16). God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16).

**What a soul is not.** The concept of the immortality of the soul originated with the Greeks. When Greek thought and Hebrew-Christian thought came into the Early Church, unfortunately, the Greek thought prevailed. “This view says, in effect, that there is a portion of me, my soul, that will continue to exist. During my lifetime here on earth this immortal soul is lodged in my mortal body. What happens at death is that my body dies and turns to dust, while my immortal soul is released and made free so that it can continue its immortal existence without being hamstrung by confinement in a body” (*SDA Bible Student Source Book*, p. 481).

This concept that our souls are finally “free” may seem like a great idea, especially for people who have had many physical challenges in this life. But what this view leads to, then, is to regard the body as unnecessary; maybe even evil. But when God created the world, and mankind, “God saw everything [emphasis supplied] that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Understanding the error of this belief is impor-
tant for teens in light of its significance regarding the relationship between mind, body, and spirit. How we take care of our minds affects our bodies and spirits; how we take care of our bodies affects our minds and spirits; and how we take care of our spirits affects our minds and bodies. (See The Ministry of Healing, p. 77, for an example of the mind-body-spirit connection.)

• How can taking care of my mind affect my body and spirit?
• How can taking care of my body affect my mind and spirit?
• How can taking care of my spirit affect my mind and body?

(Having the students act out the answers to these questions might be a good active learning exercise.)

Receiving Immortality. While immortality was conditional on our obedience, we will again receive immortality—but only when Christ returns. “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . .” (1 Cor. 15:51-53, NKJV).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Talk about how many people see beauty in the idea of going to heaven as soon as death occurs. When someone first hears it, the teaching can sound like a comforting idea. However, ask the students thought-provoking questions such as: “How would you find the idea comforting that the deceased are looking down on all this suffering from heaven?” “How do you think the dead would feel in heaven if they are witness to such atrocities happening down here?” “How does that view fit in with the description of heaven that there will be no more pain, no more sorrow?” Use these questions to begin a brief discussion.

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 Great Controversy. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.
• Punch Lines
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.
  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Genesis 3:5 contains the first lie ever recorded in history: “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (NIV).

Satan knew that the thought of being immortal like God would be appealing to Eve, but, unfortunately, she was in for a rude awakening.

Satan is cunning. He is skilled in the art of beauty and is a master at deception. The Bible refers to him as appearing to be an angel of light. He is good at making himself and his lies appealing to the senses and emotions. The only way we can decipher the truth is through Jesus Christ. We must constantly allow ourselves to spend time in His Word as well as to pray. We must be open to the truth and allow God to show it to us. We can do this by praying to God to reveal the truth to us and by removing any preconceived notions of what we think is right. We must let Christ reveal His truth through the Bible, not through traditions of men or of our own desires.

This verse sums up the reality of Satan’s deception: “[God,] who alone has immortality: dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:16, NKJV).

*Fundamental Belief No. 26.

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 Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapters 33, 34.
the deadly lie

flashlight

“Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression. Adam could not transmit to his posterity that which he did not possess; and there could have been no hope for the fallen race had not God, by the sacrifice of His Son, brought immortality within their reach” (The Great Controversy, p. 533).

key text

“When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.”

(Psalm 146:4, NIV)
we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have—

connections

what do you think?

To have an immortal soul means that even though the body dies, the soul and consciousness of the person lives on and floats up to heaven or hell or somewhere else. Name the top five reasons for how you think this belief could have originated. Do some research on your own to find the answers as well.

1. ___________________________________
2. ___________________________________
3. ___________________________________
4. ___________________________________
5. ___________________________________

did you know?

The idea of the immortal soul originated with pagan Greek philosophers—or it was at least through them that it eventually made its way into Christian theology.

Plato, for example, was one of the more well-known philosophers to profess this belief. He believed the body to be merely a “husk” that holds the human soul. He believed that once the body (husk) dies, the soul that was once inside this fleshly being moves on from the corpse and is never destroyed. The consciousness still lives on.

Dr. Emilie Brunner, who was a professor of systematic and practical theology, said it plainly: “According to Platonism: the body is mortal, the soul immortal. The mortal husk conceals this eternal essence which in death is freed from its outer shell. . . . But this solution to the problem of death stands in irreconcilable opposition to Christian thought.”

INTO THE STORY

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

“When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.”

“For the grave cannot hope for thy truth.”

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

(Genesis 3:1-5, KJV; Psalm 146:4, ESV; Isaiah 38:18, NASB; Revelation 16:13, 14, KJV)
OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Eve allowed the serpent to tempt her?

____________________________________________________

The serpent told Eve that were she to eat of the tree she would be like God. What irony exists in those words (see Genesis 1:26)?

____________________________________________________

Why do you think the serpent deceived Eve with the lie of immortality?

____________________________________________________

In what ways did the serpent mix truth and error together here? Why do you think he did it that way, instead of just coming out and telling her an obvious lie right from the start?

____________________________________________________

What do you think the Bible means when it refers to death as a “sleep”?

____________________________________________________

Can you think of any verses that individuals might use or interpret incorrectly as saying that the soul never dies? If so, what are they?

____________________________________________________

What do these verses tell us about Satan’s nature?

____________________________________________________

punch lines

“One more that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:15-20, NIV).

“For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, NIV).

“No when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay” (Acts 13:36, 37, NIV).

“You don’t have a soul. You are a Soul. You have a body.”
—C. S. Lewis.

“We do condemn and reprobate all who assert that the intelligent soul is mortal. (Damnamus et reprobamus omnes assertentes animam intellectivam mortalem esse.)”—Pope Leo X.

“Notwithstanding, let me grant it him that some are already in hell and some in heaven, which thing he shall never be able to prove by the Scriptures.”—John Frith, 16th-century Protestant priest.
Sabbath
Many people believe that death is simply the beginning of another immortal journey for the soul. However, the Bible is clear that at death the mind cannot continue to think (see Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Why do you think the issue of the immortal soul versus the mortal soul is such a heavily debated topic among Christian denominations?

Sunday
The devil has used the false doctrine of the immortal soul for thousands of years. He used the same deception with Eve in the garden when he told her that she would surely not die. Even in this modern age the media portrays it, pastors preach it, and it has become an almost second-nature belief to many.

Society has a lot to do with ingraining this idea of the soul’s immortality into our minds. What are some examples from media/movies/television that back up this statement?

Monday
The Key Text talks about how when an individual dies, their plans perish. What does this mean?

Once you understand that the dead are “asleep,” unconscious, and cannot be communicated with, what kinds of common deceptions are you protected from? Why, then, is a proper understanding of this topic so important?

Tuesday
Humankind suffers death because of Adam and Eve’s sin. They both gave into temptation and because of their actions all of humankind would suffer for thousands of years. Deception, sorrow, murder, adultery, thievery, and many more sinful patterns erupted into the aftermath of the eating of the fruit. Why do you think one “small” act of disobedience resulted in such a way?

Wednesday
The idea of soul sleep is a belief held by more people than just Adventists. Martin Luther, a 16th-century Protestant Reformer, said this: “We should learn to view our death in the right light, so that we need not become alarmed on account of it, as unbelief does; because in Christ it is indeed not death, but a fine, sweet and brief sleep, which brings us release from this vale of tears, from sin and from the fear and extremity of real death and from all the misfortunes of this life, and we shall be secure and without care, rest sweetly and gently for a brief moment, as on a sofa, until the time when he shall call and awaken us together with all his dear children to his eternal glory and joy. For since we call it a sleep, we know that we shall not remain in it, but be again awakened and live, and that the time during which we sleep, shall seem no longer than if we had just fallen asleep.—A Compend of Luther’s Theology, edited by Hugh Thomson Ker, Jr., p. 242.

Thursday
Many people who have never read the Bible (and some who have) believe that their dead relatives are looking down on them from heaven. What is the harm in believing this concept? How can the truth about where we go when we die comfort those who have lost loved ones?

Friday
Many times we find ourselves thinking about death. It’s a natural fact of life. What is the first thing you imagine when thoughts of death enter your mind? Does the idea frighten you? Look up 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. How do these texts encourage you?

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this week’s reading*
The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapters 33, 34.

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
power gone sour

Scripture Story: 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Revelation 13.
Commentary: The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 35.
Key Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Teaching this lesson requires great wisdom to find that delicate balance between speaking truth as Ellen White presents it in The Great Controversy and showing sensitivity to others who are not of our religious persuasion. This subject matter has arguably been the biggest reason for many strained tensions between Seventh-day Adventists and other denominations. With this in mind it is important to prayerfully present this topic in a manner that builds up other faiths and yet does not soft-sell the vital Adventist message of uncompromising personal conviction in the face of corrupt politics, abusive power, and counterfeit worship.

One of the ways to make this teaching on the papacy more palatable is to emphasize the fact that the church has always played a central role in God’s story of redemption for humankind. As Seventh-day Adventists we are indebted to our leaders who have shaped the church throughout the centuries. Part of our heritage, of course, includes dark chapters of corruption and abuse. But rather than pointing an accusing finger at the pope or slandering our Catholic brothers and sisters, we ought instead to own our history and admit that some of our forefathers have done unspeakably evil things in the name of religion. These atrocities, however, were committed by “us,” not “them.”

The prophecies of Revelation 13 can help us to understand the strategy of the evil one in the last days as he works through governmental power in the name of God. If church and state unite, Satan knows that many will be deceived, false worship can be enforced, and our religious liberties denied. This lesson can enlighten students of prophetic happenings behind today’s headlines. As earth’s final events unfold, use this opportunity to remind students that the only safe place to reside is “in Christ.”

II. TARGET

The students will:

• See current events in the light of Bible prophecy. (Know)
• Sense that God has always been and remains in control even as the world seems to unravel. (Feel)
• Be challenged to live in Christ as we anticipate His soon return. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Politics
• Personal convictions
• Worship

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. Discuss their responses. Ask the students to report the results of surveying church members.
As an alternate activity, ask students to access the Web and search current events that inform our understanding of Ellen White’s warnings in chapter 35 of The Great Controversy.

Discuss:
- What examples can you find in the news today of abuse of power in government?
- What is in the news about the pope? Can you find things that are a direct fulfillment of Ellen White’s warnings about the papacy?
- Could you find anything about the enforcement of national Sunday laws? Are there forces at work that might compromise our freedom to worship? If so, what are these forces?

Illustration
In the book The Cure for the Last Daze Karl Haffner shares this letter that he received:

“Dear Pastor:

“A week or so ago, I received a mailing from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. . . . I felt disgusted and sick to my stomach as I read through the booklet. You probably are thinking that I bought into what you set forth as the truth and was disgusted at the thoughts of ‘pope-worshipping’ and the pope as ‘beast.’ On the contrary; I was disgusted that your denomination would send out such hate literature in a time when Christian denominations could be working together in peace to make our world more like that which Christ wanted. . . .”

She ranted on for another two pages (single-spaced), but you get the idea. After stewing on the letter for a few days, Karl called the woman and explained he did not hate Catholics.

“Really?” The woman seemed stunned.

Karl went on: “And I wouldn’t invest a dime of my money or my local church’s money in those pamphlets or billboards.”

“Well,” she stammered, “that’s good to know.”

Karl explained his understanding of the church’s prophetic role along with an impromptu Bible study on the mark of the beast. He spoke of the corrupt church system in the Dark Ages but always with an emphasis on Christ as the means of our salvation.

“Well,” she sighed, “I still don’t think I’ll become an Adventist, but you have dramatically changed my views of your church.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story
Give the young people an opportunity to share how they would respond to that letter. Invite them to consider the counsel of Ellen White, who warned us not to get too cocky when pointing the prophetic finger at other denominations. Consider this collection of quotes: “We may have less to say in some lines, in regard to the Roman power and the papacy.”¹ The essential message of Daniel and Revelation is that “the human agent is to be kept out of sight, hid in Christ, and . . . the Lord God of heaven and His law are to be exalted.”² “Be not too ready to take a controversial attitude.”³ “Let Daniel speak, let the Revelation speak, and tell what is truth. But whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope.”⁴

Out of the Story for Teachers
After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following material to help them go a little deeper with some of the concepts in Revelation 13.

The Mark of the Beast
Share the following excerpts and discuss.
Morris Venden writes in The Pillars:

“The mark of the beast is self-worship. The mark of the beast is salvation by works. The mark of the beast is trying to save yourself—either from your past sins or from your present sinning or from the world of sin—by anything that you can do. And the seal of God, which is the opposite of the mark of the beast, is worshiping God, coming to Him, falling on your knees before Him in total dependence upon Him, learning to trust in Him.”⁴

- Discuss: Do you agree with Morris Venden’s ideas about the mark of the beast and the seal of God? Why or why not?

Charles Scriven writes in The Promise of Peace:

“When I was an eighth-grader in Spokane, a visiting evangelist . . . singled out Roman Catholics in particular when he spoke one Sunday night on ‘The Mark of the Beast.’ Spokane was strongly Catholic, and during the week that followed, rumors about anger and possible threats against the evangelist began to surface among the Adventists in town. The next Sunday night the topic was ‘The Antichrist.’ Everyone wondered how it would go. I was amazed, when I got
there, to see police officers in the hall, standing to
each side, peering into the crowd.
“No tempers flared, however, and we Adventists
left the hall relieved and newly assured of our own
worth, our own superiority. That was a long time ago.
Now the mere telling of the story evokes discomfort.”

