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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

4TH QUARTER 2026



An Open Book

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Youth Sabbath School Bible Study Guide

cornerstone connections

REAL. SOLID. STORIES.

4th Quarter 2026

An Open Book

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a word about what's ahead...

The goal of *Cornerstone Connections* is to lead you to the Bible to see the big story of God and people. This big story continues from the first generation in Eden to your generation today. It's about the lives of people as the God of the universe interacts with them.

If you are looking for a word from God that is **real**, *Cornerstone Connections* captures the message of Scripture and challenges you to make the connections to your real life.

God's Word is not only real; it is rock-**solid**. For the first generation to hear God's voice in the garden as well as the last group standing before Christ at the Second Coming, the Word of God has been and continues to be reliable.

The word from God comes to us in the **stories** of people who encountered Him and made a decision to either follow Him or walk away.

Real. Solid. Stories. You will find one in *Into the Story* in each lesson. *Out of the Story* will provide you with ways to search for truth you can apply to your life. In each lesson you will also find:

- **What Do You Think?**—a mental activity to get your mind and heart in gear for the story to follow. Every time you approach a Bible story, you are coming to it in the context of the story in which you live every day.
- **Did You Know?**—a brief statistic or definition that digs a little deeper into the story or simply provides some helpful facts to bring to the lesson.
- **Key Text**—a verse that points out a key concept from the story. It is also a great place to find verses that you can memorize and store away for later use.
- **Punch Lines**—a few other verses from Scripture that punctuate key concepts of the lesson. You may see connections between them and the Bible story as well as your own life.
- **Flashlight**—a brief snapshot of Ellen White's input on the story. These glimmers that shed light onto the biblical passage will also give you a glimpse of what awaits you in the suggested weekly reading from her inspired commentary on the stories—the Conflict of the Ages.*
- **Further Insight**—one or two quotes that will provide further insight into the central message of the lesson.
- **Connecting to Life**—the guide to making the truths about God in this story your very own. Study the Bible lesson during the week in preparation for Sabbath School. On Sabbath you will have the opportunity to review, discuss, and elaborate on what you learned with your teacher and other students in your Sabbath School class. Each day of the week you will be directed to explore one of the sections of the lesson, to relate it to the story you live, and to make the message from God apply to you personally

Welcome to *Cornerstone Connections*.

—The General Conference Sabbath School Department

PS: Don't forget to check out the reading plan.

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

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

4TH QUARTER 2026

October

3—Know God, Know Yourself [p. 5]

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.

10—Shut Door. Open Books. [p. 9]

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

17—The SINDrome [p. 13]

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.

24—Good Over Evil [p. 17]

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?

31—The Deadly Lie [p. 21]

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.

November

7—True Power [p. 25]

Headlines abound with stories of corruption and abuse. How can we Adventists live and give a message of uncompromising conviction for this generation?

14—The World's Worst Terrorist [p. 29]

The evil one has launched an all-out terrorist attack, seeking to destroy as many as possible. Are you prepared for it?

21—Discovering Daily Disciplines [p. 33]

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?

28—Run for Your Life [p. 37]

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

5—The Time of Trouble [p. 41]

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.

12—The End of the World as We Know It [p. 45]

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!

19—Wiping the Slate Clean [p. 49]

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.

26—Earth's Makeover [p. 53]

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.

An Open Book

FOURTH QUARTER 2026



Youth Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide



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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 03 2026

Scripture Story: 1 Samuel 17.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy*, (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 27.

know God, know yourself



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"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 unique.
- I am precious to God.
- Jesus loves me immensely.
- My worth is not found in my intelligence, wealth, or good looks, but in who I am—a child of God.
- My heavenly Father measures my value through Jesus' sacrifice to save me.

Can you relate to any of these statements?

did you know?

Many religious teachers assert that Christ by His death abolished the law, and men are henceforth free from its requirements. . . .

But not so did prophets and apostles regard the holy law of God. Said David: 'I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts.' Psalm 119:45. The apostle James, who wrote after the death of Christ, refers to the Decalogue [the Ten Commandments] as 'the royal law' and 'the perfect law of liberty.' James 2:8; 1:25.

And the revelator, half a century after the crucifixion, pronounces a blessing upon them 'that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Revelation 22:14" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 466).

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 conceited 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, 'Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 'Come here,' he said, 'and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!'

"David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.'"

