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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

3RD QUARTER 2026



Commitment Under Fire

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Youth Sabbath School Bible Study Guide

cornerstone connections

REAL. SOLID. STORIES.

3rd Quarter 2026

Commitment Under Fire

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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

3RD QUARTER 2026

July

4—A High Price for Faith [p. 5]

The early Christians faced nightmarish circumstances in order to stand for their faith. But their relationship with God was so strong that it gave them courage to face the worst.

11—The Bible and You [p. 9]

One of the greatest crimes during the Dark Ages was that of owning a Bible. But God had a remnant then—and now—who value and guard His Word.

18—Light of the World [p. 13]

Have you ever thought that God's Word is merely a collection of irrelevant muck? A dull read? Think again!

25—Standing for the Right [p. 17]

Even men such as Martin Luther, the great Reformer, struggled with their faith. No matter who we are, God has the ability to reform us into spiritual giants to accomplish His grand purposes.

August

1—Great Humility [p. 21]

God often chooses the humblest people to accomplish the most extraordinary things. This was true for the Reformers, and it's still true for us today.

8—Swimming Upstream [p. 25]

Peer pressure is unavoidable. And it doesn't stop after high school. But it can be positive if we decide what we want out of life and then hang around people who will help us get there.

15—Commitment Under Fire [p. 29]

Often our problems are so bad that we try to pretend they don't exist. But acknowledging their existence and God's power over them can make all the difference!

22—Two Witnesses [p. 33]

A witness is someone who testifies to what they have seen and heard. Two witnesses give even greater clarity. What impact have the witnesses of God's Word made in your life?

29—Lift Up Your Head [p. 37]

Walking with our heads down can make it so we can't see clearly enough, and we could run into something! How much more important is it to lift our heads to see spiritual things?

September

5—You Are Gifted [p. 41]

Too few of us understand what it means to receive God's spiritual gifts and talents. It isn't a privilege. It's a responsibility.

12—Final Warning! [p. 45]

The early Advent believers sold everything, and waited in their homes and on hillsides for the coming of Jesus. What are we willing to do in order to give a final warning message to the world?

19—Cleaning Up [p. 49]

The ancient Jewish sanctuary service was messy—blood everywhere. But the hope that it offered ancient Israel is the same hope that it offers us today.

26—The Imprisonment of Truth [p. 53]

The Sabbath has always been controversial. And if you are a Sabbath-keeper, then sometime in your life you're bound to have this belief challenged. But what is the best defense?



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 04 2026

Scripture Story: Matthew 24; 2 Timothy 3:12.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 1, 2.

a high price for faith



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"The mysterious providence which permits the righteous to suffer persecution at the hand of the wicked has been a cause of great perplexity to many who are weak in faith. Some are even ready to cast away their confidence in God. . . . God has given us sufficient evidence of His love, and we are not to doubt His goodness because we cannot understand the workings of His providence. . . . Jesus suffered for us more than any of His followers can be made to suffer through the cruelty of wicked men" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 47).

keytext

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns."

(Matthew 24:45, 46, NIV)

what do you think?

Look at the list below and put each item in order of what is

most important to you. Which would you be willing to die for?

- ___ Theological doctrines
- ___ Your personal faith
- ___ Your family
- ___ Your friends
- ___ Your civil rights
- ___ Your country
- ___ Someone else's rights
- ___ Stopping the suffering of another person

Which things top your personal list and why? Which things would you not be willing to die for?

did you know?

Persecution as it was known to the early Christians does not exist in North America today. We oftentimes think of ourselves as persecuted when someone disagrees with us or declines to give us a job if we aren't able to work on Sabbath. (That's more accurately described as religious discrimination.) But the kind of persecution that the early believers endured was different. They faced death—horrible, brutal deaths.

In other parts of the world Christians still face persecution in its truest sense. They risk their lives and the lives of their families in order to worship God. They are willing to die in order to follow the law of God. Now, *that* is devotion!

(To see what the Adventist Church is doing to fight religious discrimination and persecution, visit <http://parl.gc.adventist.org>.)

INTO THE STORY

“As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’

“Jesus answered: ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, “I am the Messiah,” and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn

away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all nations, and then the end will come. . . .

“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

(Matthew 24:3-14, 30-39, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Jesus gave the disciples the information that He did?

What does this tell us about the kind of relationship they shared with Jesus? How did they achieve this kind of communication? How can we?

How was this information important to the people in Jesus' day? How is it important for us today?

How do you think it would be possible for someone to deceive God's people?

The text tells us that no one except the Father knows when Jesus will return. Why do you think people try to figure out the exact time of His return?

How are things today like "in the days of Noah"?

As you read this passage, do you find it frightening to think about the end times and the hard times described? Why or why not?

punch lines

"Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me" (Psalm 50:15, NIV).

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4, NIV).

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants" (Psalm 116:15, NIV).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" (Romans 8:35, NIV).

"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown" (Revelation 2:10, NIV).

further insight

"The sufferings which they endured brought Christians nearer to one another and to their Redeemer."—Ellen G. White, *The Great*

Controversy, p. 42

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Revelation 2:10.

This text says that those who are “faithful, even to the point of death” will receive a heavenly reward. What things in life are you willing to die for? Why would you be willing to die for them? Look at the list in the *What Do You Think?* section and be honest with yourself—would you be willing to die for any of these things?

There are many jobs in our society that have a very high risk factor. List three occupations in which people risk their lives. Beside each occupation, write how you feel about their sacrifice.

Sunday

Read Matthew 24.

Jesus’ disciples asked Him what the signs of the last days would be. What Jesus told them was a double prophecy. On one level Jesus was warning them of the impending destruction of Jerusalem to happen in A.D. 70. It would be horrific, and Jesus wanted His people to be able to escape. Ellen White tells us that none of the Christians died in that siege because they had been watching for the signs Jesus gave. On another level Jesus was telling them a brief outline of Christianity and what events would happen before His coming—the actual question His disciples had been asking. Why do you think Jesus gave them information in this way? Do you think they could have handled Jesus’ torture and death, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the last days all at once? What do you think this tells us about how God communicates with us?

Monday

Read Matthew 24:45, 46.

When we think about Jesus coming again, we wonder if we are ready. At

the end of Matthew 24 Jesus tells a parable about a master who goes away and leaves a servant in charge of feeding the other servants. When the master returns, it will be good for the servant who is found doing just as he was told to do.

Identify three things that you believe God wants you to be doing right now in your life. They don’t have to be anything monumental. The servant in the parable was left in charge of the menu plan! Now look at those three things. What is important about them? How dedicated are you to doing those things, even if it gets difficult?

Tuesday

Read Revelation 2:10.