- Discuss: Do you feel “discomfort” when identify-
ing traits of the Roman Church and its leaders
as descriptive of the beast power in Revelation
13 and the antichrist? Why or why not?
- How do you understand Ellen White’s clear
 teaching against the abusive power of the
 pope?
- Does the traditional teaching of Adventists
 (which identifies the beast power as the Roman
 Catholic Church and the antichrist as the pope)
support our “worth” and/or “superiority” as a
church? Explain.

Sharing Context and Background
What does the Bible say about the antichrist? Since
there are only a handful of verses in Scripture that men-
tion the antichrist, let’s consider every reference.
The first place the antichrist is mentioned is in
1 John 2:18, 22. “Dear children, this is the last hour;
and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming,
even now many antichrists have come. This is how we
know it is the last hour. . . . Who is the liar? It is who-
ever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is
the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son” (NIV).

The second reference to the antichrist comes in
1 John 4:2, 3. “This is how you can recognize
the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that
Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but
every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not
from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you
have heard is coming and even now is already in the
world” (NIV).

Notice that this spirit of the antichrist is already in
the world. Moreover, the antichrist does not acknowl-
edge that Jesus is from God. In other words, to deny
Jesus is to act in the spirit of the antichrist.

There is one more mention of the antichrist in
2 John 7. In this verse we see that the antichrist denies
Jesus as coming in the flesh. “Many deceivers, who
do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the
flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person
is the deceiver and the antichrist” (NIV).

Every time the word “antichrist” is used in the
Bible it is in the context of undermining Jesus. The
antichrist denies three things about Christ: that He is
the anointed one, that He came from God, and that
He came in the flesh. Simply put, the antichrist denies
Jesus.

So, who might that be? Who is the antichrist?
Well, theories proliferate. Some of the most influ-
tential theologians in history have pointed to the
persecution of Christians carried out by the Roman
church and interpreted the events as the work of the
antichrist. Historian Michael de Semlyen writes:

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

- Other Eyes
  Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes con-
  vey the point of the story in this lesson.
- Flashlight
  Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out
  that most of the time it is from the commen-
tary on this week’s story found in the book
  The Great Controversy. 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**

Challenge the students to get real practical with the idea of living “in Christ.” Living in Christ would be the exact opposite of living as the antichrist. So have the students think through an ordinary day “in Christ.” When the alarm clock rings, what would it mean to get out of bed “in Christ”? What would it look like to eat breakfast “in Christ”? How would a student ride a school bus “in Christ”?

By taking the students through an activity that details the specific actions of living in Christ, you can give them practical tools to resist the temptation to live in the spirit of the antichrist.

**Summary**

The spirit of the antichrist can reign within every believer—for the actual title of antichrist literally means “instead of Christ.” We usually think of “anti” as “against.” To be more precise, it really means “instead of.” Is not every follower of Jesus vulnerable to the temptation of living “instead of” Christ?

The fundamental question surrounding a study of the antichrist is simply this: will I live “in” Christ or “instead of” Christ? Ultimately, this is not a study about the pope; it’s a study about you and me. The question is not “Who is the antichrist?” rather, “Will I live in Christ or instead of Christ?”

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1. Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers, p. 112.
2. White, p. 112.
3. White, p. 118.
7. As quoted from www.educ.ualberta.ca/staff/olenka.bilash/best%20of%20bilash/inductivedeductive.html.

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Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 35.
"A religion of externals is attractive to the unrenewed heart. The pomp and ceremony of the Catholic worship has a seductive, bewitching power, by which many are deceived; and they come to look upon the Roman Church as the very gate of heaven. None but those who have planted their feet firmly upon the foundation of truth, and whose hearts are renewed by the Spirit of God, are proof against her influence. Thousands who have not an experimental knowledge of Christ will be led to accept the forms of godliness without the power. Such a religion is just what the multitudes desire" (The Great Controversy, p. 567).
what
do you think?

Rank the following people in order of the most powerful (1) to the least powerful (10).

1. Barack Obama (president of the United States)
2. The pope (bishop of Rome and leader of the Catholic Church)
3. Phil Mickelson (professional golfer)
4. Hillary Clinton (former secretary of state, United States)
5. Hassan Rouhani (president of Iran)
6. Bill Gates (founder of Microsoft)
7. Bono (musician and social/political activist)
8. The Dalai Lama (a lineage of religious officials of the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism)
9. Oprah (talk show host)

Using this list, ask church members to rank the people. Next, ask nonbelievers to rank the list. How do the responses between believers and nonbelievers differ? Do believers and nonbelievers give similar rankings to the spiritual leaders on the list (the pope, the Dalai Lama, Billy Graham)? How would you interpret your discoveries?

did you know?

Early popes helped to spread Christianity and resolve doctrinal disputes. After some of the rulers of the Roman Empire converted to Christianity, the Roman emperors became the popes' secular allies until the eighth century when the emperors lost power in the West. In medieval times popes played powerful roles in Western Europe, often struggling with monarchs for power over wide-ranging affairs of church and state.

INTO THE STORY

“And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?’

“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.

It was given power to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. . . .

“Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And it performed great signs. . . . Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

“This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.”

(Revelation 13:1-8, 11-18, NIV)
punch lines

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

“The one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:13, NIV).

“When he saw that he was making much progress, he let the king think that he was powerful. Then he said to himself, ‘I will be like the gods’ (Job 42:2, NIV).

“Then they gathered around him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’” (Acts 1:6, NIV).

“He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority’” (Acts 1:7, NIV).

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Revelation 20:12, NIV).

“For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus” (Revelation 19:10, NIV).

“Humility is the key to experiencing God’s power.”
—Jim Cymbala, senior pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

“The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.”—Martin Luther King, Jr., clergyman and civil rights activist.
Sunday
Review Revelation 13. Prayerfully consider Ellen White’s commentary on the text:

“It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamb-like horns, and that this prophecy will be fulfilled when the United States shall enforce Sunday observance, which Rome claims as the special acknowledgment of her supremacy. But in this homage to the papacy the United States will not be alone. The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed. And prophecy foretells a restoration of her power. ‘I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.’ Verse 3. The infliction of the deadly wound points to the downfall of the papacy in 1798. After this, says the prophet, ‘his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.’ Paul states plainly that the ‘man of sin’ will continue until the second advent. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8. To the very close of time he will carry forward the work of deception. And the revelator declares, also referring to the papacy: ‘All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life.’ Revelation 13:8. In both the Old and the New World, the papacy will receive homage in the honor paid to the Sunday institution, that rests solely upon the authority of the Roman Church” (The Great Controversy, p. 579).

Questions for reflection:
• Can Satan work more effectively from within the church or from outside the church? Why?

Monday
Read the Key Text. How can we shield ourselves from the deceptions of the evil one?

Tuesday
In the Flashlight section Ellen White talks about the “pomp and ceremony of the Catholic worship.” Discuss with a friend: Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church susceptible to becoming “a religion of externals”? If so, in what way? How can we plant our feet firmly on the foundation of truth?

Wednesday
Read the additional Punch Lines and Criswell’s quotation; next, reflect on the questions.


W. A. Criswell excerpt:
“One of the great Baptist gifts to the Reformation Heritage is a full awareness that for individual believer priests (1 Peter 2:5), (1 Peter 2:9) to ‘work out’ their ‘own salvation with fear and trembling’ (Philippians 2:12) they must be unhindered by governmental interference.

Questions: After reading chapter 35 in The Great Controversy, how do you think Ellen White would respond to Criswell’s thought on religious liberty?

Thursday
In what way might Satan tempt me to abuse power?

Friday
What does this lesson have to teach me about politics?

What does this lesson have to teach me about my personal convictions?

What does this lesson have to teach me about worship?

What do you see as the primary challenge when government and church get entangled?

Does the separation of church and state mean that Christians should not hold public office? Why or why not?

Key Text

Additional reading:

Questions for reflection:

• How might your local church be affected by corruption and abuse of power?

Additional punch lines:

“Rome was founded on a hill. Give it a hill and it will build a city.”

**this week’s reading**

The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 35.

*Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at [http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s). By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
NOVEMBER 15, 2014

the world’s worst terrorist

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Tying into the theme of terrorism shouldn’t be a difficult challenge these days. Current examples often hog the headlines.

Pollster George Gallup surveyed Americans to discover how the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, affected their lives:

• 20 percent of Americans knew someone who was missing, hurt, or killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, or the plane crash in Pennsylvania.

• 58 percent of men and 82 percent of women say they have cried as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11.

• One third of Americans will change aspects of their personal lives in order to reduce their chances of becoming a victim of terrorism.1

The Bible warns believers that just before Jesus returns the world will be plagued by chaos and confusion. The evil one will launch an all-out terrorist attack that will destroy as many as possible.

This lesson presents an ideal opportunity to talk straight with your class about what’s happening in our world today. The scenario painted by Ellen White more than a century ago is now being played out on the global stage.

If there ever was a time to talk about the themes of this study—spirituality, authority, respect, and obedience—it is now! Jesus is coming again! Challenge your students with the question: “Are you ready?”

Pastor Dwight Nelson writes: “Are you ready for Jesus to come? Is really the invitation to step into the embrace of His forever friendship every day and every night until He comes. It’s that simple.”

II. TARGET

The students will:
• See the relevance of Bible prophecy in current events. (Know)
• Sense that the second coming of Jesus is at hand. (Feel)
• Be challenged to be ready to meet Jesus. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Spirituality
• Authority/respect
• Obedience

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. Discuss other methods that Satan might use in the last days to deceive even the most elect.

As an alternate activity, ask your students to create a simulation exercise to play a spiritual war game. Just as the military regularly practices war scenarios,
and young people often engage in virtual war games on the Web, so your students can benefit by replicating a global strategy center whereby half the class represents Satan and his forces in the ultimate showdown against God’s remnant. Allow the youth to be creative and formulate strategies of offense and defense. Encourage them to make it as real as possible—tying into current events that expose the great controversy between God and Satan.

Illustration

It’s been labeled the single greatest upset in Olympic history. On September 27, 2000, 29-year-old Rulon Gardner, who grew up on a Wyoming dairy farm, walked into the Exhibition Hall in Sydney, Australia. That’s when the “miracle on the mat” happened—he pocketed a gold medal after defeating the world’s greatest wrestler of all time, Russian Alexander Karelin.

Mind you, this Russian had never lost in international competition. He’d never even been scored on in 10 years! He pummeled opponents despite broken ribs, torn muscles, and opposing coaches who would spend years designing strategies just to beat him. Karelin was considered the most intimidating athlete in Olympic history, so feared by opponents that two prior finalists essentially quit on the mat rather than to keep absorbing the pounding. And, according to legend, the Russian once carried a refrigerator home from the store and up seven flights of stairs.

So no one expected the American to win. In fact, the International Olympic Committee chairman even showed up at the match in order to present the Russian his fourth gold medal—the medal he wouldn’t get.

After the historic match, reporters swarmed around Rulon. “When did you think you could beat him?” they asked.

“When did I think I could beat him? About 10 minutes ago,” Gardner replied. “I kept saying, ‘I think I can. I think I can.’ But it wasn’t until it was over that I knew I could.”

Turns out that Gardner used a simple strategy to counter Karelin’s dreaded lifts and relentless pressure. He approached the match with only two things on his mind: to stay focused and hang on. And for nine excruciating minutes that’s exactly what he did. Now, Gardner is a legendary hero.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

When you think about it, Gardner’s strategy is a good one that extends beyond the wrestling mat. After all, it’s easy to lose our focus in the spiritual battle that we all must fight. The great controversy between God and Satan rages around the world. Satan seeks to destroy you. But in the end, if you stay focused and hang on to Jesus, you will be triumphant.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Compare 2 Peter 3:8-17 from the Into the Story section with 1 Peter 4:1-11.

The apostle Peter says when you see the “debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry” (1 Peter 4:3, NIV) in this world you can know this: “The end of all things is near” (1 Peter 4:7, NIV). Jesus is coming again! Ours is a dark and evil world, but don’t despair, Jesus is coming again. So what are we to do as we wait for the second coming of Christ? Peter poses this question in the passage from the Into the Story section: “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NIV).

In 1 Peter 4:1-11, the apostle unpacks what it means to live “holy and godly lives.” Peter calls us to do three things as we wait for Jesus to come.

First, Peter tells us to pray. “Therefore,” he writes, “be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray” (1 Peter 4:7, NIV). As Christians we may not be able to mend the moral corruption of our world, but we can pray. Prayer is the practice of living in Christ.

Second, we can love. Next, Peter writes: “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8, NIV). As we wait for Jesus to come, we are called not only to be a community of prayer, but a community of love.

Finally, Peter calls us to serve. “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:9, 10, NIV). While we wait for Jesus to come, we are to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace.