(1 Samuel 17:26-45, NIV)

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, *The 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" (**Psalms 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**).

further insight

"By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character."—Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 94

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Ephesians 3:17-19; Luke 15:11-20; John 15:15.

Consider the statements in the *What Do You Think?* section. Which ones did you resonate with? From where (or whom) did the message(s) come?

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").

What is the message God is sending you in today's reading?

Sunday

Read Ephesians 4:29.

Read the *Into the Story* section and complete the *Out of the Story* questions. If you were David and heard these negative messages, how would you feel? What would you feel toward those who had spoken them? In what ways are your responses similar or different from David's, and why?

Monday

Read 1 Samuel 17:45.

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 Colossians 4:6.

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

Read Titus 3:1, 2.

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?

5. What (or whom) do you love?

6. What surprises you?

7. What disgusts you?

You may or may not be able to answer all the questions. You may also have more to say on one or two questions than the rest. If that happens, stay with that question for as long as you need to complete it.

Friday

Read Psalm 141:3.

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.

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>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 10, 2026

Scripture Story: Genesis 7:6-23.

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

shut door. open books.



cornerstoneconnections 9

Photo by A. Truman

flashlight

"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).

keytext

"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)

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
- Judgment of the righteous
- Substitution
- Atonement

did you know?

In the book of God's remembrance every deed of righteousness is immortalized. There every temptation resisted, every evil overcome, every word of tender pity expressed, is faithfully chronicled. And every act of sacrifice, every suffering and sorrow endured for Christ's sake, is recorded."

"God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing. He is not deceived by appearances of piety. He makes no mistakes in His estimation of character."

"Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 481, 486, 490).

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 land 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; Hebrews 9**)

further insight

"Whatever is done from love, however small it may appear in the estimation of men, is accepted and rewarded of God."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 487

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 7:21-23.

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 today's reading 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 were the people Jesus referred to basing their readiness for heaven? On what basis can you know confidently that when God judges you, He is judging you "not guilty"?

Sunday

Read Matthew 24:42-44.

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

Read Genesis 7:23; Revelation 22:10, 11.

The *Key Text* may seem 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 the verse in Genesis to the one in Revela-

tion, 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 Revelation 3:5.

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"?

Take some time and write out a prayer to God asking Him to place your name in the book of life. According to this quote, what are some things you need to say? Think about what it means to repent and admit that all your good works can never qualify you for heaven. Also, think about what it means to have all the good works of Christ pronounced on your behalf. What does it mean to you to have Christ not only die for you, but also live perfectly for you?

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?

Thursday

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

Thinking about the judgment is sobering because there is no moment on earth that has so much at stake. How can you respond to this week's lesson—not out of fear or guilt, but from a heart full of joy and confidence in what Christ has done to pronounce you "not guilty"? This judgment takes place now, while we are alive. When Christ comes, the book is closed, but today the book is open. Remind yourself that today is the hour of God's merciful judgment on you by leaving books open—strategically placed to be a reminder to you that today God's judgment is taking place, and for those who have trusted in Christ, it is good.

Friday

Read John 1:10-13.

Reflect 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." 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.

**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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 17, 2026

the SINdrome

Scripture Story: Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17;
Revelation 12:7-9.

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



flashlight

"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).

keytext

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon. . . . 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."

(Revelation 12:7-9, NKJV)

what do you think?

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?

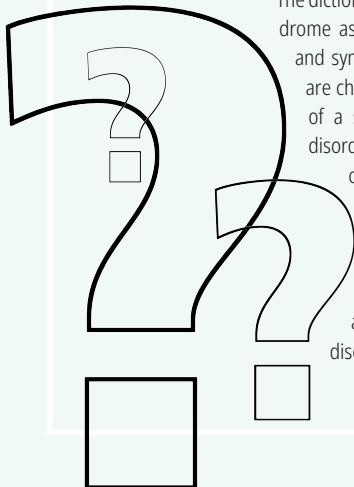
did you know?

Sndrome." 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.



INTO THE STORY

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"

"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 with 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?

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**).

further insight

"In the final execution of the judgment it will be seen that no cause for sin exists."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 503

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Genesis 3:14, 15.

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 your reading today, 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

Read 1 Peter 5:8, 9.

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

Read Revelation 12:7-9.

The *Key Text* from this week's lesson and today's reading 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"
- "nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer"
- "the great dragon was cast out"
- "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world"

As you think of believers who have a keen awareness of how sin began and where it is headed, whom do you know who lives with the attitude that God has won and Satan has lost? How does it show up in their life?