Look through a newspaper or an online news source today and note all the stories about suffering. What sorts of stories do you see? Why good people suffer is a question people have wrestled with since the beginning of time. For each story of suffering you find, think about how God might be working in the lives of the people experiencing such hard times. Refer back to yesterday’s *Key Text*. What might God be asking you to do to care for the people around you?

Wednesday

Read Romans 8:35.

Thinking about what the early Christians endured is pretty unsettling. It isn’t typical human nature to face death on principle. Look at each of the *Punch Lines* texts. Beside each one write down the hope that it offers. Where do you think the early Christians got their strength to face death for their faith? What could God’s presence with them have done to turn a horrific nightmare into a heroic stand?

Thursday

Read Psalm 116:15.

We might not have to face death for our faith in Jesus, but we do face opposition. In what ways can you find courage from the experience of the early Christians to stand for what you believe in?

Pray today that God will not only show you what He wants you to do for Him, but also give you the courage to do it!

Friday

Read Psalm 23:4.

God is real! Do you think that the early Christians would have been willing to face death if they did not feel His presence with them in a very real way? What is your experience with God like? Is God an idea? an ideal? a set of rules? If you don’t experience God in your life in a very real way, you are missing out on something exciting and empowering! How real is God to you? How real do you want Him to be?

this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 1, 2.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at <http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s>. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 11 2026

Scripture Story: Daniel 7:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7; Revelation 12:6.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 3, 4.

the Bible and you



cornerstoneconnections 6

flashlight

"Satan well knew that the Holy Scriptures would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the Word that even the Savior of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault, Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, 'It is written'" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 51).

keytext

"For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way."

(2 Thessalonians 2:7, NIV)

what do you think?

Answer these questions as quickly as you can:

1. Where is your Bible right now?

2. When did you last read your Bible?

3. What is your favorite Bible passage?

4. How much would you sell your Bible for if you were offered cash right now?

did you know?

Before the invention of the printing press, it took a skilled writer about 10 months to produce a copy of the Bible. Anyone who wanted a Bible must wait almost a year to receive their purchase. In today's standards, the writer would be paid at the rate of any other skilled laborer, possibly \$15-\$20 per hour. If that laborer worked five days a week, eight hours a day, that would make your Bible cost \$24,000!

But wait . . . we aren't considering the cost of keeping a business open. A business never charges you only the fee to pay the basic salary of the employee who is working on your Bible. The fee is much higher to compensate for electricity, taxes, office space, etc. When you get your car fixed, you don't pay the \$20/hr for the mechanic; you pay \$50-\$75/hr to cover all of the other costs as well. If we apply that to your Bible, it could cost as much as \$96,000!

(<https://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/library/article/id/615/how-much-is-bible-worth-to-you.htm>, accessed July 16, 2025.)

taken out of
the way.”

“The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.”

(Daniel 7:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7; Revelation 12:6, NIV)

INTO THE STORY

“He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.”

“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, the man doomed to destruction. 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.

“Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is



OUT OF THE STORY

How do these passages describe the Dark Ages of European history?

When a religious organization sets itself up as having the same power as God Himself, what would that do to the people who were governed by it?

Why do you think God told us ahead of time that these things would happen?

What do you think is the “secret power of lawlessness”?

What are the “set times” and “laws” that this power would try to change?

Is it possible to have an organization that started out with pure intentions, became corrupt with power, but still has good, God-fearing people within it? Explain.

Who or what does the woman represent? How did God take care of her? How will He take care of us?

punch lines

“Don’t suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God’s Law or the Prophets. I’m not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God’s Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God’s Law will be alive and working” (**Matthew 5:17, 18, *The Message***).

“You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the Lord your God” (**Leviticus 24:22, NIV**).

“Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety” (**Leviticus 25:18, 19, NIV**).

“By your words I can see where I’m going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path” (**Psalm 119:105, *The Message***).

further insight

“In like manner He had established His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and upon earth. The arm of man might reach his fellow men and destroy their lives; but that arm could as readily uproot the mountains from their foundations, and hurl them into the sea, as it could change one precept of the law of Jehovah, or blot out one of His promises to those who do His will.”

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 66

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Psalm 119:105.

We are used to having free and easy access to the Bible. The Bible is used in literature, in poetry, in government, and even in comedy. Most of us have several Bibles in our homes. Bibles are given out for free by churches. Bible verses are displayed on billboards. Count how many Bibles you have in your home right now. Look at how many Bible versions you have available online. If you suddenly had no access to a Bible—not online, in your home, in the library, or in churches—would you miss it? Would you want one? Or would you not notice its absence? Psalm 119:105 says: “By your words I can see where I’m going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path” (*The Message*). How might your Bible guide you today? (Remember, you have Notes pages in the back of your study guide to write longer answers.)

Sunday

Read Romans 15:4.

It is said that absolute power corrupts absolutely. In the Dark Ages, the Catholic Church wielded absolute power over the population of Europe. Corrupt leaders were more interested in controlling people than they were in teaching them. Without access to the Bible, the people had no way of knowing the truth about God.

Next to these mistakes the common people made without the Bible to guide them, write down what these ideas would make them think about God.

1. God changed the Sabbath to a different day.
2. The church has absolute authority equal to God's, and can decide if you are saved or lost.
3. You must earn forgiveness either by paying money or by doing repetitive tasks.

4. The Bible is too complicated to be understood by regular people and must be read only by religious leaders.

Do you even *like* that kind of God?

Monday

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

The *Key Text* refers to the “secret power of lawlessness” that was already at work right after Jesus left earth to go to heaven. How has the idea that God’s law no longer matters been insinuated into our lives today? The idea that “rules were made to be broken” is a very dangerous one. Watch the news tonight. Make a list of every “broken rule” that you can see throughout the program. Look at them separately and see how innocent they look, and then consider the repercussions. What ways do you think you can assert your independence and unique perspective without going against the law of God?

Tuesday

Read Psalm 31:24.

Ellen White points out in *Flashlight* that Jesus used the Scriptures to fight off the temptations of the devil. Sometimes we think of the devil’s temptations as obvious, such as stealing something or killing someone. However, the devil is smarter than that. He comes at us with fear, despondency, loneliness, and rage. The Bible is not a book of rules; it’s a book of promises and hope, and the devil doesn’t want us to have access to its power.

Start a journal today, writing down every promise that you find in the Bible. Look back on it often. Memorize the verses that have special meaning to you. Next time you feel like the world is against you, pull out your Bible and your journal, and see what a difference God’s Word makes in difficult times!

Wednesday

A common belief out there is that after Jesus died on the cross God’s law no longer mattered. Look at the verses in *Punch Lines*. Does this seem to be the case? In fact, there are promises that our lives will be richer and happier for having followed God’s guidelines. Look up the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. Are there any of God’s laws that you think don’t matter? Why do you think they might still matter today? How would they improve our lives? If Jesus’ death really erased these laws, are we free to do all these things?