Sharing Context and Background

On February 28, 2007, the day after the Dow Jones Industrials plunged over 400 points, a reporter
from CNN interviewed a financial expert. The reporter asked the question everyone wanted to know: “Given the violent volatility of the market, what should we do with our investments at this point? Should we buy? Sell? Or hold?”

The expert’s answer struck a familiar chord for Adventists—that is, for those waiting for Jesus to come. The financial analyst gave simple advice: “Wait and watch.”


Jesus gave the same counsel when He spoke about the chaos in the last days. “Don’t panic,” He said. In Matthew 24 we find an extensive list of signs that alert us to the nearness of His coming—earthquakes, wars, increase of knowledge, and so on. Jesus then trumpets the punch line in verse 42: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come” (NIV). Then again, in Matthew 25:13 Jesus said: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

Note, Jesus did not just say to “wait,” suggesting a passive activity. Rather, He commanded “wait and watch.”

Watching is not a spectator sport. As Oswald Chambers put it: “The only way to wait for the Second Coming is to watch that you do what you should do, so that when He comes is a matter of indifference. It is the attitude of a child, certain that God knows what He is about. When the Lord does come, it will be as natural as breathing.”

The apostle Peter makes a similar observation: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief” (2 Peter 3:10, NIV). Remember that Peter was with the other disciples when Jesus said, “But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into” (Matthew 24:43, NIV). Thus, Peter reminds us that the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come (NIV). Then again, in Matthew 25:13 Jesus said: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

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

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

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

**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

**Hope, Not Fear**
When teaching on the topic of “The Impending Conflict,” it is important to focus on hope, not fear. Don’t scare the bile out of kids with the “good news” that Jesus is coming again! Of course we might be tortured for our faith. The pastor may betray his own congregation. Iran might blow up the world.

But the truth is this: we don’t know how the final days of this earth’s history will unfold. So encourage your youth with the words of Jesus: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. . . . I go and prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-3, NIV).
same word, *roizedon*, is used to describe the sound a spear makes as it sails through the air. The idea here is that faster than a speeding bullet, “the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

Peter tells us that the Second Coming will catch many by surprise. So Peter urges us to wait and watch. “You ought to live holy and godly lives,” he says, “as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:11, 12, NIV).

**III. CLOSING**

**Activity**

Close by reading 1 Peter 4:7-10. Ask the kids to brainstorm a list of specific things they can do in the week ahead to live out the commands “love each other deeply” (verse 8); “offer hospitality” (verse 9); and “serve others” (verse 10, NIV). Explain that this activity will take a week and they are to come back the next Sabbath prepared to share stories of what they did to put these verses into action.

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**Summary**

Clearly, there are specific things we ought to be doing while we wait for Jesus to return. William Miller, the Adventist pioneer who erroneously interpreted Daniel 8:14 to mean Jesus would come on October 22, 1844, discovered this in his later years. Shortly before his death, he confided to his friend Hendrix: “I now know when Jesus will come.”

“Really?” his friend replied. “You were quite wrong last time. Now when do you think Jesus will come?”

The aged Miller replied, “Jesus is going to come today, today, today . . . until He comes.”

We too know when Jesus will come. He’s coming today, so let’s pray. Today, so let’s love. Today, so let’s serve. *Today . . .* until He comes.

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“Satan’s policy in this final conflict with God’s people is the same that he employed in the opening of the great controversy in heaven. He professed to be seeking to promote the stability of the divine government, while secretly bending every effort to secure its overthrow. . . . While Satan seeks to destroy those who honor God’s law, he will cause them to be accused as lawbreakers, as men who are dishonoring God and bringing judgments upon the world” (The Great Controversy, p. 591).
Ellen White touches on a number of ways in which Satan will deceive people in the last days (see *The Great Controversy*, chapter 36). In the end, Satan will reveal his true identity as the world’s worst terrorist. Next to each method that Ellen White mentions, see if you can find a current example of it by doing an Internet search, scanning magazines and newspapers, and talking with friends and family members. Write your example in the blank provided.

“The press publishes the revolting details of vice” (p. 586).

“Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions” (p. 588).

“Through spiritualism…” (p. 589).

“Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls” (p. 589).

“He will bring disease and disaster” (p. 589).

**did you know?**

**n** Revelation 12:17

God’s devoted followers are defined as those who keep His commandments and “hold fast their testimony about Jesus.” According to Revelation 19:10, this “testimony of Jesus” is the “spirit of prophecy,” meaning that Jesus communicates to His people through prophecy.

**What do you think?**

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

“Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”

(2 Peter 3:8-18; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, NIV)


**OUT OF THE STORY**

How does the message that Peter sent to believers regarding the last days (2 Peter 3:8-18) compare with the excerpt from Paul’s letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:1-5)?

In what ways are the passages similar?

How are the passages different?

How would you define “holy”? What does it mean to live a holy life? (Do a word search of “holy” at www.blueletterbible.com)

How does a person “grow in the grace and knowledge” of Jesus Christ?

Based on what you know about Peter’s story, what else would you expect him to say to Christians waiting for Jesus to return?

Based on what you know about Paul’s conversion, what else would you expect him to say to Christians waiting for Jesus to return?


**other eyes**

“**The fruit of the Spirit grows only in the garden of obedience.”**—Terry Fullam, author, speaker, and former rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Darien, Connecticut.

“Religion is, at its heart, a way of denying the authority of the rest of the world.”—Stephen Carter, as quoted in Leadership, vol. 15, No. 2.

“Spiritual authority flows not from titles and positions but from a life that is genuine.”—Wayne Jacobsen, former pastor, editor, and collaborator on The Shack.


**punch lines**

“My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice” (Ezekiel 33:31, 32, NIV).

“Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy” (Leviticus 20:8, NIV).

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV).

“These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you” (Titus 2:15, NIV).

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14, NIV).
**Sabbath**

Discuss the following questions with your friends:

What are some other deceptions that are not mentioned by Ellen White that you see Satan using today to ensnare Christians?

If you were the devil how would you attack the people of God in the last days?

What can you do to ensure your salvation?

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**Sunday**

Brainstorm a list of ways that you can “be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”

Carefully read 2 Peter 3:10-13 and complete the following sentence: Because Christ will return, Christians should ____________ ____________ ____________

**Monday**

Read the Key Text. Consider the following commentary from the Life Application Bible:

“The apostle Paul tells us that we are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-12). John says that the war is still being waged, but the outcome has already been determined. Satan and his followers have been defeated and will be destroyed. Nevertheless, Satan is battling daily to bring more into his ranks and to keep his own from defecting to God’s side. . . . God will not lose the war, but we must make certain not to lose the battle for our own souls. Don’t waver in your commitment to Christ. A great spiritual battle is being fought, and there is no time for indecision.”

**Tuesday**

Compare the comments in the Flashlight section with the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24:24 (“For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” [NIV]). Spend some time in prayer seeking God’s wisdom today so that you will not be deceived in the last days.

**Wednesday**

After reading the Punch Lines, reflect on the following letter that was written by Karen Watson, a Southern Baptist Missionary to Iraq. The letter was dated March 7, 2003. Karen was killed, along with four other missionaries, on March 15, 2004.

“Dear Pastor Phil and Pastor Roger:

“You should only be opening this letter in the event of my death.

“When God calls there are no regrets. . . . I wasn’t called to a place. I was called to Him. To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, His glory my reward, His glory my reward.

“One of the most important things to remember right now is to preserve the work. . . .

“I thank you all so much for your prayers and support. Surely your reward in heaven will be great. Thank you for investing in my life and spiritual well-being. Keep sending missionaries out. Keep raising up fine young pastors.

“In regards to any service, keep it small and simple. Yes, simply, just preach the gospel. . . . Be bold and preach the life-saving, life-changing, forever-eternal gospel. Give glory and honor to our Father.

“The Missionary Heart:

“Care more than some think is wise. “Risk more than some think is safe. “Dream more than some think is practical. “Expect more than some think is possible.

“I was called not to comfort or success but to obedience. . . . There is no joy outside of knowing Jesus and serving Him. I love you two and my church family.

“In His care, “Karen.”

**Thursday**

How am I ready for the impending conflict that Ellen White describes?

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**Friday**

Scripture warns us that in the last days the evil one will “make war with the remnant” (Revelation 12:17, KJV). Do you see the effects of spiritual warfare in the world today? How about personally, in your life? If so, how? What is the best way to fight spiritual battles (see 2 Chronicles 20:15)?

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this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 36.

“Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URHf1B09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
discovering daily disciplines

Scripture Story: Daniel 6:3-10; Exodus 20:8-11.
Commentary: The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 37.
Key Text: Psalm 119:9-16.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Few of us would say no to a lasting and meaningful relationship with God. At least not consciously. The challenge is that while we want a deep communication with Him, we never seem to pause long enough to spend the time needed to cultivate that relationship with Him. Often our distractions are insidiously disguised as purposeful activities—fulfilling work deadlines, studying hard to maintain good grades. We are addicted, not to drugs or alcohol, but to tasks, work, and “doing.”

However, God has an answer to our problem! He has given us a way to deeply root our lives in Him—daily communication and Sabbath rest. Prayer is one form of communicating with God. Other forms include reading His Word, and contemplating His Word and the experiences He has brought us through. Daily communication is simply setting aside time each day to talk, listen, and reflect with God. With Sabbath rest we are called to stop, slow down, center our thoughts on God, and enjoy being in His presence.

It is critical to remember that daily communication and Sabbath rest are not meant to be other “to-do” items in our long checklist of deadlines and commitments. It is rethinking the way we live each day. The key is not the length of the communication but the frequency. It is going against the grain of our fast-paced culture and choosing instead to create regular times in our day to pause, for no other reason than to simply experience being loved and loving in return. These times anchor us to God and serve as oases of time to reflect and reorder our lives.

II. TARGET

The students will:
• Understand that in order to develop an authentic relationship with God, we have to spend time with Him. (Know)
• Realize that knowing the truth is only the first step; spiritual disciplines (such as prayer and daily study of the Word) are necessary to build the psychological and emotional “muscles” needed to stand up against opposition and pressure. (Feel)
• Be challenged to begin taking the steps needed to build up their spiritual strength and root themselves in God’s Word. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

• Self-discipline
• Spiritual disciplines
• Sabbath

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. Discuss their responses to the activity.

Let friends pair themselves up. Then tell them you are going to test which pairs of friends know each
other best. Have one person from each pair leave the room. Ask the remaining students what answers they think their partners will give to the following questions:

1. If you could have an all-expenses-paid dinner with any person in the world (alive or dead), who would it be?
2. Knowing that you were going to crash anyway, which would you choose to be riding? A bicycle or a skateboard?
3. If you had to choose one punishment, would it be watching your baby sister for an entire week after school or having your car keys taken for the week?

Bring their partners back into the room and ask them to give their answers. Which answers were close? Or wrong? Now tell the class you are going to give them five minutes to chat. They can talk about anything and then it will be their partner’s turn to try to guess their answers to the same questions next.

Was it easier to know more about someone before or after spending some time talking to each other?

**Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

In his book *A Hidden Wholeness* Parker Palmer tells a story about farmers in the Midwest who would prepare for blizzards by tying a rope from the back door of their house out to the barn as a guide to ensure they could return home safely. These blizzards came very quickly and were highly dangerous. When they blew at full force, you could not see the end of your hand. Many farmers froze to death in these blizzards because they could not see where they were going. If they lost their grip on the rope, they could not find their way home. Some froze to death just a few steps from their front door, never seeing how close they were to safety.

**II. TEACHING THE STORY**

**Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

Many of us live in a blizzard—we are overwhelmed with work, tasks, to-do lists, and responsibilities. Multitasking is seen as an admirable skill, but we multitask so much that we are overscheduled, burned out, hurried, tense, pressured for time, and our over-productivity becomes counterproductive. We have no time to spend cultivating relationships with our family, our friends, our God.

Then when troubles and trials blow into our lives suddenly and unexpectedly, we become lost and lose our way. We need a rope to guide us home.

**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** the main characters in this story.
- **What is the situation that Daniel is in here? How did he get there? What is happening to him? What roles do the other characters play?**
- **Share any aspects of the story that are new to you.**
- **Daniel was taken by force from his home and country. In Babylon he was given a prestigious education and a high-level job in government. The pressure on him to conform to the worldly, pagan values of Babylon was great. What were some examples of problems that he faced? How did he resist them?**
- **Sabbath is engaging in a regular pattern of stopping, resting, delighting in, and contemplating God for 24 hours each week. What are you doing now to experience this Sabbath rest? Is there anything stopping you from fully embracing this time of rest and reflection?**
- **What might you want to consider changing in your life after thinking about these things?**

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 6:25-27; Genesis 2:1-3.*

**Sharing Context and Background**

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

According to *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, the name Daniel means “God’s judge,” “God is judge,” or “God is my judge.” Daniel was born into a noble family from the lineage of King David.

Although Daniel was just a young man, his skills in administration and interpreting dreams were quickly displayed and he served as a high-ranking government official in four dynasties of Babylonian and Medo-Persian power.