Tuesday

Read John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9.

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 accomplishes 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

Read Romans 16:20.

In today's reading 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

Read John 10:9, 10.

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#.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

OCTOBER 24 2026

Scripture Story: Mark 5:1-19.

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

good over evil



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"Were not miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles? The same compassionate Savior 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).

keytext

"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)

what do you think?

Do you think that many people today are aware of the angels that are sent to help, guide, and protect God's children? What evidence do you know of in Scripture that conveys the idea that God sends His angels to help us?

did you know?

Satan is using many avenues to turn our eyes from God's love and truth. It is in TV shows, movies, books, and the media. It is important that we guard the avenues to our soul and keep our eyes on Jesus.

"Seeing Jesus in Scripture brings spiritual vitality to our whole being. In the Gospels Jesus heals the sick, multiplies the bread, raises the dead, forgives sin, delivers demoniacs, and calms storms. He brings healing, happiness, and hope. He overcomes disaster, demons, and death. He defeats sorrow, suffering, and sickness. He triumphs over sin and Satan."—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 23.

INTO THE STORY

"They went across the Sea of Galilee to the area of the Gerasenes. Jesus got out of the boat. A man controlled by an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. The man lived in the tombs. No one could keep him tied up anymore. Not even a chain could hold him. His hands and feet had often been chained. But he tore the chains apart. And he broke the iron cuffs on his ankles. No one was strong enough to control him. Night and day he screamed among the tombs and in the hills. He cut himself with stones.

"When he saw Jesus a long way off, he ran to him. He fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, 'Jesus, Son of the Most High God, what do you want with me? Swear to God that you won't hurt me!' This was because Jesus had said to him, 'Come out of this man, you evil spirit!'

"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 own people. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how kind he has been to you.'"

(Mark 5:1-19, NIV)

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).**

further insight

“It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell.”

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 555

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Ephesians 6:10-12.

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. From our reading today 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?

Sunday

Read Philippians 2:10.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section, you will find one of the most amazing stories of deliverance in Scripture. What part of the story speaks to you personally? How is the demon-possessed man like people you may know today? How does his testimony impact others? What do you think God is trying to say to the church in this story?

Monday

Read Mark 5:15.

What does this text tell us about people whom the church or a community may "write off" or "set aside" because their problems are so severe that they could never be restored? Whom do you know in your church/community who never gives up on those who are oppressed by the spiritual war discussed in this lesson? How do they interact and work on behalf of those who seem bent in the direction of evil?

Tuesday

Read John 16:24; Matthew 17:20-22.

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

Read Psalm 91:11.

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

Read Hebrews 1:14.

Take some time to reflect on how important the angels are in the plan of salvation. Reflect 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?

this week's reading*

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

**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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 31 2026

Scripture Story: Genesis 3:1-5; Psalm 146:4; Isaiah 38:18, 29; Revelation 16:13, 14.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 33, 34.

the deadly lie



Photo by Jacqui Janeczko

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).

keytext

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

(Psalm 146:4, NIV)

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. The Bible tells us that when sin entered our world, the penalty was death. When we die, our life ceases and even our thoughts end. Find and list five Bible verses that tell us about death and when we will receive an immortal life.

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.

“The Bible declares that the dead know not anything, that their thoughts have perished; they have no part in anything that is done under the sun; they know nothing of the joys or sorrows of those who were dearest to them on earth” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 556).

“But death is not the end of the road. The grave is not a dark night without a morning. Christians never say goodbye for the last time, for there will be a glorious reunion on resurrection morning. . . .

“On that day we shall have final closure, ‘when death is swallowed up in victory’ (1 Corinthians 15:54).”—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, pp. 325, 226.

the pit 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; Revelation 16:13, 14, KJV)

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 praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into



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

"More than 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).**

"Now 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).**

further insight

"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions."—Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 188

"God has given the world sufficient light to enable them to discover the snare."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 556

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Ecclesiastes 9:5.

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.

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

Sunday

Read Genesis 3:4.

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

Read Psalm 146:4.

The Key Text and today's reading 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

Read Romans 6:23.

Humanity suffers death because of Adam and Eve's sin. They both gave into temptation and because of their actions all of humanity 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

Read John 11:1-15.

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

Read 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

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?

How does the concept of what happens when we die impact my relationship with Jesus and others?