Thursday

Read Deuteronomy 31:12.

How do you read your Bible? Do you just read a verse here or there? Do you take your parents’ or your teachers’ word on what the Bible is saying in the bigger picture? Here is a challenge: make it a point to read your Bible cover-to-cover and see for yourself what is in there! Once you see all of it, you’ll never be the same again. Guaranteed.

Friday

Read 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

How does the Bible affect *your* life? How could it improve your life? If Christians in the Dark Ages would pay the equivalent of \$100,000 in today’s currency for one copy of the Bible, what do you think is in there that is worth so much?

this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 3, 4.

**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

JULY 18 2026

Scripture Story: Psalm 119:105; Matthew 10:17-22.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 5, 6.

light of the world



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flashlight

"The character of Wycliffe is a testimony to the educating, transforming power of the Holy Scriptures. It was the Bible that made him what he was. The effort to grasp the great truths of revelation imparts freshness and vigor to all the faculties. It expands the mind, sharpens the perceptions, and ripens the judgment. The study of the Bible will ennoble every thought, feeling, and aspiration as no other study can. It gives stability of purpose, patience, courage, and fortitude; it refines the character and sanctifies the soul" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 94).

keytext

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

(Psalm 119:105, NIV)

what do you think?

Choose a wall in the room. The far right-hand side of the wall

represents the answer “One hundred percent absolutely YES!” The far left side of the wall represents the answer “One hundred percent absolutely, unequivocally NO!” Respond to the following statements by standing somewhere along the continuum of the wall to reflect your answer.

When people read the Bible, they should—

- believe and follow what it says.
- believe and follow what their pastor tells them it means.
- study carefully and then obey the teachings that are clear.
- look for principles rather than rules.

did you know?

The Bible's uniqueness does not come from its unparalleled political, cultural, and social influence, but from its source and its subject matter. It is God's revelation of the unique God-man: the Son of God, Jesus Christ—the Savior of the world” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 11).

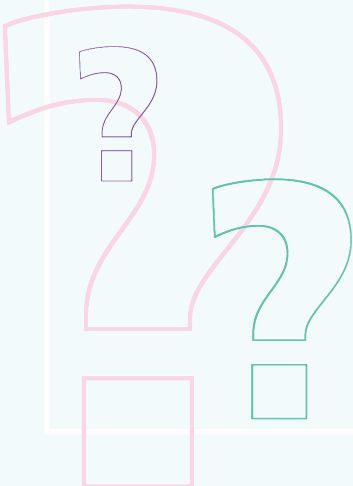
INTO THE STORY

**“Your word is a lamp
for my feet, a light on my
path.”**

“Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

(Psalm 119:105; Matthew 10:17-22, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Read Psalm 119:105 and then compare it with the following verses:

- Proverbs 30:5
- Luke 11:28
- 2 Timothy 3:15, 16
- Hebrews 4:12

What is the one major theme that emerges from the five texts?

What do these verses have to say to you personally?

How might you benefit by increasing the time you spend reading your Bible?

Read the entire chapter of Matthew 10. Reflect on the following questions: How does the context of the story of Jesus sending out the 12 disciples illuminate verses 17-22?

Is this passage more relevant, less relevant, or equally relevant for followers of Jesus today? Explain.

How do the inevitable trials that Jesus warned us about impact a person's faith?

punch lines

"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (**Joshua 1:8, 9, NIV**).

"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (**Ephesians 6:13-18, NIV**).

"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (**Luke 11:28, NIV**).

further insight

"The maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience; in other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 102

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Romans 10:17.

Review your ideas about the Bible in the *What Do You Think?* section. Expand the activity by using the same wall as a continuum to share your opinion on the following statements:

- Every word in the Bible is inspired.
- The Bible contains a lot of good, practical advice such as the golden rule.
- The Bible is more about rules than relationships.

Sunday

Use the video and/or camera feature of your cell phone to capture stories of church members that illustrate the Bible verses for this lesson. Use the following questions in your interview and then share these stories (along with pictures and/or videos) with the rest of your Sabbath School class.

• Psalm 119:105

In what ways has the Bible been a light to your pathway in life?

What is your favorite verse in the Bible and why?

Other than "light," what metaphors would you use to describe the Bible?

• Matthew 10:17-22

Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? If so, what happened?

Have you ever felt "the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10:20)? What happened?

What has God taught you through the adversities and trials of life?

Monday

Read Psalm 119:105.

Review the *Key Text* and then consider this commentary on the passage from the *Life Application Study Bible*:

"To walk safely in the woods at night we need a light so we don't trip over tree roots or fall into holes. In this life, we walk through a dark forest of evil. But the Bible

can be our light to show us the way ahead so we won't stumble as we walk. It reveals the entangling roots of false values and philosophies. Study the Bible so you will be able to see your way clear enough to stay on the right path."²

Tuesday

Read 1 John 2:5.

Compare and contrast Ellen White's statement in the *Flashlight* section with this quotation:

"In the Bible are found the only safe principles of action. It is a transcript of the will of God, an expression of divine wisdom. It opens to man's understanding the great problems of life, and to all who heed its precepts it will prove an unerring guide, keeping them from wasting their lives in misdirected effort" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 506).

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines*. Compile the commands included in the verses by writing the top 10 commandments found in Joshua 1:8, 9; Luke 11:28; and Ephesians 6:13-18.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Thursday

Read 1 Timothy 4:12.

After reading chapters 5 and 6 of *The Great Controversy*, reflect on the main characters of the chapters. Ask yourself:

- What do I most admire about John Wycliffe? Why?

- What do I most admire about John Huss? Why?
- What do I most admire about Jerome? Why?
- What lessons do these three great Reformers have to teach me? (Remember, you have Notes pages in the back of your study guide to write longer answers.)

Friday

Read 1 Peter 2:21.

Reflect on the closing thoughts of chapter 6 in *The Great Controversy*:

"Steadfast to the gospel, the Bohemians waited through the night of their persecution, in the darkest hour still turning their eyes toward the horizon like men who watch for the morning. Their lot was cast in evil days, but . . . they remembered the words first uttered by Huss, and repeated by Jerome, that a century must revolve before the day should break. These were to the Taborites [Hussites] what the words of Joseph were to the tribes in the house of bondage: "I die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out" ' " (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 119).

Pray over this question: "God, when I face trials and persecution, how can I have the resolve of a martyr?"

¹ Brian Lowery, managing editor, *PreachingToday.com*; source: The Barna Update, "Americans Identify What They Consider 'Holy' Books," July 7, 2008.

² *Life Application Study Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), p. 1041.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 5, 6.