Daniel’s faithfulness to God (and God’s resulting blessing upon him) exposed him to attacks by jeal-
ous rivals. Knowing his unwavering fidelity to God, his enemies had him thrown into the lions’ den for praying to a God other than King Darius.

Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary writes about Daniel’s persistence in prayer despite knowing about Darius’s decree: “Persecuting laws are always made on false pretences; but it does not become Christians to make bitter complaints, or to indulge in revilings. It is good to have hours for prayer. Daniel prayed openly and avowedly; and though a man of vast business, he did not think that would excuse him from daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable are those who have but little to do in the world, yet will not do thus much for their souls! In trying times we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we are guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. All who throw away their souls, as those certainly do that live without prayer, even if it be to save their lives, at the end will be found to be fools. Nor did Daniel only pray, and not give thanks, cutting off some part of the service to make the time of danger shorter; but he performed the whole. In a word, the duty of prayer is founded upon the sufficiency of God as an almighty Creator and Redeemer, and upon our wants as sinful creatures. To Christ we must turn our eyes.”

To quote The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary: “The plotters did not have to wait long to see Daniel disregard the king’s prohibition. Decree or no decree, this man of God felt that he should continue his regular prayer habits. God was to him

**Teaching From . . .**

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

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

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

- **Punch Lines**
  
  *Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.*
  
  *Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.*

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**Tips for Top-notch Teaching**

*Orchestrating Your Teaching*  
Good teaching should be entertaining. However, does this mean that it lacks in substance? No. Effective teaching is not about reading word by word from a guidebook or having your eyes fixated on a slide projector while you drone on. Good teachers work the room and every student in it. They realize that they are the conductors and the class is the orchestra. All students play different instruments and at varying proficiencies. Here are some ideas for engaging students:

- Greet your students, by name, at the door when they enter the classroom.
- Start the class on time.
- Encourage students to ask questions at the beginning of the class. Write these down on the whiteboard (or chalkboard) and check each off as you answer them during your lesson.
- Note who is absent. Write a personal note or call them.
- During the week, call your students and ask about their day. Listen attentively and respond kindly (no nagging!). Before ending the call, ask permission to pray for them over the phone.
the source of all his wisdom and success in life. The favor of Heaven was dearer to him than life itself. His conduct was the natural result of his trust in God” (vol. 4, p. 812).

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Using a stereo, play a favorite Christian song as loud as you can stand it. Read a favorite Bible verse very quietly while it is playing. Stop the music when you’ve finished reading. Ask the students if they could hear you clearly? If not, why not?

Our lives are sometimes filled to the brim with noise—the noise can be the busyness of work or our pride pushing us to do more and more to prove our worth. But if we are surrounded by so much noise, and do not take the time to stop the loud music, we cannot hear God’s still small voice.

Summary

Share the following story in your own words:

There is a story told of a wagon trail of Christians traveling on their way from St. Louis to Oregon. This community observed the habit of stopping for the Sabbath during autumn, but as winter approached some in the group began to panic. They feared they would not reach their destination before the snows began. So the ones who were afraid suggested that they cease their practice of stopping for the Sabbath and travel seven days a week. Not everybody in the community agreed with this proposal. So the wagon train was divided into two groups. One would press on for seven days a week; the other would stop every Sabbath to rest.

It turns out that the group that rested arrived in Oregon first. Their horses and people were so rested by their Sabbath observance that they could travel more efficiently the other six days.


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 Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 37.
**flashlight**

“Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will. . . .

“Even youth of little experience presume to insinuate doubts concerning the fundamental principles of Christianity. And this youthful infidelity, shallow as it is, has its influence” *(The Great Controversy, pp. 595, 600, 601).*

**keytext**

“How can a young person live a clean life? By carefully reading the map of your Word. . . . I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you, I attentively watch how you’ve done it. I relish everything you’ve told me of life, I won’t forget a word of it.”  

*(Psalm 119:9-16, Message)*
Jesus wants very badly to have an honest relationship with you. He wants very much to give you gifts and blessings, and to help you live a fulfilled life. What does “an honest relationship with God” look like? sound like? How can you have a relationship with a Being you can never see?

**did you know?**

David’s habit was to pray seven times a day (Psalm 119:164). Daniel prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10). After Jesus’ resurrection His disciples continued to pray at certain hours of the day (Acts 3:1; 10:9). In the book titled *The Rule of Saint Benedict* it tells how Benedict structured time for prayer into eight segments a day, including one in the middle of the night. Trappist monks structure their workday around times of prayer.

Each of these people experienced the blessings that come from a continual and familiar presence of God by setting aside small units of time throughout the day. By including periodic times of prayer in our day, we invite God into more than an isolated morning (or evening) session; we invite Him to saturate our entire day’s activities with His sacred presence, thereby eliminating any division between the spiritual and secular in our lives.

**what do you think?**

Prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.’ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.”

(Daniel 6:3-10, NIV; Exodus 20:8-11, NLT)

Blessed are those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; she has no equals. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She brings him lasting wealth and honor; she is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her (Proverbs 3:13-17, NIV).

The king and the other satraps were terrified. They rushed off to King Darius and said, “May King Darius live forever! After the decree from you, King Darius, whoever maketh known any part of the scroll shall be cut up. For a time may be given to you, Your Majesty, to issue the decree. And one may be cut up in fifteen days. And the king signed the decree and put it in writing. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, ‘We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.’

“So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: ‘May King Darius live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who

Blessed are those...
OUT OF THE STORY

Read Daniel 6:10. Which words or phrases stand out to you? Why?

Daniel broke the law when he went against Darius’ decree. When is it appropriate for Christians to break the law?

What was the cost of disobeying Darius’ decree?

What was it about Daniel’s life and habits that made it so that his government colleagues found him trustworthy? (See previous chapters in Daniel.)

Daniel habitually prayed three times a day. How do you think this practice helped him to face this great pressure?

Read Exodus 20:8-11. Sabbath is about trusting God, slowing down to enjoy the gifts He gave us, resting from our schoolwork and being consciously aware of the blessings and promises God gives us—for 24 hours. What, if any, is your current practice of Sabbathkeeping?

What concerns, questions, or fears do you have that keep you from making this Sabbathkeeping practice a weekly habit?

other eyes

“Christ is not valued at all—unless He is valued above all.”—Augustine, 4th-5th-century
Latin church father.

“There is a hunger in the heart of man which none can satisfy, a vacuum which only God can fill.”—John Stott, 20th-century British Christian leader.

punch lines

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:15-20, NIV).

“For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. But you should keep a clear mind in every situation” (2 Timothy 4:3-5, NLT).

“Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.” (Proverbs 3:13-17, NIV).

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7, 8, NIV).
Sabbath

In the What Do You Think? section of your lesson, you were asked to describe an honest relationship with God. Was it easy to do? difficult? Why or why not?

How can you have a relationship with a Being that you cannot see?

Sunday

Read the Into the Story section of your lesson, and do the question in the Out of the Story section.

Daniel didn’t become trustworthy and faithful overnight. Character is not built in a moment, but as a result of many “moments.”

What can you learn from these three biblical characters about developing positive habits and spiritual disciplines?

Joseph

Jesus

Mary (the mother of Jesus)

How can you begin today to build lifelong habits that will draw you closer to God?

Tuesday

Using your own words, paraphrase what Mrs. White is saying in the Flashlight section of your lesson. Draw from your personal experiences and use familiar names and/or places to better illustrate your words.

How can we learn from spiritual leaders, such as pastors and teachers, without allowing them to have too much influence in our lives?

Having a relationship with someone simplifies direct communication with them. However, often we are more willing to listen to what others have to say about God than we are to hear Him personally.

Take 3 to 5 minutes to journal one small step you can take to begin to include daily communication and weekly rest with God.

Wednesday

Read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week’s lesson. What can you learn from each verse about what constitutes a strong and healthy relationship?

2 Timothy 4:3-5

Thursday

What obstacles are preventing you from stopping to be with God two or three times each day? Think about someone who has an active relationship with Jesus. How does this relationship show up in their life?

Friday

Read Psalm 119 in its entirety. Write a letter to God about your feelings and thoughts after reading it.

this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 37.

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URIHF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

From God’s initial warning to Adam and Eve not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17), to the admonition delivered by the angel of Revelation 18, much has transpired. God’s counsel has fallen on some deaf ears, while others have made it their duty to obey. However, whatever the past record of humanity’s adherence or disdain, Revelation 18 signals the end of God’s patience with sin.

The angel John sees in vision illumines the entire earth with its brightness. The message borne is reminiscent of the second angel of Revelation 14:6-13, who declares that the world’s system of confusion—Babylon—is fallen, broken beyond repair. But the angel in Revelation goes further. Not only is Babylon fallen, it has become the “dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird” (Revelation 18:2, NKJV), and human beings are caught up in it.

Students need to know that the progression from Revelation 14 to 18 depicts the fearful state of the world as we near the second coming of Jesus. Contrary to human prognosticators, the world is not getting better, argues the angel of Revelation 18. The truth, as it is in Jesus, has been rejected by this time. Human minds and hearts have become deadened to sin, and those who adhere to truth are subjected to terrible privations—even death—especially as they hold true to God’s holy Sabbath.

As the world plunges deeper into peril, God’s Holy Spirit will give special power to the proclamation of the final warning to the world, represented by the message of the Revelation 18 angel. Your students need to know that God is playing for keeps this time. Now is the time to heed God’s warning to come out of the world’s system of confusion, renounce all sin, and prepare to meet Jesus in peace.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God will not allow the world’s system of sin and confusion to continue forever. (Know)
- Accept God’s call to separate from Babylon and its system of sin. (Feel)
- Share God’s message of warning with their friends. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Decision-making
- Sabbathkeeping
- Forgiveness from God

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

The answers to the What Do You Think? activity...
The idea that we could be threatened for our faith seems far-fetched, especially in Western democratic countries. We must realize that God has been to the future and seen the difficulties we will one day have to face, and He has returned to tell us to stand apart from the world, lest we partake of its punishments (Revelation 18:4).

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 angel speaking in Revelation 18 has some specific attributes. The angel has “great authority” and illuminates the world with its glory. These special traits will also be seen in the lives of the end-time remnant who deliver God’s final message of warning.

- Babylon, the great harlot, has seduced “all the nations.” They commit fornication with her. She has also made the merchants of the world rich because of her many luxuries. Do we see these practices in the world today? If Babylon represents the world’s system of corruption and open rebellion against God, what practices in particular might God be referring to here? Unpack some of these for the students.

Beginning with verse 9 of Revelation 18, we see the people of the world mourning the fall of their bankrupt lover. One need only look at the response to rises and falls in world financial markets to see that much of our planet has put its trust in the things of this world—chiefly money.

- Babylon’s sin has come before God. There is a sense in Revelation 18 that her sins have been mounting over time, carefully catalogued by God. The pronouncement of judgment by the angel is accompanied by many scrupulous details about her crimes. What does this tell us about the way in which God views sin.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Revelation 14:6-12; 7:1-8; Ephesians 6:10-19; Isaiah 48:20.

Sharing Context and Background

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

1. The Set-up. Understanding Revelation 18 is
who are truly His people will hear His voice and heed His call” (vol. 7, p. 861).

4. **Humble Instruments Wanted.** “As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the uncultivation of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 606).

2. **Demonic Possession.** There is a tendency among many, particularly the young, to believe that demonic possession is evidenced by frothing from the mouth, loud shrieks, and other such phenomena. Babylon seems to give the lie to that idea. The angel describes Babylon as a sensual woman who entangles humanity by her charms and luxuries. This is hardly the picture of demonic activity.

Yet Revelation 18:2 depicts Babylon as wholly possessed, the place “foul spirits” call home. The picture is one of total perversion and apostasy, but to those in her embrace, none of this is seen. They are simply enjoying their time with Babylon.

Revelation 18 is serious because it unMASKs the true identity of the world’s system of corruption and evil, and God’s desire to save His people from its destruction.

3. **Historical Parallel.** Read Isaiah 48:20; Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6, 45. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes: “As God’s people formerly came out of literal Babylon in order that they might return to Jerusalem, so His people today are called out of mystical Babylon in order that they may be accounted worthy to enter the New Jerusalem. Presumably, all who are truly His people will hear His voice and heed His call” (vol. 7, p. 861).

4. **Humble Instruments Wanted.** “As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the uncultivation of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 606).

### Tips for Top-notch Teaching

**Guess Who’s Coming to Sabbath School?**

For this lesson you might want to have a woman from your church dress up in the garish manner of the woman described in Revelation 17 and 18. She should be adorned in jewelry, makeup, and clothing of someone seeking attention.

Invite your guest of honor to class and have the class try to guess who she is based on how she is attired. When the guesses stop, have her put on a sash—or hold up a sign—that reveals her identity—BABYLON.

This activity ought to get the class thinking and exploring the subject matter.

### 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 Great Controversy*. 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.

Close this week’s lesson by asking each student to pray silently, asking God to reveal areas in their lives where Babylonian ways and values have crept in. Perhaps it’s in their entertainment choices, their online lives, or their friendships.