Friday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:15-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

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? How did today's reading encourage you as you thought about death?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 33, 34.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER 07 2026

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

true power



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"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).

keytext

"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, . . . He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

(2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, NIV)

what do you think?

Based on what qualities do nonbelievers rank leaders?

Based on what qualities do Christians rank or value leaders? How do you evaluate people? How would you like to be evaluated by others?

did you know?

Brilliance of style is not necessarily an index of pure, elevated thought. High conceptions of art, delicate refinement of taste, often exist in minds that are earthly and sensual. They are often employed by Satan to lead men to forget the necessities of the soul,

to lose sight of the future, immortal life, to turn away from their infinite Helper, and to live for this world alone" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 567).

"The religion of Christ needs not such attractions to recommend it. In the light shining from the cross, true Christianity appears so pure and lovely that no external decorations can enhance its true worth. It is the beauty of holiness, a meek and quiet spirit, which is of value with God" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 566, 567).

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?'

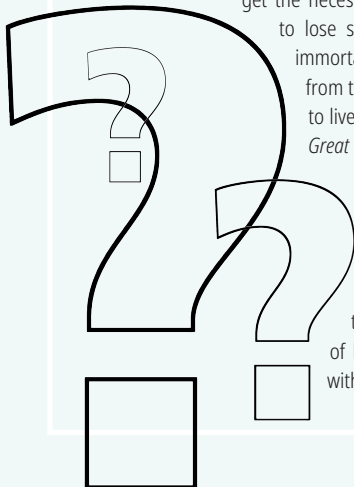
"The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme

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)



OUT OF THE STORY

Circle all the animals mentioned in this prophecy.

Underline every reference to worship.

Put a star next to every reference to “power.”

What do you think is the main verse in this passage? Why?

Write the key thought of this passage that is unmistakably clear:

Note the reference to the leopard, the bear, and the lion in verse 2. Now compare this to the symbolism used in Daniel 7. With the help of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, research what governmental powers these beasts represented. How do these powers compare to the powers represented by the statue in Daniel 2? Why do you think John references these powers in reverse order from Daniel?

There are four references in this chapter to “the dragon.” Read Revelation 12:7-9 to identify the dragon. Who fought against the dragon? With what results?

By just reading verses 17 and 18, what do you know about the mark of the beast and the number 666?

Compare verse 18 with James 1:5. How can you find the wisdom needed to understand about the mark of the beast?

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**).

“**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**).

further insight

“**To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to them the rich treasures of the truth.**”

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 59

“**God can deliver by few as well as by many. He is honored not so much by the great numbers as by the character of those who serve Him.**”

—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 550

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

Discuss the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. What makes a person powerful? Who are the most powerful people for the cause of Christ today? Why?

Sunday

Read 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?
- What examples do you see today that might suggest movement toward a one-world government?

Monday

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

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

Tuesday

Read John 17:17.

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"? How can we plant our feet firmly on the foundation of truth?

Wednesday

Read the following Bible references and reflect on their meaning to you.

1 Peter 2:5, 9; Acts 5:12-29; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

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

What is our duty as Christians regardless of the circumstances and despite persecution?

Thursday

Read Mark 14:38.

Reflect on the following quote: "It is the beauty of holiness, a meek and quiet spirit, which is of value with God" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 567).

Friday

Read 1 Chronicles 29:12, 13.

How is your friendship with Jesus changing your character in His likeness?

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

What does this lesson have to teach me about worship?

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>. 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 14 2026

Scripture Story: Revelation 12:17; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3.

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

the world's worst terrorist



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"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).

keytext

"Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring—those who keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus."

(Revelation 12:17, NIV)

what do you think?

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 deception" (p. 588).

"Through spiritualism" (p. 589).

"Satan works through the elements also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls" (p. 588).

"He will bring disease and disaster" (p. 589).

did you know?

In 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 the gift of prophecy.

a new earth,
where righteousness
dwells.

INTO THE STORY

"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

"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?

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" (**Revelation 22:14, NIV**).

further insight

"The word of God, received into the soul, will be manifest in good works. Its results will be seen in a Christlike character and life."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 60

"We shall no longer live the common life of selfishness, but Christ will live in us. His character will be reproduced in our nature. Thus shall we bring forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 61

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Romans 10:9, 10.

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?

Sunday

Read 2 Peter 3:10-13.

Brainstorm a list of ways that you can "be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position" (verse 17, NIV).