**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

JULY 25 2026

Scripture Story: Romans 1–3; John 15:19, 20.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 7, 8.

standing for the right



Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

“The fear of the Lord dwelt in the heart of Luther, enabling him to maintain his steadfastness of purpose and leading him to deep humility before God. He had an abiding sense of his dependence upon divine aid, and he did not fail to begin each day with prayer, while his heart was continually breathing a petition for guidance and support. ‘To pray well,’ he often said, ‘is the better half of study’” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 122).

keytext

“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”

(Romans 1:17, NIV)

what do you think?

Conduct a survey asking respondents what percentage

(0-100) of truth they would ascribe to each statement. Invite your friends to conduct the survey as well. Calculate the average for each answer. Compare and discuss your findings with your friends' results.

What percentage of truth would you give to each statement?

- ___ There is no absolute truth.
- ___ We can get to heaven through an equal combination of faith and works.
- ___ Christianity is a cause worth dying for.
- ___ The Bible contains mistakes, but it is still the Word of God.
- ___ People are better Christians today than they were in the past.

did you know?

When Martin Luther married, neither he nor his bride, Katherine von Bora, felt "in love." Katherine was still getting over a broken engagement to a man she truly loved. Martin admitted, "I am not 'in love' or burning with desire." Yet their love for one another and for others flourished throughout their 20-year marriage.

They regularly took in so many sick and dying people, their house had to be quarantined long after the plague of 1527 ended. In 1541 a transient woman came to their home.

Martin and Katherine fed and housed her, only to discover she had lied and stolen. Even on his wedding night, Luther couldn't refuse a person in need.

At 11:00 p.m., after all the guests had left, Radical Reformer Andreas Karlstadt knocked at the door. Largely because Luther fiercely opposed him, Karlstadt had fled town. But now, when Karlstadt was fleeing the Peasants' War and needed shelter, Luther took him in.¹

INTO THE STORY

"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

"But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."

This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."

(John 15:19, 20; Romans 1:16, 17; Romans 3:21-31, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think the world hates Jesus and His followers? What does it mean to “belong” to Jesus?

What do these passages teach us about the Christian faith?

What do these passages teach us about the experience of salvation?

How do these passages inform us about the gospel?

What is it about the gospel that would make someone ashamed of it? How have you addressed that in your life?

What is the relationship between keeping the law and being saved?

The book of Romans was life-changing for Martin Luther. Why do you think this was the case? Are the concepts in Romans equally life-transforming for you? If so, why? If not, why not?

punch lines

“See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (**Habakkuk 2:4, NIV**).

“For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people” (**1 Peter 2:15, NIV**).

“An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies” (**Proverbs 12:17, NIV**).

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (**Acts 3:19, NIV**).

“Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!” (**Hebrews 12:1-3, The Message**).

further insight

“The spirit of the world is no more in harmony with the spirit of Christ today than in earlier times, and those who preach the Word of God in its purity will be received with no greater favor now than then.”—Ellen G. White, *The*

Great Controversy, p. 144

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read John 8:32.

After doing the survey in the *What Do You Think?* section, meet with friends who also surveyed others and discuss the following questions:

- What was the most interesting response you got? Why?
- Which statement got the most diverse answers? Which one got the most similar responses? How would you explain the responses?
- Suppose you surveyed Martin Luther. What percentages do you think he would have given to each statement?
- How did the average percentages for each statement compare with your own answers?

Sunday

Read Romans 1-3 and reflect: How have I been set aside for the gospel? What does this mean for me today? (Remember, you have Notes pages in the back of your study guide to write longer answers.)

In what areas does my faith need to be strengthened? What can I do today to strengthen my faith?

If God were to ask me, “Why should I let you into heaven?” how would I respond?

How would I explain the true meaning of Christian faith to an unbeliever?

If I had to explain the gospel solely based on Romans 1-3, what would I say?

Monday

Read Romans 1:17.

Review the *Key Text* and then consider this scenario detailed in Mark Finley’s book *Solid Ground*.

Two men confronted each other. One a prison guard, Grecu, and the other a prisoner, Richards Wurmbbrand, who was pale and weak from weeks of torture.

Grecu yelled, “Enough! We know you have been communicating in code with the other prisoners. We want to know exactly what you have said. Here is some paper for you to write your confession.”

Richard knew anything he wrote could and likely would be twisted and used as evidence that he was a spy.

This is what he finally wrote: “I am a disciple of Christ, who has given us love for our enemies. I have never spoken against the Communists. I understand them and pray for their conversion so that they will become my brothers in faith.”

The guard’s heart was touched, and Richard’s confession led to many discussions about Jesus and the meaning of life.

No matter where you are, your testimony is a powerful witness of Christ’s love. Trust Him whatever your circumstances are. He is there for you and will use you to help others.²

What does it mean to you to have faith?

Tuesday

Read Habakkuk 2:4.

Compare and contrast Ellen White’s statement in the *Flashlight* section with this text: “See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (Habakkuk 2:4, NIV).

Wednesday

Choose one of the *Punch Lines* and incorporate it into a morning and evening prayer to use this week to begin and end your day.

Thursday

Read Ephesians 2:4-10.

How can I experience salvation today?

Friday

Read Romans 1:17.

How does this text compare to Hebrews 12:1-3? What do these texts tell you about “living by faith”?

¹ “Martin Luther—The Later Years and Legacy,” *Christian History*, Issue 39.

² Adapted from Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, pp. 288, 289.

this week’s reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 7, 8.

**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

AUGUST 01 2026

Scripture Story: Isaiah 57:15; James 4:6; Isaiah 41:10.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 9, 10.

great humility



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"The heavenly Teacher passed by the great men of the earth, the titled and wealthy, who were accustomed to receive praise and homage as leaders of the people. They were so proud and self-confident in their boasted superiority that they could not be molded to sympathize with their fellow men and to become collaborators with the humble Man of Nazareth. . . . The leading Reformers were men from humble life. . . . It is God's plan to employ humble instruments to accomplish great results" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 171).

keytext

"But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"

(James 4:6, NIV)

what do you think?

Circle the names of the following individuals that you think

are prideful. Discuss with your friends how you think their pride is shown.

- Regan mocks anyone who can't understand algebra as well as he can.
- Elizabeth wants everything in her life to be perfect—and complains when nothing goes right.
- Rafael refuses to apply himself in school, ignoring advice from his parents, teachers, and pastor.
- Natalie ignores her friends whenever there is something she thinks is more fun or important.
- Your coach ignores the feedback that you and your teammates try to give him.
- Rachael displays her straight-A report card on the refrigerator door.
- Carly is always showing off her latest electronic gadget.

did you know?