Let this personal prayer time end the Sabbath School time together.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The final scenes of earth’s history will be fearful ones. Jesus said as much in Matthew 24 and 25, though the disciples could scarcely grasp His meaning at the time. Though they could not fully understand their Lord, Jesus still warned them of what was to come, much of it coming thousands of years after their deaths.

Revelation 18 shows a remarkably consistent God, one who suffers long with human beings and gives them every opportunity to be saved. The world’s system of confusion and sin will one day be shattered. God will return to save those who remain faithful to Him. But in the meantime, those faithful ones have a work to do. They must lay bare the sins of Babylon, so that men and women can make a choice for or against God.

Lightened with the power of the Holy Spirit, the faithful will stand on God’s Word, choosing death and privation rather than give up the Sabbath or disobey any of God’s laws. Their sacrifice will lead countless others to heed the call to come out of Babylon.

It is a singular honor to be trusted with such an all-important message. Let us not fail God!
“But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. There are many who have never had an opportunity to hear the special truths for this time. The obligation of the fourth commandment has never been set before them in its true light. He who reads every heart and tries every motive will leave none who desire a knowledge of the truth, to be deceived as to the issues of the controversy. The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Everyone is to have sufficient light to make his decision intelligently” (The Great Controversy, p. 605).

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.’”

(Revelation 18:4, 5, NKJV)
Connections

He book of Revelation encompasses visions given by Jesus Christ to John while he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos. Patmos still exists today. It is a relatively small island among the Sporades group of islands in the Aegean Sea near the west coast of Turkey. Roman emperors would seek out remote territories such as Patmos to imprison political and religious rivals because there they would have neither legal rights nor access to courts. According to some historians, John was believed to be in his 90s when the emperor Domitian imprisoned him on Patmos for two years. It was during this time that God gave him a vision of the end of time.

What do you think?

When natural disasters leave a path of destruction and ruined lives, one of the first questions that people ask is, Was there adequate warning? That’s one question that can never be asked of God when He brings judgment on human beings. He always gives a warning.

Here are few warnings God gave before destruction came. Match the people with the scripture where the warning is found.

A. Noah 1. Genesis 41:30, 31
B. Pharaoh 2. Genesis 19:12-15

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What did you know?

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Into the Story

“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix for her double. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, “I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.” Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

“And the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, “Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.”

“And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. And the fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.’

(Revelation 18:1-14, NKJV)
punch lines

“And another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’” (Revelation 14:8, NKJV).

“Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you—the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month” (Joel 2:23, NKJV).

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13, NKJV).

“As the Lord had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15, NKJV).

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13, NKJV).

eyes

“O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams.” —Saint Augustine, 4th-5th-century Roman Christian theologian and bishop of Hippo.

“It may be that your whole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.” —Anonymous.

OUT OF THE STORY

Have you ever read Revelation 18:1-14 before? What part of this week’s passage caught your attention?

Who is speaking? Who is the audience for this message?

Notice the sins of the woman symbolically referred to as Babylon. Place a checkmark by each sin that she has committed. How do people in the world relate to her?

If you were to describe God’s attitude toward Babylon, what would you say?

What do you think Babylon represents? What is it a symbol of?

Why does the world mourn for Babylon after God begins to destroy it? Is it possible to become so caught up in sin that you literally cry over the fact that it is gone?

What two lessons do you take away from this week’s Into the Story passage?
Sabbath
Complete the What Do You Think? activity.
Were you able to correctly match the warning given with the person or persons warned? By now you’ve got the answers, but let’s dig a little deeper into each story.

Take a moment to read the following scriptures again. Examine each passage to find out what specific sin or sins led God to begin punishment. Write what you find next to each verse.

Genesis 41:30, 31:

Genesis 19:12-15:

Jonah 3:4, 5:

Genesis 6:5:

Notice that God’s punishments are not arbitrary. God’s punishments are always a last resort, after all other means have failed.

Sunday
After reading the Into the Story section, explore the passage using the Out of the Story prompts. The word “Babylon” comes to us from an ancient place called Mesopotamia. Babylon was its chief city, a place known for its sensuality, sexual immorality, and luxury.

Now that you know what Babylon means, why do you think God calls the world’s system of sin by the name Babylon?

Read Revelation 18:3. The world has committed fornication with Babylon. Fornication occurs when two unmarried people have sex. Why is the angel of Revelation 18 using such strong terms to describe what’s happening in the world?

Monday
Read this week’s Key Text again. The angel encourages all people to come out of Babylon. In a sentence or two share what you think it means to “come out of Babylon.”

Now, read Romans 12:1, 2. How does giving your life to Jesus Christ help you detach from the world?

Tuesday
His week’s Flashlight quote reminds us that God will give every person an opportunity to accept Him as their personal Savior from sin and Lord of their life. One of the ways that we demonstrate that we are willing to follow Jesus is by keeping His commandments.

Read Exodus 20:1-17. Which of the Ten Commandments separates you from most of the world (i.e., most of the world disregards it)?

What message does keeping all the commandments send to the world? What does it say about you and your relationship to God? Do you think you’ll have to defend that relationship one day?

Wednesday
Do any of this week’s Punch Lines grab your attention? They should.

Farmers and others who work in agriculture understand the importance of early and latter rains. Early rains—typically in the spring—help a crop to get going. Latter rains get it ready for the harvest.

Read Isaiah 44:3, 4 to see the harvest imagery at work. Why does God want to rain down His Holy Spirit on you as Jesus prepares to return to earth?

Thursday
Write a three- or four-sentence response to the following scenario:

One day while you are walking to school, two friends you usually hang out with begin to shout at each other. They get louder and louder and soon a pushing match ensues. You listen in and discover that they are fighting over a girl they both like.

What would you do and why?

Friday
Do you see any parts of Babylon in your life? What about the music you listen to, the movies you watch, the friends you hang with?

Is there something that you need to give up in order to heed God’s final warning? Why not ask God’s forgiveness, and pray at the beginning of each hour for strength to go without it?

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#URlf18039s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
the time of trouble

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The time of trouble is one of those phrases that fills Seventh-day Adventist believers and others who look for Jesus’ appearing with trepidation. Even if one is supremely at peace with God, they cannot discount the fearful scenes that will signal the close of earth’s history.

By the time of the proclamation found in Daniel 12:1 the record of all humanity is sealed. The filthy will remain so; the holy will be sealed in their holiness. Jesus will cease to mediate on behalf of humanity, and Satan will be freed to use all the power available to him to persecute the followers of God and lead the fallen world to the precipice of destruction. This is one trial that will be worse in culmination than in anticipation.

As you prepare to teach this lesson, know that many teenagers in your class are fearful of the end-time, the time of trouble. Who can blame them? For many years the events that usher in the second coming of Jesus have been used to bludgeon people into following Christ. The youth have experienced this. Avoid the tendency to sensationalize the events of the time of trouble simply as a means of pressuring them to follow Jesus. Fear may take us to Christ, but it will not keep us there.

The youth need to know that even though trying times are ahead, a small remnant of faithful believers, of which they may be a part, will endure to the end. This group will neither give up their faith in Jesus Christ, nor give up the Sabbath. Like Jacob on the night that he wrestled with God’s angel (Genesis 32:24-30) they will pray earnestly, pleading with God for mercy and humbling themselves before Him. As they review their lives they see little that is good, but all they see will have been confessed and repented of.

The main point to be communicated this week is the “fierce urgency of now.” Now is the time to be right with God. Now is the time to forsake sin and surrender to God—before the time of trouble comes.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn that a time of trouble is coming upon the earth such as never was. (Know)
- Experience the assurance that they can stand for Christ, no matter what comes upon the earth. (Feel)
- Embrace their role as faithful members of God’s end-time remnant. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Persecution
- Abiding
- Remnant and its mission

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.
Review the What Do You Think? activity with your class. Chances are you, like your students, have a strong emotional reaction to the time of trouble. It is difficult to be neutral about something that has so many far-reaching implications for one’s life.

Ask the students to share their answers. Let the students know that there is no right or wrong ranking of their emotions. The objective of this activity is to help the students take a hard look at what they think about end-time events, and whether or not their reactions are supported by the facts of what will occur before Jesus comes.

(Note: you may need to define the time of trouble for some of your students. One way to describe it would be to say, “There will come a point when God’s angel will be instructed to stop holding back the fierce winds of human evil. God’s people will then experience their ultimate test of loyalty to Jesus. However, God has promised to deliver His people during this time [Dan. 12:2], and to cut it short for their sake [Matt. 24:22].”)

Another way to approach the What Do You Think? section is to write the phrase “time of trouble” on a board and have the students call out the first thing that comes to mind. This activity will be less controlled—who knows what might come out of a teenager’s mouth?—but you will get a great “gut reaction” from which to teach the lesson.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In the early 1900s a movement known as the Boxer Rebellion began to sweep across China. Chinese territory was greatly desired by powerful Western nations, such as the United States. As powerful nations encroached upon China, Empress Dowager Tsu Hsi enlisted the help of a secretive group called the Fists of Righteous Harmony to purge the nation of foreign influence. The secret society was referred to as Boxers because they practiced a form of martial arts, and did not believe that Western bullets could stop them.

The Boxers attacked foreign diplomats and dignitaries, but they also persecuted Christians in the process. Here’s one story from that persecution.

“During China’s Boxer Rebellion of 1900, insur- gents captured a mission station, blocked all the gates but one, and in front of that one gate placed a cross flat on the ground. Then the word was passed to those inside that any who trampled the cross underfoot would be permitted their freedom and life, but that any refusing would be shot. Terribly frightened, the first seven students trampled the cross under their feet and were allowed to go free. But the eighth student, a young girl, refused to commit the sacrilegious act. Kneeling beside the cross in prayer for strength, she arose and moved carefully around the cross, and went out to face the firing squad. Strengthened by her example, every one of the remaining 92 students followed her to the firing squad.”

(Source: www.smplanet.com/imperialism/fists.html; bible.org/illustration/china%E2%80%99s-boxer-rebellion)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It was Martin Luther King who declared, “A man who won’t die for something is not fit to live.” That simple statement exemplifies the spirit that will engulf the faithful remnant who will live during the time of trouble. Like the young girl who faced down a firing squad, refusing to sacrifice her faith, God’s end-time people will love Him too much to acquiesce to the demands of the world.

We must remember that such a stand is not the product of the moment. To stand for God in times of crisis, one has to be standing consistently in times of peace.

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.

Three passages of Scripture comprise this week’s Into the Story section, each of which offers a wealth of learning about the time of trouble. Explore each passage with your students.

Revelation 12:11: This verse more than any other signals the end of God’s probation for humanity. Students need to know that there is an end to God’s mercy, that while He loves us, He also hates sin. You may wish to highlight the fact that when God pronounces His final judgment, He is simply confirming the chosen state of each human being. Those who will remain holy chose long ago to be holy. The filthy chose their filth over God. The point to be made here is that God honors our choices.

Genesis 32:24-30: A part of the time of trouble is also referred to as the time of Jacob’s trouble. This
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 Great Controversy. 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.
“Leonidas, King of Sparta, was preparing to make a stand with his Greek troops against the Persian army in 480 B.C. when a Persian envoy arrived. The man urged on Leonidas the futility of trying to resist the advance of the huge Persian army. ‘Our archers are so numerous,’ said the envoy, ‘that the flight of their arrows darkens the sun.’ ‘So much the better,’ replied Leonidas, ‘for we shall fight them in the shade.’

“Leonidas made his stand, and died with his 300 troops” (Today in the Word, August 1989, p. 7).

The most important part of standing for Jesus at the end of time is the determination to stand for Him now, right where we are. Ask God to give you and your students the solemn resolve to stand tall until we all see Jesus’ face.

**Summary**

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

The time of trouble will be a difficult time for all human beings alive at the time. Not only will Satan be unleashed in all of his terrible ferocity, but angels from heaven will pour out plagues upon the earth that will send the world into a nightmarish frenzy.

Amid the turmoil, a small bunch of die-hard believers will refuse to bow to Satan’s pressures. The Sabbath test will be the most prominent issue on which they stand firm for God, but it will by no means be the only one. Religious leaders will point to them as the source of the world’s pain and chaos. They will be persecuted mercilessly and driven underground.

But they will survive. Their sacrifice will lead countless others to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. There is no way to soft-pedal the fearful scenes soon to fall upon earth, but we hope in these words from Jesus: “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12, NKJV).

Even so, come Lord Jesus!

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 Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 39.
the time of trouble

flashlight

“When the third angel’s message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth. The people of God have accomplished their work. They have received “the latter rain,” “the refreshing from the presence of the Lord,” and they are prepared for the trying hour before them. . . . All who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done. . . . He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.’ Revelation 22:11” (The Great Controversy, p. 613).

keytext

“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.”

(Daniel 12:1, NKJV)
What have you heard about the time of trouble? Below are several words that describe the way people sometimes feel when they speak or hear about the time of trouble. Rank the following words according to the emotions that most affect you. Place a 1 by the word that best describes how you feel, 2 by your second choice, and so on.