Complete the following sentence in light of today's reading: Because Christ will return, Christians should _____

Monday

Read Revelation 12:17; Ephesians 6:10-12.

Read the *Key Text*. Reflect on the following excerpt from *The Great Controversy*, pages 582, 583.

"God's holy Word, which has been handed down to us at such a cost of suffering and blood, is but little valued. . . .

"Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians,

journalists—the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions—is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia."

Tuesday

Read Matthew 24:24.

Compare the comments in the *Flashlight* section with the warning of Jesus in Matthew 24:24. 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 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

Read Philippians 4:12, 13.

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

Friday

Read Revelation 12:17; 2 Chronicles 20:15.

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)?

* "Keep Sending Missionaries," *Baptist Press*, March 24, 2004.

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#.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 21 2026

Scripture Story: Daniel 6:3-10; Exodus 20:8-11.

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

discovering daily disciplines



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, *The Message*)

what do you think?

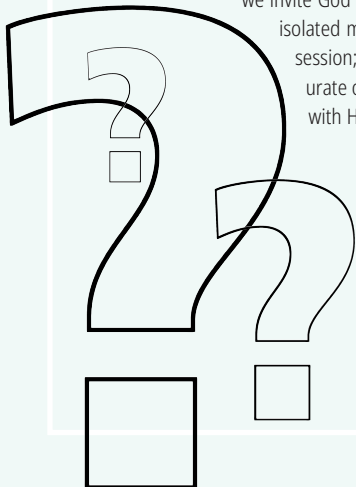
Jesus wants very badly to have an honest relationship with

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; Acts 10:9). There are people who structure their workday around times of prayer. Others make it a point to stop in the middle of their day to take time to pray.

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.



INTO THE STORY

"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 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 law 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)



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's decree. When is it appropriate for Christians to break the law?

What was the cost of disobeying Darius's 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?

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**).

further insight

"Unceasing prayer is the unbroken union of the soul with God, so that life from God flows into our life; and from our life, purity and holiness flow back to God."

—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 98

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read John 20:27-29.

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 Romans 12:1, 2.

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?

Monday

Read Psalm 119:9-16.

Read the *Key Text*. What does this verse teach us about the importance of relationship in obedience? How does having a

relationship with God keep obedience from being mere works?

Tuesday

Read Hebrews 13:7.

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 2 Timothy 4:3-5.

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 _____

Proverbs 3:13-18 _____

Jeremiah 17:7, 8 _____

Ephesians 5:15-20 _____

Thursday

Read Colossians 3:2.

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.

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#.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 28 2026

Scripture Story: Revelation 18:1-14.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 38.

run for your life



Photo by A. Truman

flashlight

"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).

keytext

"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)

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 |
| C. Lot | 3. Jonah 3:4, 5 |
| D. Nineveh | 4. Genesis 6:5 |

did you know?

The 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 revelations of the end of time and John wrote the book of Revelation.

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 dwelling place 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 double for her. 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.

“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 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. 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)

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?

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**).

further insight

"So the followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God's word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 414

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

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

Read Revelation 18:3.

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?

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 Revelation 18:4, 5.

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

Read Exodus 20:1-17.

This 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.

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

Read Isaiah 44:3, 4.

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.

In today's reading we see the harvest imag-

ery at work. Why does God want to rain down His Holy Spirit on you as Jesus prepares to return to earth?

Thursday

Read James 3:17.

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

Read 1 John 1:8-2:2.

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?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 38.

**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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 05 2026

Scripture Story: John 20:1-18.

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

the time of trouble



Photo by The Crystal Lenz

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 do you think?

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 | ☐ Hopeful |
| ☐ Fear | ☐ Grateful |
| ☐ Joy | ☐ Sick |
| ☐ Relieved | ☐ Ready |
| ☐ Stressed | ☐ Sinful |
| ☐ Unprepared | |

Why did you choose the ones you did?

did you know?

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.

INTO THE STORY

"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."

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

"And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.'

"But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!'

"So He said to him, 'What is your name?'

"He said, 'Jacob.'

"And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with

God and with men, and have prevailed.'

"Then Jacob asked, saying, 'Tell me Your name, I pray.'

"And He said, 'Why is it that you ask about My name?' And He blessed him there.

"So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.'"

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.'

"Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

"You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked."

(Revelation 22:11; Genesis 32:24-30; Psalm 91:1-8, 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?