Urich Zwingli enjoyed music and played many instruments, including the violin, harp, flute, dulcimer, and hunting horn. He would entertain the kids in his congregation on his lute and was so well-known for his playing that his enemies mocked him as “the evangelical lute-player and fifer.” Although Zwingli’s hymns were not intended for music to be used in worship services, they were published in some sixteenth-century hymnals.¹

INTO THE STORY

“For this is what the high and exalted One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”

(Isaiah 57:15, NIV)

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

(Isaiah 41:10, NIV)

“But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’”

(James 4:6, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Write a paraphrase of the Bible verses from *Into the Story* and combine the key points into one verse:

Read Proverbs 16:5, 18, 19; Proverbs 27:2; and Proverbs 29:23. What is the result of pride in your life? Do these texts point out pride in your life?

Fill in the blank and discover God's strategy on how to be humble and happy:

1. Confess my _____
Proverbs 28:13 (NIV): "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

2. Be honest in my _____
Romans 12:3 (NIV): "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you."

3. Recognize the source of _____
1 Corinthians 4:7 (TLB): "What are you so puffed up about? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why act as though you are so great, and as though you have accomplished something on your own?"

4. Serve others like _____
Philippians 2:3-5 (NIV): "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

5. Allow God to _____
James 4:10 (TLB): "Then when you realize your worthlessness before the Lord, he will lift you up, encourage and help you."

punch lines

"Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate" (**Psalm 101:5, NIV**).

"The Lord preserves those who are true to him, but the proud he pays back in full" (**Psalm 31:23, NIV**).

"The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished" (**Proverbs 16:5, NIV**).

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

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 2:5, KJV**).

further insight

"The glory will not be given to men, but to Him who works through them to will and to do of His own good pleasure."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 171

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Proverbs 16:5.

Rank the people in the *What Do You Think?* section. Explain your reasoning behind your ranking.

Sunday

Revue the texts from *Into the Story*. Circle the text that you think is . . .

the easiest to understand:

Isaiah 57:15 James 4:6 Isaiah 41:10

the most comforting:

Isaiah 57:15 James 4:6 Isaiah 41:10

the strongest indictment against pride:

Isaiah 57:15 James 4:6 Isaiah 41:10

Review the steps to a humble and happy life in *Out of the Story*.

Would you suggest any other steps? If so, what?

Which step is the hardest for you to take? Why?

Monday

Read James 4:6-10.

Memorize the *Key Text* (James 4:6). Compare it to James 4:10. How does the following quote from E. G. White illuminate these two verses in James 4? "True humility will lead a man to exalt Christ and the truth, and to realize his utter dependence upon the God of truth" (*Lift Him Up*, p. 282).

Tuesday

Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

Compare and contrast Ellen White's statement in the *Flashlight* section with other statements she makes in chapters 9 and 10 in *The Great Controversy*.

Ellen White quoting Martin Luther: "May God of His mercy preserve me from a church in which there are none but saints. I desire to dwell with the humble, the feeble, the sick, who know and feel their sins, and who groan and cry continually to God from the bottom of their hearts to obtain His consolation and support" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 191).

"The contrast between the disciples of the gospel and the upholders of popish superstition was no less manifest in the ranks of scholars than among the common people. 'Opposed to the old champions of the hierarchy, who had neglected the study of languages and the cultivation of literature, . . . were generous-minded youth, devoted to study, investigating Scripture, and familiarizing themselves with the masterpieces of antiquity. Possessing an active mind, an elevated soul, and intrepid heart, these young men soon acquired such knowledge that for a long period none could compete with them. . . . Accordingly, when these youthful defenders of the Reformation met the Romish doctors in any assembly, they attacked them with such ease and confidence that these ignorant men hesitated, became embarrassed, and fell into a contempt merited in the eyes of all'" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 195, 196).

Wednesday

Read Psalm 31:23.

List the advantages of living with a humble spirit next to the disadvantages of living with a prideful spirit.

Advantages of humility	Disadvantages of pride
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Thursday

Read Philippians 2:5.

Reflect on this suggestion from Pastor Dwight Nelson: "Seek to become low and weak and nothing. Jump at the opportunity to serve someone else. You be the one to stop and help the driver with the flat tire. You give up your place in that checkout line for that impatient soul farther back. You be the one to miss your plane because the stranger at the gate is obviously sick and needs someone to get her to help. Do yourself what in the past you have delegated purely as a sign of your authority over a subordinate."²

Ask yourself: How can God create in me a spirit of humility?

Friday

Read Mark 12:30, 31.

Dwight Nelson writes: "The cross of Jesus is proof that humility is the shining pinnacle of God's character!"³ Do you agree or disagree? Why? How can you reflect the humility of God's character?

¹ Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huldrych_Zwingli.

² Dwight K. Nelson, *The Eleventh Commandment* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2001), pp. 34, 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 9, 10.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

AUGUST 08 2026

Scripture Story: Acts 5:25-42.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 11, 12.

swimming upstream



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flashlight

"The reformed princes had determined upon having a statement of their views in systematic form, with the evidence from the Scriptures, to present before the Diet; and the task of its preparation was committed to Luther, Melancthon, and their associates. . . . The Reformers were solicitous that their cause should not be confounded with political questions; they felt that the Reformation should exercise no other influence than that which proceeds from the word of God" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 206).

keytext

"Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings!'"

(Acts 5:29, NIV)

what do you think?

Look at the situations below. For each one, decide whether it is appropriate to go with public opinion or with your personal belief.

- Most people you know think that a particular guy is creepy and possibly dangerous. You don't really see it. He asks you to get together with him one evening.
- You have been invited to a party. You are excited to go until you hear that alcohol may be served. All your friends say, "It's no big deal. Just don't drink any."
- You don't really like a particular style of music, but all of your friends love it. They want you to go along to a concert.
- A group of fellow students are angry at a teacher for giving them low grades. You like the teacher and think that they aren't being fair; however, they seem to feel very strongly about their position. Do you say something?

did you know?

The Bible's authority for faith and practice rises from its origin. Its writers viewed the Bible as distinct from other literature. They referred to it as 'Holy Scriptures' (Romans 1:2), 'sacred writings' (2 Timothy 3:15, RSV), and the 'oracles of God' (Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12).

The uniqueness of the Scriptures is based on their origin and source. The Bible writers claimed they did not originate their messages but received them from divine sources. It was through divine revelation that they were able 'to see' the truths they passed on (see Isaiah 1:1; Amos 1:1; Micah 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Jeremiah 38:21)" (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 13).

INTO THE STORY

"Just then someone showed up and said, 'Did you know that the men you put in jail are back in the Temple teaching the people?' The chief and his police went and got them, but they handled them gently, fearful that the people would riot and turn on them.

"Bringing them back, they stood them before the High Council. The Chief Priest said, 'Didn't we give you strict orders not to teach in Jesus' name? And here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are trying your best to blame us for the death of this man.'