- No emotion
- Fear
- Joy
- Relieved
- Stressed
- Unprepared

Why did you choose the ones you did?

Did you know that the mental uncertainty of whether or not all our sins are forgiven will be more trying than the events of the time of trouble themselves? It’s hard to grasp that, isn’t it? If you’re being hounded to the point of death by angry mobs who believe that you’ve brought destruction on the world because of your beliefs, what can be more painful than that?

Well, before the second coming of Jesus, those who remain faithful to God—especially as it relates to the Sabbath—will be faced with terrible persecution, even death. However, Revelation 12:11 says: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (NKJV). They will not be overly concerned about dying. They will be concerned about living with Jesus Christ forever.
punch lines

“The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all” (Psalm 34:18, 19, NKJV).

“The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7, NKJV).

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV).

“For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5, NIV).

“Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep” (Luke 6:25, NKJV).

OUT OF THE STORY

Several different passages of Scripture make up this week’s Into the Story section. Read each passage and highlight one thing from each passage that is directly related to the time of trouble. Place an X by the item you select in each passage.

In Revelation 22:11 who is speaking? Who is the audience? Remember, the apostle John is seeing all of this while imprisoned on a deserted island. Why do you think God gave John this view of events, even though John could not understand fully what he was seeing?

Who had been searching for Jacob for many years? Why?

What did Jacob believe that the angel could do for him? Share a time in your life when you “wrestled with God” over a difficult issue.

Psalm 91 suggests that God will always protect His people from pain and suffering. Is this true? Explain.

King David is the writer of Psalm 91. Share one “time of trouble” that David went through in his life.

What assurance about the time of trouble can you take away from these verses?

other eyes

“If patience is worth anything, it must endure to the end of time. And a living faith will last in the midst of the blackest storm.” —Mohandas Gandhi, 19th-20th-century political and spiritual leader of India.

“What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly.” —Richard Bach, American writer.
Did you complete the What Do You Think? activity? What word best captures how you feel when speaking about the time of trouble? Perhaps we should look to Jesus for some guidance on handling the trouble to come.


Why did Jesus choose to pray instead of running from the danger He faced?

What specifically was Jesus asking His Father to do?

When His Father refused, what did Jesus say?

Do you believe that Jesus can give you the same courage to stand that He showed as He faced crucifixion?

The Michael Daniel mentions is Jesus Christ, who is now talking to God for us in heaven. He is our Mediator (Hebrews 8:6; 12:24). There is a point at which Jesus will stop His mediation in heaven. He will “stand up” to ready Himself to return to earth, save His people, and destroy the wicked.

What did the angel tell Daniel to do with the things he had been shown? (Daniel 12:4)

Why? (Habakkuk 2:3)

In this week’s Flashlight quotation Ellen White picks up on the finality of the moment when God marks the wicked and seals the righteous.

What role will angels play in the time of trouble? Read Revelation 16.

What are the angels in Revelation 16 doing to the earth? What plagues are they pouring out?

What does Psalm 91:11 tell us about the function of angels in times of trouble?

The apostle Paul found particular comfort in Psalm 34:19. What did Paul say to Timothy about the troubles that he had suffered? (2 Timothy 3:11, 12)

This week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 39.

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
the end of the world as we know it

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The time of trouble will be a terrifying time for people who don't know God, but it will be a time of victory for God's people. God will protect His people from those terrible times. While we oftentimes tend to focus on the difficulty of the end-times, we forget to focus on the power of God to deliver us!

Being frightened about the world ending is very natural. In fact, even unbelievers are nervous looking at the signs around us. People are putting their faith in an ancient Mayan calendar to tell them when the world will end. They make up conspiracy theories to explain the signs in the world around us. They say that aliens will come and destroy the earth. . . . They say that we will destroy the earth with a nuclear holocaust. . . . They say that an asteroid will hit the earth and destroy life as we know it. Why is there such a focus on the world ending? Because God has put something into our hearts to warn us. When we look to God, we know that He will come to deliver us out of our misery and pain. When we don't look to God, we are filled with fear of the unknown, and a horrible sense of powerlessness and a lack of control.

God will protect us, and we will be delivered. That is what we need to remember! We are not alone, and we are truly safe with God.

II. TARGET

The students will:

• Understand that the end of the world is not a time for us to fear. (Know)

III. EXPLORE

• Sense the trustworthiness of God and His Word (Feel)
• Choose to pursue a friendship with God in order to feel safe and secure. (Respond)

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 thoughts on the What Do You Think? section. Then have them look at these situations and decide if Jesus' coming is "soon" for each example:

1. Stephen in Acts is stoned as a young man and sees Jesus in a vision as he dies.
2. An old man dies of natural causes at 75 after waiting his whole life for Jesus to come.
3. A teenager who thought he had all the time in the world is hit by a bus and killed.
4. An angel appears to you and tells you that Jesus will come in the next 70 years. That is the
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Charles Blondin (1824-1897) was a French tightrope walker. At the age of 5 he went to the École de Gymnase at Lyon. Six months later he had his first performance.

In June of 1859 he attempted to become the first tightrope walker to cross a tightrope stretched across Niagara Falls, over 1100 feet of tightrope, 160 feet above the water. A huge crowd had come to watch him. He did all sorts of amazing feats. He crossed the tightrope on stilts. He crossed the tightrope in a sack. He even crossed it with a stove and frying pan, sat down in the middle and cooked and ate an omelet! The crowd cheered their encouragement.

Finally, Charles took a wheelbarrow and crossed the tightrope blindfolded. When he came back to the thunderous applause of the crowd, he asked if they thought he could carry a person across in the wheelbarrow.

“Yes, yes, yes!” they shouted. He was the greatest tightrope walker of all time. They had no doubt that he could do it!

“Then do I have a volunteer?” he asked.
The crowd buzzed and looked around. They gasped and cheered and watched, but not one volunteered.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Sometimes we claim to believe in God and we say all the right things, but when it comes right down to it, we don’t want to trust God where it counts. Like the people watching the great Blondin doing his tightrope walk across Niagara Falls, we shout “Yes, yes, yes!” when we are asked if we trust God, but we certainly don’t step out and get into that wheelbarrow!

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 the verses that describe the time of trouble.

• Underline the verses that are promises for God to protect His people.

• Which verses apply to God’s people, and which verses apply to those who have rejected God?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Matthew 6:25-34; 25:31-46.

Sharing Context and Background

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

People have been speculating about the end of the world for a very long time—possibly since the Flood! That was the first time anyone ever imagined that the world could be wiped clean, and their fear that another flood could wipe away their society again drove them to build the Tower of Babel. The mistake they made, however, was forgetting to trust in God.

The year 2000 was a time when many people thought the world as we knew it might end. Our reliance on technology had become absolute, and when the internal clocks in computers were not prepared to switch to the new millennium, many top scientists wondered if our technological infrastructure might crash, sending our ordered society into chaos. The predicted chaos and social meltdown never happened. January 1, 2000, dawned just like any other morning, and life continued as normal.

More recently, all eyes turned to the Mayan calendar that ended on December 21, 2012, which was said to be the end count of a 5125-year cycle in the Mayan Long Count Calendar. It is said that the Mayans “predicted” historical events and that they “knew” that the world would not continue past the year 2012, but serious scholars didn’t support this idea. In fact, a Hollywood movie was made on the subject, making more than $769 million dollars. It is a topic that has grabbed the imaginations of people for generations, even if it is unsupported by NASA’s observations. Regardless, many people are still afraid of the world ending.

There is an entire “apocalyptic” genre of books and movies that focus on this idea that the world will end and only a few humans, if any, will survive the cataclysmic changes. Sometimes humanity destroys itself with nuclear weapons, and sometimes the devastation is caused by something external like an asteroid. Regardless, this genre focuses on a few humans...
struggling to survive against the odds. Our society’s preoccupation with the end of the world shows us that even nonbelievers have an internal sense that our planet’s time is nearly up.

The Bible tells us that the world will end, but not because of alien attacks or flipped magnetic poles. The world will end because God decides that it is time to end sin and Satan’s reign on earth. This is not a time to be afraid; it’s a time to celebrate! God will rescue His people, and sin will be gone forever. Ellen White speaks of this time as follows: “Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: ‘Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!’”

Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying: ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ 1 Corinthians 15:55. And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory.”*

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Go back to the students’ discussion of “how soon is soon.” Considering that the longest any of us have to wait to experience Jesus’ coming is another 70 years or so, does that affect our lives? Look at this list of “things to do before Jesus comes” and have the students put them in order of highest priority to lowest:

1. Read your Bible
2. Pray daily
3. Help the poor
4. Get baptized
5. Stop swearing
6. Get to know Jesus better

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

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

  Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.
“The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Saviour’s conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God throughout eternity. And such is the value of the soul that the Father is satisfied with the price paid; and Christ Himself, beholding the fruits of His great sacrifice, is satisfied” (The Great Controversy, p. 652).

Scripture Story: Daniel 12:1, 2; Revelation 1:7; 7:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; John 14:1-4.

Commentary: The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 40.

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. . . . Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:1, 2, NIV)

Key text

7. Memorize the Ten Commandments
8. Make up with your enemy
9. Get rich

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Oftentimes, we think about the time of trouble before Jesus comes with fear and trepidation. We think of enduring hardship and punishment. We are anxious about the misery we feel that God inflicts on us before He comes. But that is not the case. God has promised to care for His people through the time of trouble. If we look at the promises through the Bible about how God will care for His people and not allow them to perish, and if we look at Ellen White’s description of how God will protect His people and deliver them, we have nothing to worry about.

God’s deliverance goes further than the time of trouble, however. He will take us out of this sinful world and give us a home with no more pain or death. We will be delivered from all discomfort, and our pain and fear will be forgotten.

1 Fundamental Belief No. 10.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 25.
3 Fundamental Belief No. 26.

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 Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 40.
“The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Saviour’s conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God throughout eternity. And such is the value of the soul that the Father is satisfied with the price paid; and Christ Himself, beholding the fruits of His great sacrifice, is satisfied" (The Great Controversy, p. 652).

Scripture Story: Daniel 12:1, 2; Revelation 1:7; 7:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; John 14:1-4.
Commentary: The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 40.

keytext

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. . . . Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

(Daniel 12:1, 2, NIV)
what do you think?

What does “soon” mean to you? We always hear that Jesus is coming “soon,” but our parents, grandparents, and great-great grandparents all believed that Jesus would come in their lifetimes. Even the apostles believed that Jesus would come before they died. Do you think that it matters if Jesus comes tomorrow, 10 years from now, or 100 years from now? How does it affect your life today?

did you know?

An ancient Mayan calendar was discovered that ended in the year 2012. Many people grasped onto this little fact and jumped to the conclusion that the ancient Mayans had a glimpse into the future and knew that the world would end in the year 2012. Some people suggested that a meteor would hit our planet and flip the magnetic poles, causing mass destruction. Others suggest that aliens would come to our planet and completely destroy it. Others wondered if we might not destroy ourselves with our own nuclear capability. Regardless, a great many people believed that the “end of the world” was coming and tried to prepare themselves for a great apocalypse. They stored up food and drinking water, dug underground shelters, and stockpiled guns and ammunition. People were afraid. Of course, we know that the end did not come. But should we be afraid of it?

INTO THE STORY

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”‘ and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’ So shall it be! Amen.”

“I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. “Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,” nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; “he will lead them to springs of living water.” “And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”’”

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

(Daniel 12:1, 2; Revelation 1:7; 7:14-17 ; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; John 14:1-4, NIV)
punch lines

“But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:36-39, NKJV).

“He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and do good while they live” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, 12, NIV).

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12, NKJV).

“He has showed you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8, NIV).

OUT OF THE STORY

From these passages, what kind of mental pictures do you get about Jesus’ coming? Look specifically at 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and Daniel 12:1, 2.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and John 14:1-4. What specific comforts are there in these passages?

What do these verses tell you about what happens when people die?

How would you explain to someone from these verses that the righteous dead do not go immediately to heaven upon death?

In Revelation 7:14-17, there is a description of the people who have come out of “the great tribulation.” The description is very symbolic. What kind of reward do these symbols show us?

What do you think it means to be faithful to God? What does God expect of us? (Micah 7:8; John 15:9-11 are a couple of examples.)

Revelation 7:14 says that the saved are those who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” What does this symbol mean? How will we be ultimately saved and go to heaven?

other eyes

“The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life.”—John F. Kennedy, 20th-century American president.

“The planet’s survival has become so uncertain that any effort, any thought that presupposes an assured future amounts to a mad gamble.”—Elias Canetti, 20th-century Nobel Prize in Literature recipient.
Sabbath
Complete the What Do You Think? activity. The word “soon” can mean different things to different people. One person might think it means this afternoon. Another thinks it means tomorrow. And another might think it’s a ploy by their parents to put off their requests: “Mom, when can I get that new dress?” “Soon, dear, soon. . . .”

In light of the fact that we die we all sleep in the grave, what do you think Jesus’ coming “soon” will mean to us? Does that thought have any bearing on how you live your life?