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**).

further insight

"Such will be the experience of God's people in their final struggle with the powers of evil. . . . They will have a deep sense of their shortcomings, and as they review their lives their hopes will sink." But "they will lay hold of the strength of God, as Jacob laid hold of the Angel."

—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 202

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Luke 22:39-44.

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.

How did Jesus prepare for His death? From today's reading answer the questions below.

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?

Sunday

Read Revelation 22:11.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, explore the passage by answering the *Out of the Story* questions.

Why do you think our reading today is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible?

After the death of Jesus, the Jewish temple worship was obsolete. Jesus had become the sacrifice slain for humanity's sins. Yet, the Jews continued to worship at the Temple as though nothing had changed, though they had rejected the Savior.

What special work will God do before He seals our fate? (Revelation 14:7)

Monday

Read Daniel 12:1

This week's *Key Text* was written by Daniel, hundreds of years before the apostle John wrote down the visions he received from God while imprisoned on the island of Patmos.

Daniel was himself coming out of a crisis when he received his end-time vision. What do you think Daniel means when he says, "At that time Michael shall stand up"?

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)

Tuesday

Read Revelation 16.

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?

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?

Wednesday

Read each of this week's *Punch Lines* very carefully and apply them to your life.

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)

Timothy was still a young man when Paul wrote to him. What message was Paul attempting to give Timothy?

What does Luke 6:25 tell us about the reality of living in a sinful world?

Isn't it good to know that God will be with us through it all?

Thursday

Ephesians 6:10-19.

List the specific tools that God has given His people in their battle with the devil:

Are you dressed for battle?

Friday

Read Isaiah 41:10; 1 Corinthians 16:13.

Someone once noted that "Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared." Are you still afraid of the time of trouble? Not sure that you'll be able to stand up for what's right? Why not tell God that right now?

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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 12 2026

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

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

the end of the world as we know it



flashlight

"The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Savior'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).

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."

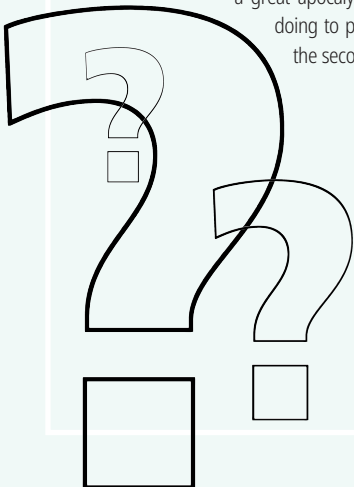
(Daniel 12:1, 2, NIV)

what do you think?

What does “soon” mean to you? We always hear that Jesus is coming “soon.” 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?

Some people suggested that a meteor would hit our planet and flip the magnetic poles, causing mass destruction. 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. What are we doing to prepare each day for the second coming of Jesus?



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 away 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; Revelation 7:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; John 14:1-4, 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?

punch lines

"But of that day and hour no one knows, 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 to 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 shown 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).**

further insight

"To His faithful followers Christ has been a daily companion and familiar friend. They have lived in close contact, in constant communion with God. . . . In them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has been reflected. . . . They are prepared for the communion of heaven; for they have heaven in their hearts."

—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 421

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Peter 3:9.

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 when 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

Read Psalm 51.

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

Read Daniel 12:1, 2.

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

Read John 3:16, 17.

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

Read Matthew 22:36-40.

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

Read 1 John 2:3.

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

Read 2 Peter 3:18.

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?

this week’s reading*

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

**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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 19 2026

Scripture Story: 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 41.

wiping the slate clean



Photo by Colleen Cahill

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)

what do you think?

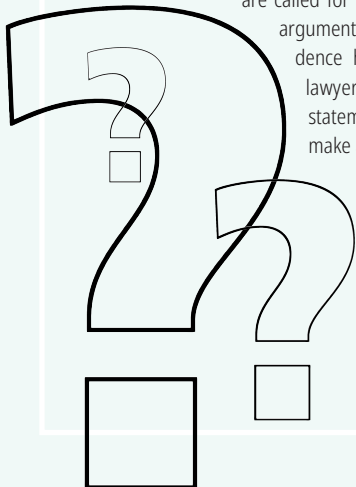
How fair is God? Have you ever questioned God's fairness?

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?

- ☐ A teen dies young from a driving accident.
- ☐ A good person wins the lottery.
- ☐ An unethical business person becomes increasingly wealthy.
- ☐ A country experiences a natural disaster and thousands die.
- ☐ The devil was not destroyed immediately.