"Peter and the apostles answered, 'It's necessary to obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, the One you killed by hanging him on a cross. God set him on high at his side, Prince and Savior, to give Israel the gift of a changed life and sins forgiven.

And we are witnesses to these things. The Holy Spirit, whom God gives to those who obey him, corroborates every detail.'

"When they heard that, they were furious and wanted to kill them on the spot. But one of the council members stood up, a Pharisee by the name of Gamaliel, a teacher of God's Law who was honored by everyone. He ordered the men taken out of the room for a short time, then said, 'Fellow Israelites, be careful what you do to these men. Not long ago Theudas made something of a splash, claiming to be somebody, and got about four hundred men to join him. He was killed, his followers dispersed, and nothing came of it. A little later, at the time of the census, Judas the Galilean appeared and acquired a following. He also fizzled out and the people following him were scattered to the four winds.

"So I am telling you: Hands off these men! Let them alone. If this program or this work is merely human, it will fall apart, but if it is of God, there is nothing you can do about it—and you better not be found fighting against God!"

"That convinced them. They called the apostles back in. After giving them a thorough whipping, they warned them not to speak in Jesus' name and sent them off. The apostles went out of the High Council overjoyed because they had been given the honor of being dishonored on account of the Name. Every day they were in the Temple and homes, teaching and preaching Christ Jesus, not letting up for a minute."

(Acts 5:25-42, *The Message*)

OUT OF THE STORY

There is a lot of social pressure in this story. Both Peter and the Sanhedrin must deal with the opinions of the people. How do they deal differently?

Whose opinions matter most to the Sanhedrin? Whose opinions matter most to Peter and the apostles?

How does peer support give strength to either side of this conflict?

The Sanhedrin were *fearful* that the people would riot, so they handled the apostles "gently" How does fear keep us from obeying God? How can we combat fear?

Gamaliel stands up for Peter and the apostles. What is his argument? Do you agree with his point that groups of people, no matter how devoted to each other, are doomed to lose their bond if it isn't blessed by God?

punch lines

"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18, NIV).

"When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: 'Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?'" (Esther 4:12-14, NIV).

"Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother'" (Matthew 12:49, 50, NIV).

"A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me" (John 16:32, NIV).

"God sets the lonely in families" (Psalm 68:6, NIV).

further insight

"These faithful men acknowledged an authority above that of earthly rulers."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 202

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Ephesians 4:1-6.

Peer pressure isn't always a bad thing! Peer pressure can make people do good things that they wouldn't normally do as well as bad things. That is why God gave us a church. That's not to say that we should pressure each other, but the very fact that people around us hold certain values, do certain things, or talk a certain way rubs off on us. Everyone wants to belong, and we subtly change our behavior and manners in order to do so.

Make a list of four things that you would not normally do if it weren't for your church community or Christian friends encouraging you. How have these things affected your life for the better?

Sunday

Read Acts 5:38, 39.

In the *Into the Story* section, Peter and the apostles are pressured to stop preaching about Jesus. Gamaliel stands up to the Sanhedrin (his peers) in support of Peter. He has an interesting argument. He cites other charismatic leaders who have had significant numbers of followers. Over time, the groups always fell apart. He claimed that if the leader were not of God, then the group did not have a chance! What groups are you a part of? Is God a part your group bond? If not, do you think that your group will remain united in the long term? Why or why not?

Monday

Read Acts 5:29.

As children, we are told that obedience makes us good. We are supposed to obey our parents and other authority figures in order to gain praise and avoid discipline. Look up the word "obey" in a concordance. Look up some of the texts in your Bible. Who

are we supposed to obey? When Peter was told to stop preaching, he declared that "We must obey God rather than men!" Have you ever had an experience where an authority figure was telling you to do something that you felt was wrong? How did you handle it? How do you wish you had handled it?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 22:21.

In the *Flashlight* excerpt some reformed princes who had accepted the Protestant faith drew up a document describing their beliefs to be brought before the Diet (a committee of Catholic officials) to gain the right to worship as they believed they should. These were powerful men who could have mustered up armies to support their cause, but, they didn't. They refused to use violence, and they refused to get involved in political questions. They believed that the "Reformation should exercise no other influence than that which proceeds from the Word of God." They respected the existing authorities as much as they could but, ultimately, they obeyed God. In what ways can you show your support of the authority figures you encounter? Get some practice: How would you respectfully disagree with an authority figure in your life?

Wednesday

Read Matthew 12:49, 50.

Make a list of the social groups that you belong to. You might list groups such as your family, your school, your church, or your job. Out of these groups, place an X beside the ones that you chose to belong to. How important are these social groups to you? Which group is the most important to you?

God created us with the need to belong with other people. Take a look at the *Punch Line* texts. Is belonging to the family of God a comfort to you? Why or why not?

Thursday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

Since peer pressure can work in a positive way as well as a negative way, have you ever considered using it for your benefit? What kind of person do you dream of becoming? Do you want to be smart? successful? known for your kindness and compassion? Do you want to be someone spectacular? God created you with huge potential, but the people with whom you choose to surround yourself will affect what you become. Whom do you choose to spend time with? Is their influence positive or negative for your life?

Friday

Read Colossians 1:9, 10.

Going against popular opinion is never easy. Whose opinion matters the most to you in your life? Why? What do you gain by pleasing this person?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 11, 12.

**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

AUGUST 15, 2026

Scripture Story: Romans 1:8-17.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 13, 14.

commitment under fire



Photo by A. Truman

flashlight

"The rage of the persecutors was equaled by the faith of the martyrs. Not only men but delicate women and young maidens displayed unflinching courage. 'Wives would take their stand by their husband's stake, and while he was enduring the fire they would whisper words of solace, or sing psalms to cheer him'" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 240).

keytext

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NIV)

what do you think?

Take the following true-false (T/F) quiz to test your knowledge about the persecution of Christians.

- T / F Those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus can expect to be persecuted.
- T / F King David asked God for permission to avenge those who persecuted him.
- T / F The prophet Jeremiah understood that others rebuked him for God's glory.
- T / F Jesus taught that whoever is persecuted for righteousness' sake is blessed.
- T / F As a result of persecution, the gospel was spread.
- T / F Through a parable Christ explained that some believers would endure for a time, but when trouble comes, they fall away.

did you know?

Even today, there are still places all over the world where people are killed or imprisoned for declaring themselves as Christ's followers. To many of us who are privileged to live in countries that do not persecute Christians, we don't necessarily think about our freedom as much as we probably should. We're just used to it. Often when we think of persecution, we conjure up images of burning stakes, lions, and the Amphitheatre.

But no matter how foreign it all sounds, it's as real now in some countries as it was centuries ago. Whether it's a Chinese man who chooses to become a Christian, a North Korean who smuggles Bibles, or an African woman who takes care of her two nephews because their father and mother were martyred for their belief in Jesus Christ, Christians all over the world are jailed, murdered, and executed for their faith.