Sunday
Look at the passages from Into the Story. Put aside your preconceptions and just look at those passages. What kind of descriptions do you see? If God were saying these things directly to you, how do you think He would be saying them? Would He be reassuring or comforting?

It’s interesting how we can “wash our robes” in red blood and have them come out white! Of course, we know this to be symbolic of the cleansing that Jesus’ blood has on us.

How can you be cleansed by the blood of Jesus? What difference will this cleansing make in your relationship with God? with others? with yourself?

Monday
In the Key Text this week Michael (or Jesus) is described as “the great prince who protects your people.” By choosing Jesus, we become one of His. We put ourselves under His protection. Someone once said that the safest place to be is in the middle of God’s will, and that is very true.

Even when we die, when we no longer have any control over anything—even our thoughts—we are being held safely by God until it is time for us to wake up. God keeps that unique personality, all of your memories, everything that is you safely sleeping while your body turns back to dust. In what other ways are we safe with God? Write a list of all the ways that God protects us and provides for us. See how long that list can get!

Tuesday
Ellen White gives us a very unique glimpse of God after sin has been destroyed. In the Flashlight section she says that after all Jesus endured on earth, after all the misery of sin and the battle that has been fought between good and evil, God will think that the battle was worth it! Jesus’ torture and death was worth it! Why? Because fighting that battle brought you home! If you think about that kind of love, does it make it easier to trust God to take care of you?

When have you done something very difficult for someone you love? Was it worth it? Explain.

Wednesday
The end of the world doesn’t need to be frightening if we belong to God. We know that God will protect us and that we will have eternal life, never having to experience pain, death, or sin again. But how do we know if we are OK with God? Look at the passages in the Punch Lines section. What do we need to do in order to be connected to God? First of all, a relationship with God is the most important thing. We need to know God. We need to talk to Him. We need to listen when He talks back! It isn’t about the rules; it’s about getting closer to God, and then letting Him love others through us.

Read through the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, 23. Choose one and explain how God is working in your life to grow that “fruit” so that you can love others on behalf of Christ.

Thursday
What can you do to make sure that you are ready for Jesus’ coming? How can you get to know Jesus on a personal level so that when He comes, you’ll be confident that you are meeting a Friend, not a Judge?

Friday
Do you really know God well enough to be ready for Him to come? If so, what has helped you know God? If not, what can you do to prepare a place for Him in your heart and life?

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URHrF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
wiping the slate clean

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After the Second Coming the earth will be made new, but not before the wicked are destroyed. This is not an easy topic to cover. God destroying and killing the evil people is not a comfortable image or idea. However, it is necessary before sin can be eradicated once and for all, allowing us to live in peace and happiness for all eternity.

It is a very natural emotion to pity the wicked. However, Ellen White gives us a unique view into the mental space of the wicked before they are destroyed. They are not sorry for the pain and misery they have caused, only sorry that God has triumphed. They are not redeemable.

God’s love for us, and for the irredeemable wicked, is more than we can imagine. God does not want to destroy anyone, which is why He waits so long, waiting to give everyone the last possible chance to change. God loves each of us infinitely more than we love the dearest person in our lives. His heart aches for us. He longs to be reunited and to stop the pain we must endure, but He also longs to save the lost.

The millennium will be used to put God’s goodness on trial. We will have the opportunity to ask our questions, see why God did what He did, and let God prove His goodness to the cosmos.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand the millennium and the reason for destroying the wicked. (Know)

- Sense God’s desire to have a relationship with them on a personal level. (Feel)
- Choose to seek a relationship with God to prepare for His coming. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE

- Knowing God
- Millennium and the end of sin
- Sin/evil/devil

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

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Take a recent news story about a crime committed in your area. Show the students the news story, and ask them these questions:

1. What should be done to the person who did this?
2. What is a fair punishment and why?
3. If the person repents of what they did and changes their life, does your decision change, or does it make a difference?

Note the different responses from different students. Each person will likely have a different idea of what is fair.
Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

When Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933) was vice president of the United States, he had a reputation of being a man of few words. He was a very eloquent speaker, but in his private life he was quiet, earning him the nickname “silent Cal.” At one dinner party, a lady sitting next to him said that she’d made a bet that she could get more than two words out of him. His reply: “You lose.” Coolidge had a quick and memorable wit, but he was very uncomfortable in formal situations. When asked why he attended formal dinners that made him so uncomfortable, he was rumored to have said, “Have to eat somewhere.”

Senate debates can get rather heated. Each senator, each faction, Democrats and Republicans, see their politics in a very personal light. There is a reason why religion and politics are not polite dinner conversation—people take both too seriously to be able to chew calmly, let alone digest properly.

During a very heated debate in the Senate, Vice President Calvin Coolidge was presiding. The senators were firing back and forth at each other, and one exasperated senator shot out, “Go to hell!”

The senator who was spoken to so disrespectfully turned to Coolidge, enraged, and complained to him.

Coolidge looked up from the book he’d been leafing through and said, “I’ve been looking through the rule book. You don’t have to go.”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

While Calvin Coolidge was joking in his reply to the senator, his words held truth. Hell is a very real experience reserved for the end of time when God cleanses the earth. It is an experience we can skip, however. God doesn’t want even one person to be lost. When we look at the “rule book” we can see that we don’t have to go either. Our eternal reward is a choice.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

• Underline what happens to the saved people.
• What hope do we see here for those who have trusted in God?
• Circle what happens to the lost people.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story: Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 18.

Sharing Context and Background

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

It is important to remember that for literally hundreds of years people have been taught about hell. Hell is either featured as a place of horrific torment where people’s worst nightmares come true, or it is laughed off as funny. Both views are dangerous.

If we look at the first view of hell as a place of horror, it is hard to see a loving God behind it. If hell is a place where evil reigns and people are tortured in the vilest ways, then how can we believe that God is loving? Following God would simply be out of fear, not out of love.

Adolescents are bombarded with entertainment that glorifies the horrific nature of hell. Horror movies return to the theme repeatedly, and video games cash in on the shock value. If we simply accept these ideas as they are hammered into us, then our view of God becomes skewed and Satan gets just what he wants!

Laughing at hell is equally damaging. Cartoons, stand-up comics, movies, Halloween costumes, and even modern philosophy poke fun at hell. We all have seen the images of little devils with pitchforks and hooves standing amid flames. They are depicted as quite cute, while angels are shown to be boring and “killjoys.” The joke is that while everyone is trying to avoid hell, it is really the place where all the fun is. Satan has been deceiving humanity from the beginning, and this just one more lie to lure people toward destruction.

Hell, according to the Bible, is a temporary situation. The fires will burn long enough to consume sin, and then sin will be no more. The only reminder we will have for what sin did will be in our memories and in the palms of Jesus’ hands. Hell is also the opposite of heaven. Hell is a separation from God, and heaven is being reunited with the God who so lovingly created us. God created you because He wanted to have a relationship with you. That relationship pulls us away from sin and the terrible consequences sin brings, and draws us closer to
paradise with Him. When we pull away from God, we pull away from the Source of life, and the result is eternal death, not eternal punishment.

The Millennium is a thousand-year period after Jesus comes and takes those who love Him to heaven. “During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. ‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” 1 Corinthians 4:5. Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came, ‘judgment was given to the saints of the Most High.’ Daniel 7:22. At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: ‘I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ ‘They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.’ Revelation 20:4, 6. It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, ‘the saints shall judge the world.’ 1 Corinthians 6:2. In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.

“At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of ‘the judgment written.’ Thus the reve- altor, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says: ‘The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.’ Revelation 20:5.”* It is only after those thousand years that God will wipe the earth clean with fire and destroy sin forever. First of all, God needs to take the time with us to make sure

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

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

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

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* Tips for Top-notch Teaching

**Contract Teachers**
What do you do when you ask a question and no one wants to speak? One way to avoid this kind of situation is to make a contract with the students at the beginning of the class. Nothing they say will leave the classroom. Nothing they say will be used against them. Nothing they say can be wrong, because it is their perspective. And keep your end of the contract, even if they test you. Making a safe environment for discussion is more important than extracting “correct” answers from the students.

angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.’ Jude 6.

“Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people. Says Paul: ‘Know ye not that we shall judge angels?’ Verse 3. And Jude declares that ‘the
we understand His justice. Why? Because that is what you do when you have a loving relationship. You take the time you need to understand each other.

III. CLOSING

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

Ask the students each to think of one thing they wish to see obliterated from the earth when Jesus comes. Write each word on one side of the board in no particular order. On the other side of the board, ask the students to do the same exercise, but this time stating something they are looking forward to enjoying for eternity. What things on each side of the board are already in their lives now?

Summary
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Someone once said that hell proves God’s love. If God did not love us so much, He would not have given us a choice. If God did not respect us so much, He would not allow us to separate ourselves from Him, thereby destroying ourselves. God’s love is so strong that God allows His own heart to be broken. The wicked are destroyed because God’s glory, which comforts those who have stayed connected to Him, is too much for the wicked, and it consumes them.

When God destroys sin and wipes the slate clean, we will finally have a chance to live without pain, frustration, anger, or depression. We will be able to live without fear, learning and growing for eternity. The best part, however, will be being close to God and never feeling separated again.

1 Fundamental Belief No. 27.

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 Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 41.
wiping the slate clean

flashlight

“The wicked are filled with regret, not because of their sinful neglect of God and their fellow men, but because God has conquered. They lament that the result is what it is; but they do not repent of their wickedness. They would leave no means untried to conquer if they could.

“The world see the very class whom they have mocked and derided, and desired to exterminate, pass unharmed through pestilence, tempest, and earthquake. He who is to the transgressors of His law a devouring fire, is to His people a safe pavilion” (The Great Controversy, p. 654).

keytext

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”

(2 Peter 3:10, NIV)
How fair is God? Have you ever questioned God’s fairness? On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least fair and 10 being perfectly fair, what do you think of the following situations?

1. A teen dies young from a drinking and driving accident.
2. A good person wins the lottery.
3. An unethical business tycoon becomes increasingly wealthy.
4. A third world country has a famine and millions die.
5. The devil was not destroyed immediately.

What do you think? How do you think this trial is intended to convince people? Why or why not?

Did you know?

There are several steps to a criminal trial in the United States. These steps are there to ensure that every person gets a fair chance to defend themselves in a court of law. First of all, a person is charged with a crime; however, the accused person is considered innocent until proven guilty. Next, a jury of 12 regular citizens is selected. Both lawyers make opening statements that explain why they think the accused person is either guilty or innocent. Next, witnesses are called for both sides of the argument. When all the evidence has been given, the lawyers recap with closing statements and the jury is left to make a decision.

Reports say that thousands of people are wrongly convicted each year.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. The second death has no power over them, but they will be destroyed forever.

The lake of fire is the second death.

(Revelation 20, NIV)
How does God judge the evil people?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

How are the righteous people involved in the process?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Do you think the righteous people are judging the evil people, or are they judging God’s decisions? Explain.

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Why would God permit Himself to be put on trial?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

What is the second death?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Does the punishment of the lake of fire seem like an unduly harsh penalty to you? Why or why not?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Does the reward of eternal life seem “too good” for the righteous people? Why or why not?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Who do you think this trial is intended to convince?

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

“I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4, NIV).
Sabbath

Complete the What Do You Think? activity, and read through the Did You Know? section. The American justice system prides itself on being as fair as possible. The accused is innocent until proven guilty. The convicted can appeal a decision. One judge does not make the decision in a criminal trial, but a jury of 12 peers is chosen. These safety features are designed to catch mistakes so that people get a fair trial and the wrong person is not convicted. However, even with all of this, mistakes are made.

If God is perfect and good, do you think it is wrong to “put God on trial”? In what way do you think it is OK to “test” God?

Sunday

Read the Into the Story section and complete the questions in Out of the Story. During the millennium, after Jesus takes us to heaven and before we come back to the new earth, we will be very busy reviewing, or “judging” for ourselves, God’s decisions. In a way God will be on trial.

Malachi 3:10 tells us to try God and to test Him at His word. The millennium will be a chance to do just that—to dig in and ask all the questions we need to ask.

Why is this person not saved? Why is that person in heaven after all the bad things they did? Make a list of questions that you struggle with, and start praying now for some answers.

Monday

The Key Text tells us that Jesus’ coming will be a surprise, “like a thief,” and that the earth will be demolished and scrubbed clean. Watch the news tonight. Make a mental note of all the things you would like to see wiped from the earth: the pain, the heartbeat, the wars, the famine, the gunshots and violence, the poverty. . . . Seeing everything that is happening around the world, how do you feel about a fresh start? What things in your own life would you like “wiped clean”?

Tuesday

In the Flashlight quotation Ellen White describes the experience of the wicked before God wipes everything clean again. Is it hard for you to think about the wicked people being destroyed? Ellen White gives us a better view of what the people who have ultimately rejected God are experiencing. God is a fair God who reads the heart. He would not destroy a well-meaning person for misunderstanding. The people who are being destroyed are the ones who have hurt other people and feel no remorse. They have caused pain and misery and their only regret is that God has “caught” them. They will never change.