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, 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.



INTO THE STORY

“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 they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

(Revelation 20, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

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?

punch lines

"And try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it" (**Malachi 3:10, NKJV**).

"God then confronted Job directly: 'Now what do you have to say for yourself? Are you going to haul me, the Mighty One, into court and press charges?'" (**Job 40:1, 2, The Message**).

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him" (**Psalms 34:8, NIV**).

"I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (**Psalms 34:4, NIV**).

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" (**Psalms 32:7, NIV**).

further insight

"By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of the Ages*, p. 764

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Psalm 86:5.

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 1 Corinthians 6:2.

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

Read 2 Peter 3:10.

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 heartbreak, 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

Read Psalm 7:9; Psalm 44:21.

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

Read Matthew 24:43, 44.

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

Read Psalm 19:14.

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.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 26, 2026

earth's makeover

Scripture Story: Revelation 15:1-4; Revelation 20:7-15; Revelation 21; Revelation 22.

Commentary: *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).

keytext

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.' "

(Revelation 21:2, 3, NIV)

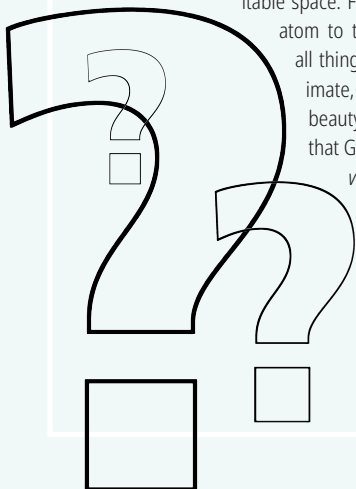
what do you think?

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. We can experience heaven today. A NS D
4. Heaven is open to everyone. A NS D

did you know?

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).



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)



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?

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” (**Psalms 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**).

further insight

“In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammelled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found.”

—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 309

connectingtolife

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:

Revelation 4:1-6	Revelation 21:15-21
Revelation 4:6-11	Revelation 21:22-27
Revelation 5:1-5	Revelation 22:1-5
Revelation 5:6-14	Matthew 8:12
Revelation 6:8	Luke 16:19-31
Revelation 7:16, 17	Matthew 25:41
Revelation 19:1-10	2 Peter 2:4
Revelation 20:10-15	Jude 6
Revelation 21:1-8	2 Thessalonians 1:9
Revelation 21:9-14	Mark 12:25-27

Sunday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

After reading the passage in the *Into the Story* section, prayerfully reflect on the following words:

"The life on earth is the beginning of the life in heaven; education on earth is an initiation into the principles of heaven; the lifework here is a training for the lifework there. What we now are, in character and holy service, is the sure foreshadowing of what we shall be" (*Education*, p. 307).

What will you choose?

Monday

Read Revelation 21:2, 3.

Read the *Key Text*. Consider the following ideas that pastor and author Max Lucado talks about:

"When the great Russian writer Maxim Gorky visited the United States, he was taken to Coney Island one weekend. His hosts took him on all kinds of thrill rides. . . .

"At the end of what seemed like a perfect day, they asked Gorky how he'd liked it.

"The writer was silent for a moment. Then he

said, 'What a sad people you must be!'

"Gorky was right. Any society that bases its very existence on the 'cheap thrills' of the moment must be a sad society indeed.

"Jesus offers something so much better for us. . . .

"There is no greater joy than knowing that we are in the center of God's will. There is no greater happiness than knowing we are pleasing God. There is no greater satisfaction than the genuine satisfaction that comes from sharing His love with some other human being.

"The happiness Jesus gives us is lasting . . . which will continue until the day He comes to take you home." (Adapted from Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, pp. 384-385.)

Complete this sentence: When I see Jesus face-to-face, I will

Tuesday

Read Psalm 16:11.

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)
- New lifestyle (Isaiah 65:21, 23)
- New worship (Isaiah 66:22, 23)

Thursday

Read 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10.

Ellen White once wrote, "Even in this life we may catch glimpses of His presence and may taste the joy of communion with Heaven, but the fullness of its joy and blessing will be reached in the hereafter" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 602).

In light of Ellen White's statement, is it possible to experience heaven today? If so, how? See also *Further Insight*.

Friday

Read Isaiah 65:17.

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 are you preparing today for spending an eternity with Him?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 42.

**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.