INTO THE STORY

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

"I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

(Romans 1:8-17, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Who is Paul writing to? List the emotions that he feels toward them and why.

Do a bit of investigative work: Where was Paul when he wrote this passage? What was he doing? Does the setting add new insight or change any perspectives to his words?

Paul repeats the word “gospel” several times in this passage. Circle the word “gospel” each time it appears in the passage. What is the context each time it is mentioned?

How do spiritual gifts make us strong?

What is the power of the gospel that Paul speaks of? How is it at work in your life?

punch lines

“While he lived on earth, anticipating death, Jesus cried out in pain and wept in sorrow as he offered up priestly prayers to God. Because he honored God, God answered him. Though he was God’s Son, he learned trusting-obedience by what he suffered, just as we do. Then, having arrived at the full stature of his maturity and having been announced by God as high priest in the order of Melchizedek, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who believably obey him” (**Hebrews 5:7-10, *The Message***).

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (**Hebrews 11:8, NIV**).

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (**James 1:2-4, NIV**).

“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring” (**2 Thessalonians 1:3, 4, NIV**).

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (**Romans 8:28, NIV**).

further insight

“God was with His people, and persecution could not prevail to silence their testimony.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great*

Controversy, p. 252.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read James 1:2-4.

Sometimes your most profound and intimate experiences of God will be discovered during your darkest hours. All through the Bible, we find characters who, in times of trouble, reach out to the Lord in special ways. This is seen, for example, in many of the psalms, where the author would cry out to the Lord, seeking a deeper experience with Him during times of distress, pain, and suffering. Problems force us to look at God and depend on Him, instead of ourselves.

How has God used circumstances and trials in your life to bring growth and Christlikeness?

Sunday

Read Psalm 50:15.

Problems do not automatically make you a better person. Sadly, many people get bitter instead of better. The difference lies in the way they choose to respond to their problems, and our choices depend upon our walk with the Lord. If we make it a habit to be in communion with God daily, and if we make it a habit to think on Him, dwell on Him, and praise Him for His goodness, we will be much more inclined in times of distress to run to the Lord and learn from Him.

Think of a problem you are facing right now and ask yourself: "What does God want me to learn?"

Monday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Notice how the Bible tells us to give thanks "in" all circumstances, not

"for" all circumstances. This small difference in prepositions can make a big difference. No matter what problems you are facing, you can still be assured in His love, wisdom, care, power, and faithfulness. Think back on your past experiences; how did the problems get resolved? Can you see a way in which God was present through it all?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 5:14.

How is God using the Bible, the power of the Holy Spirit, and circumstances in your life to help you reach out to your friends and family for Christ? In what ways are you feeling convicted to tell others about Jesus and what He has done for you and what He has promised to all who accept Him? How can you be more willing to reach out to those who don't yet know the Lord?

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? What circumstances are you facing that should cause you to lean more on the Lord and less on self or, in fact, anyone else?

Thursday

Read Matthew 25:35, 36.

How can your personal circumstances and life experiences be opportunities for you to serve God and others? That is,

wherever you are, whatever situations arise, how can you be open to the leading of the Spirit to be a witness to others? Sometimes, even in the smallest and kindest acts, we can be a powerful witness for God. Think about even the "small" things you can do that could make a big impression on someone who might be searching for truth.

Friday

Read Romans 8:28.

God often allows certain struggles and hardships in our lives so that we can sympathize and minister to the same kind of needs in other people's lives. In what ways has God comforted you that would enable you to comfort others? What have you been through, and what have you learned in your trials that could help someone else going through something similar?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 13, 14.

**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

AUGUST 22 2026

Scripture Story: Revelation 11:1-14.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 15.

two witnesses



keytext

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

(Revelation 11:3, NKJV)

flashlight

"The suppression of the Scriptures during the period of papal supremacy was foretold by the prophets; and the Revelator points also to the terrible results that were to accrue especially to France from the domination of the 'man of sin'" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 266).

what do you think?

Either/Or

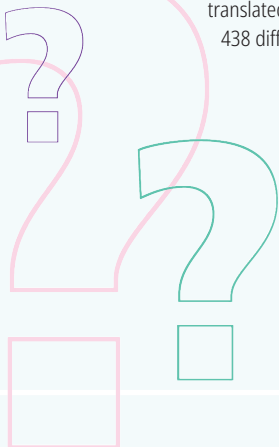
Choose one of the positions given and explain why you think the statement is true.

Which is worse, openly opposing the Bible because you believe it is false or continually neglecting God's Word even though you know it is true and life-giving?

Which position did you take? Explain.

did you know?

Throughout history there have been those who have tried to silence God's message of love. But the Bible continues to speak to us. In spite of the fact that throughout history many have sought to defame or flame the Bible out of existence, God's Word has now been translated into more than 438 different languages.



INTO THE STORY

"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.'

"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have

power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

"When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

"Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

"The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly."

(Revelation 11:1-14, NKJV)

OUT OF THE STORY

As you read this prophetic passage in Revelation 11, first know that it is the story of God's people who emerge from a dark season in earth's history.

What are some basic themes that you think are prominent in this passage?

Make a list of words and phrases that you don't understand.

Who are the two witnesses and why are they mentioned?

Why are they "clothed in sackcloth"?

What is the significance of the mention of the "forty-two months" and the "one thousand two hundred and sixty days"?

Whom do "Sodom" and "Egypt" represent? Why are they linked with Jerusalem, particularly where "the Lord was crucified"?

What are some examples from Scripture of open rebellion against God and His Word?

punch lines

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (**John 3:19, NIV**).

"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good" (**Psalms 14:1, NIV**).

"Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord. Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes" (**Proverbs 1:29-31, NIV**).

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" (**Romans 15:4, NIV**).

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (**Isaiah 40:7, 8, NIV**).

further insight

"The Old and the New Testament. Both are important testimonies to the origin and perpetuity of the law of God. Both are witnesses also to the plan of salvation."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 267

"The written word, the law of God, will measure the character of every man."—Ellen G. White,

The Great Controversy, p. 268

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Psalm 14:1.

Read and respond to the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. Which position did you choose to defend—to defame or to be disinterested in what God says in His Word? Both sides are troubling, but which viewpoint seems harder to change?

In Psalm 14:1 the Bible says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (NKJV). But Elijah said to the people on Mt. Carmel, "'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.' But the people said nothing" (1 Kings 18:21, NIV). What do you say?

Sunday

Read Isaiah 40:8.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section, you will notice another prophetic passage that requires a bit more study than a simple story in Scripture. This particular section is about a time in earth's history in which God's people are overshadowed for almost 1260 years by a power that deliberately resists God's Word and even some openly defy it. If you read chapter 15 in *The Great Controversy* you will find that the pieces of the prophetic puzzle fit tightly together. What do you think is the message God is trying to say to people today about the era in which atheism is popular?