Think seriously: Is there anything you are holding on to that you would hate to be caught for but don’t want to give up?

Wednesday

The Punch Lines show two different kinds of “testing” God. One is being self-involved and whining, while the other is an act of faith.

A real, living relationship is an evolving thing. You trust God only by watching Him come through for you. We can think about Jesus’ coming with certainty and happiness only when we have a relationship with God and know that we will be seeing our best friend come in the clouds.

Give one example of a self-involved and whining test of God, and then give an example of a test that is an act of faith.

Thursday

If you were responsible for protecting your house from burglars, you would probably put an alarm system in place, lock your doors, and keep an inventory of your valuables. You don’t want to be caught unprepared.

Of course, even though Jesus’ coming will be like a thief—unexpected and surprising—we want to let Him in! But we also want to be ready so that we can go with Him to heaven.

What do you think you need to do to be ready at a moment’s notice for Jesus’ coming?

Friday

Remembering that it is a friendship with Jesus that will make the difference, what do you think you need to do to develop that friendship? Write a contract with God: “Lord, I want to be Yours. I want to be ready. I don’t know how to get to know You better, so please come closer to me. Just as I am, I am Yours.” Sign your name. Date it. Keep it. Remind yourself of your ultimate goal—to know Him.

this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 41.

*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.
The Bible promises that one day “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4, NIV). The great controversy will be over. The earth will be made new. At last we will experience peace on earth and “good will toward men” (Luke 2:14, KJV).

II. TARGET
The students will:
• Learn about heaven. (Know)
• Be invited to live with the assurance that some day they will experience the earth made new. (Feel)
• Be given the opportunity to experience the peace of Christ as they wait and watch for the Second Coming. (Respond)

III. EXPLORE
• Great controversy
• New earth
• Contentment/peace

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. Ask them to share the basis on which they answered the questions.
As an alternate activity, wrap up various Christmas gifts. Distribute the gifts and then discuss the following questions:

- What is the best Christmas gift you have ever received and why?
- Be honest here: do you prefer giving or receiving a gift? Explain.
- Which is a greater gift from God—to come as a baby in a manger or to come back and take us home to heaven? Why?
- In light of the consumerism of Christmas, how can you be perfectly content with what you have?
- Discuss with your friends what you are looking forward to the most when you get to heaven.

Illustration

There is an old legend of a swan and a crane. A beautiful swan swooped by the banks of a pond in which a crane was wading about seeking snails. For a few moments the crane viewed the swan in stupid wonder and then asked: “Where do you come from?”

“I come from heaven!” replied the swan.

“And where is heaven?” asked the crane.

“Heaven!” said the swan, “Heaven! Have you never heard of heaven?” The beautiful bird went on to describe the grandeur of the eternal city. She told of streets of gold and the gates and walls made of precious stones; she dreamily described the river of life flowing as pure as crystal. In eloquent terms the swan described the tree of life and the hosts who live in the other worlds—yet failed to arouse the slightest interest on the part of the crane.

Finally the crane asked: “Are there any snails there?”

“Snails!” gasped the swan, “No! Of course there are not.”

“Then,” said the crane, as it continued its search along the slimy banks of the pond, “you can have your heaven. I want snails!”

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

How often do we get distracted by the trinkets and toys of this world—even though they’re slimy snails compared to what is yet to come? Eavesdrop on conversations around any high school and you’ll hear high-powered prattle that seems to be real important, but in reality is snail talk.

“Check out my new set of wheels!”

“That blouse, like, makes you look so fat.”

“Dude! I scored three goals in the soccer game.”

Let’s face it: The stuff that often consumes our conversations on this earth is meaningless compared to what is yet to come in the new earth. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 2:9 that what’s to come is out of this world. In fact we cannot even conceive of what God has prepared for us in heaven.

Out of the Story for Teachers

Divide the class into three groups and designate to each group one of the following chapters and assignments. (If your class is small, choose one of the following assignments or do all three of them together.) After 10 minutes of working on the assignment, have each group share their final project with the rest of the class.

Revelation 20: Ask this group to prepare the chapter as a dramatic reenactment. Encourage them to be creative. They may present it as a reader’s theater with the students taking turns reading certain words and verses. They may rewrite the chapter into a very contemporary translation. They might want to have some students act it out as the chapter is read.

Revelation 21: Have this second group recreate the highlights of the chapter using pictures. Their assignment is to pretend they are hiding in a cave just before Jesus returns; but there is a language barrier with several foreigners who are also hiding in fear for their lives. These people do not know of the blessed hope that Jesus promised to come again. Using a chalkboard or an easel pad, the students are to communicate this entire passage of hope by sketching it out.

Revelation 22: This third group is tasked with the challenge of “selling” this belief that Jesus is coming again. By selecting key phrases and verses in this chapter, have the students prepare an infomercial that will make viewers long for heaven.

Sharing Context and Background

The Beginning: The great controversy between God and Satan began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed. God then said to the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15, NIV).
Satan is our enemy. He will do anything he can to get us to follow his evil, deadly path. The phrase “you will strike his heel” refers to Satan’s repeated attempts to defeat Christ during His life on earth. “He will crush your head” foreshadows Satan’s defeat when Christ rose from the dead. A strike on the heel is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is. Already God was revealing His plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Drama: Ellen White captures the climactic drama of the human story with her opening statements in *The Desire of Ages*:

“‘His name shall be called Immanuel, . . . God with us.’ ‘The light of the knowledge of the glory of God’ is seen ‘in the face of Jesus Christ.’ From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was ‘the image of God.’ . . . It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God’s love—to be ‘God with us’” (p. 19).

The End: Angelfire.com posts this commentary on the conclusion of Revelation:

“Revelation closes human history as Genesis opened it—in paradise. But there is one distinct difference in Revelation—evil is gone forever. Genesis describes Adam and Eve walking and talking with God. Revelation describes people worshiping God, face-to-face. Genesis describes a garden with an evil serpent. Revelation describes a perfect city with no evil. The Garden of Eden was destroyed by sin; but paradise is re-created in the New Jerusalem.

“The book of Revelation ends with an urgent request: ‘Come Lord Jesus.’ In a world of problems, persecution, evil, and immorality Christ calls us to endure in our faith. Our efforts to better our world are important, but their results cannot compare with the transformation that Jesus will bring about when He returns. . . .

“Revelation is, above all, a book of hope. It shows that no matter what happens on earth, God is in control. It promises that evil will not last forever. And it depicts the wonderful reward that is waiting for all those who believe in Jesus Christ, as Savior and Lord.”

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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 Great Controversy. 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
Ask your youth group to brainstorm a list of movies and TV shows that have dealt with heaven and hell. (You may wish to show a few examples from www.youtube.com.) Talk with your students about how Hollywood portrays heaven and hell. Do they believe these to be accurate representations of heaven or hell? Why or why not? What have your kids heard differently in church or in school? Is anything different? If so, what?

Summary
Conclude with this simple story and challenge:
“My favorite place in the whole world,” Paul exclaimed, “is Grandma and Grandpa’s ranch!”
“Yeah,” his brother Randy agreed, “and I like Grandma’s apple pies the best.”
“I like playing soccer in their big yard,” Paul added.
Grandma and Grandpa’s place was a slice of heaven: swinging on the front porch, licking ice-cream cones, swimming in the creek, and best of all, listening to Grandpa’s stories about World War II.

Then everything changed. The aroma of fresh apple pies had disappeared from the kitchen. No one pulled Paul and Randy in the wagon. And the swing was always empty. Grandpa had died, and Grandma had moved to a nursing home.

What do you think Paul and Randy really liked most about visiting their grandparents’ house? Although there were fun things to do there, what really made the ranch special were Grandma and Grandpa. Without them, the ice cream lost its flavor and the swing lost its magic.

Heaven promises great things to do—riding rhinos, flying to planets, eating apples the size of watermelons. But without question the best thing about heaven will be spending time with Jesus.

1 Adapted from Henry Nouwen, Our Greatest Gift, a Meditation on Dying and Caring (Harper One, 2009), pp. 18, 19.
2 Fundamental Belief No. 8.
4 As quoted at www.angelfire.com/sd/firstbaptistchurch/hope.html.
5 www.usp.edu/teaching/tips/activities.shtml.

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 Great Controversy (or Love Under Fire), chapter 42.
**flashlight**

“The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 678).

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**Scripture Story:** Revelation 15:1-4; 20:7-15; 21; 22.  
**Commentary:** *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 42.
what do you think?

What Do You Think? A=Agree NS=Not Sure D=Disagree
1. People who live good lives will go to heaven. A NS D
2. Christians should worry more about today than the afterlife. A NS D
3. If there is a heaven, there must be a hell. A NS D
4. We can experience heaven today. A NS D
5. Heaven is open to everyone—murderers, thieves, arsonists, etc. A NS D

into the story

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

"The angel said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.'"

"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.'

"I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, 'Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!'

"Then he told me, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.'

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.'"

(Revelation 22:1-14, NIV)

did you know?

The Gilgamesh epic, an ancient Babylonian legend, refers to a resting place of heroes and hints at a tree of life. In the pyramids of Egypt the embalmed bodies had maps placed beside them as guides to the future world. The Romans believed that the righteous would picnic in the Elysian Fields. . . .

Although these depictions of the afterlife differ, the unifying testimony of the human heart throughout history is belief in life after death. Anthropological evidence suggests that every culture has a God-given, innate sense of the eternal—that this world is not all there is.1
OUT OF THE STORY

What are the “new” features of the New Jerusalem in verses 1-6?

What crops does the river of life yield? How does this relate to the source of the river? Why?

Compare this passage in the Out of the Story section with Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; and Zechariah 14:8. What are the similarities? What are the differences? What do these visions tell us about God?

What do you think John means when he says that God’s name will be on our foreheads?

Why are we rewarded for what we have done if we are saved by grace? (John 15:8-11; Romans 6:15-18; James 2:14-18)

What does the Christmas story tell us about God? In what ways are the topics of Christmas and heaven similar?

What are the “new” features of the New Jerusalem in verses 1-6?

punch lines

“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Revelation 3:21, NIV).

“As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness” (Psalm 17:15, NIV).

“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2, NIV).

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24, NIV).

“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit,” (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, NIV).

“All beauty in the world is either a memory of Paradise or a prophecy of the transfigured world.”—Nicholas Berdyaev, 19th-20th-century Russian religious and political philosopher.

“Only one person in the Bible receives a direct promise of heaven—a thief.”—Philip Yancey, Christian author.

“Christmas is when God came down the stairs of heaven with a baby in His arms.”—R. Eugene Sterner in Vital Christianity (December 14, 1975).
**Sabbath**

How biblical are your answers in the *What Do You Think?* section? Find more information on heaven and hell by studying the following texts:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation 4:1-6</th>
<th>Revelation 21:15-21</th>
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<tr>
<td>Revelation 4:6-11</td>
<td>Revelation 21:22-27</td>
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<td>Revelation 5:1-5</td>
<td>Revelation 22:1-5</td>
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<td>Revelation 5:6-14</td>
<td>Matthew 8:12</td>
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<td>Revelation 6:8</td>
<td>Luke 16:19-31</td>
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<td>Revelation 7:16, 17</td>
<td>Matthew 25:41</td>
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<td>Revelation 19:1-10</td>
<td>2 Peter 2:4</td>
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<td>Revelation 20:10-15</td>
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<td>Revelation 21:1-8</td>
<td>2 Thessalonians 1:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 21:9-14</td>
<td>Mark 12:25-27</td>
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**Sunday**

After reading the passage in the *Into the Story* section, prayerfully reflect on the words of Richard L. Neil:

“You can be there—you must be there! The trials of our present world cannot compare with the joy that will be ours when we are reunited with our loved ones and see our Savior. What does it take? Just a determination to allow Christ to rule in your life. Accepting His sacrifice for your sins and living your life by the instructions found in His Word are all it takes to be able to live with God eternally.

“The price has been paid. The choice is yours.”

What will you choose?

**Monday**

Read the *Key Text*. Consider the following ideas that pastor and author Max Lucado talks about:


**Tuesday**

After contemplating the words of Ellen White in the *Flashlight* section, pay attention to glimpses of heaven on earth. Keep a journal for a day, noting all things of “unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, [which] declare that God is love.”

**Wednesday**

Summarize all of the *Punch Lines* in one, concise statement.

Think about what the new earth will mean to you by considering these additional *Punch Lines*:

- New laws of nature (Isaiah 11:6-9)
- New government (Revelation 22:14, 15)

**Thursday**

Fredrick Buechner once said, “When you are with somebody you love, you have little if any sense of the passage of time. When you are with God, you have something like the same experience. The biblical term for the experience is eternal life. Another is heaven.”

In light of Buechner’s statement, is it possible to experience heaven today? If so, how?

**Friday**

A little girl was taking an evening walk with her father. Wonderingly, she looked up at the stars and exclaimed: “Oh, Daddy, if the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful, what does the right side look like?”

How would you answer the girl’s question?

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*Love Under Fire is a special adaptation of The Great Controversy, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlHF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.*