Monday

Read Revelation 11:3.

The *Key Text* from this week's lesson is found in Revelation 11:3 where God says: "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sack-cloth" (NKJV). The "two witnesses" are the

messages of the Old and New Testaments, and some would even add the two groups of people who testify in both eras (OT and NT) about God and His plan of salvation. Whom do you know who has a deep love for the Old Testament in a way that comes out of their life and their conversation? Think of another witness, or someone you know, who is a real fan of the New Testament. How does their devotion to God's Word show up in their lives?

Tuesday

Read Revelation 22:17-19.

Read the quote from *The Great Controversy*, which summarizes the effect of ignoring or downplaying God's message to people in Scripture. After reading the chapter in *The Great Controversy*, how do you see this kind of thinking and behavior showing up in today's world? Even though God's Word is spreading around the world, so is the sentiment that there is no God and people are on their own. What do you think is the best way to show evidence of God's existence to the world?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse speaks most prominently to you today? Think of stories in the Bible that illustrate the sentiments in each verse. Are there people in your life who either do not believe in God or live as though God were not real? Pray for them today that their hearts might be softened or quickened to be open to what God longs to do in their life through His Word, as it says in Isaiah 50:4: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (KJV).

Thursday

Read John 13:34, 35.

Think of the two types of people mentioned in this week's lesson: the apathetic and the atheistic. What acts of kindness or service to others will soften their hearts? What can you do this week for others that might demonstrate to the atheist that God does exist? You don't know who is watching, so just be faithful. Also, how might your passion for God's Word awaken someone whose spiritual life is sleepy? Think about starting a Bible study/prayer small group or a service team and invite others to join you.

Friday

Read 1 Timothy 4:12.

Think about how God has continually brought people through troubled seasons. God has allowed people, world powers, and misguided institutions to have their way for a time, but He has never restricted the influence of individuals to share what He is like to the world. Reflect on those people who have withstood persecution and isolation for the cause of God. How can you be counted among their number?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapter 15.

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CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

AUGUST 29 2026

Scripture Story: Luke 21:7-28.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 16, 17.

lift up your head



flashlight

"The doctrine of the Second Advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer's power and bring them again to the lost Paradise. Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 299).

keytext

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars. . . .

Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

(Luke 21:25-28, NKJV)

what do you think?

Which do you think is the most powerful motivation for being watchful for the second coming of Christ? Rank according to the strongest emotion you feel (1-strongest; 4-least strong).

- ☐ Fear of being lost
- ☐ Guilt for past
- ☐ Desire for sin to be over
- ☐ Longing to be with Jesus

Why did you answer this way? If you could rank your motivation according to what you think is the ideal, what would be first on your list? Why?

did you know?

The coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness has inspired the most sublime and impassioned utterances of the sacred writers.

The poets and prophets of the Bible have dwelt upon it in words glowing with celestial fire" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 300).

INTO THE STORY

"So they asked Him, saying, 'Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?'

"And He said: 'Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am He," and, "The time has drawn near." Therefore do not go after them. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.'

"Then He said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons.

You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls.

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.'"

(Luke 21:7-28, NKJV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Underline some of the specific events Christ mentions that indicate that season in which we live.

Describe the mood you think the disciples felt as they listened to Jesus talk about what was to come.

How should those who are living for the second coming of Christ negotiate between what's happening in the world and what Christ has called them to do?

To what degree do you think the disciples were certain they would see Jesus come in their lifetime? How should we answer the age-old question, "The signs are all around, but why is it that Christ still hasn't come?"

Why do you think that the signs of the end tend to be negative in nature?

Based on this passage, what do you think should be our motivation to "be ready" for the second coming of Christ?

What do you think Jesus means by "lift up your heads" at the close of this passage?

punch lines

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (**Matthew 24:3, NKJV**).

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (**2 Timothy 3:1-5, KJV**).

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. . . . But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (**2 Peter 3:3, 4, 8, KJV**).

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (**Revelation 1:7, KJV**).

"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" (**Revelation 22:12, 13, NIV**).

further insight

"The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 302

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Peter 3:13, 14.

Read and respond to the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson. What motivates you to be mindful of Christ's return? What are the kinds of things that distract you from the events that will frame the return of Christ?

Notice how Peter, close to his own death, refers to the importance of paying attention to how we should live for Christ's coming: "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him" (2 Peter 3:13, 14, NIV).

According to Peter's frame of mind in this passage, what do you think motivates him to "be ready"?

Sunday

Read Matthew 25:1-13.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to prompt your study of the text, what emotions do you feel when you imagine and think seriously about the soon return of Christ and the end of the world as it is now? What do you think is the difference between "getting ready" and "being ready" for Christ to return? What do you think God is trying to say to you in this week's passage?

Monday

Read Luke 21:25-28.

The *Key Text* from Luke reveals a solemn reality that "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things

which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." This text seems to indicate that people will be aware that *something* is going wrong on earth and it will cause fear, but their fear will come too late, for Christ will be coming at that point. Knowing that *something is wrong* is not enough. We must know Christ. When believers hear of the events that cause others to be afraid, what should be their response?

Tuesday

Read the quote from *The Great Controversy* in the *Flashlight* section of this lesson and reflect on the truth that the Second Coming is the "keynote" theme of Scripture. Reflect on what it would look like in our churches if the second coming of Christ were the "keynote theme of all church life." There is a saying that reads, "People can be so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good." Does this saying apply to those who long for the coming of Christ? Whom do you know who lives with their feet firmly on earth but with their hearts and eyes directed toward heaven? What is their impact on others?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse urges you to be ready? Which verse causes you to worry about friends who are lost? Why do you think this verse is particularly relevant to you today?

Thursday

Read 1 Peter 3:15.

Talking to God and to others about the coming of the Lord heightens your awareness and your anticipation of that day. Every time you pray, take a few moments to

talk to God about His return and see how it shapes your overall outlook that day. In your interaction with friends, practice talking with them about the Second Coming in a positive, hopeful way, and notice how it affects what you value throughout the day.

Friday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 1:7.

Take some time to meditate on the events of Christ's return as you imagine it occurring.

What will it look like?

What will it sound like?

What will it feel like?

It is likely that our mind's eye will fall short of capturing the final event. However, we are called to be watchful for that day.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy, (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 16, 17.

**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

SEPTEMBER 05 2026

Scripture Story: 1 Corinthians 12:4-28.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 18-20.

you are gifted



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"Like the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, the advent movement appeared in different countries of Christendom at the same time. In both Europe and America men of faith and prayer were led to the study of the prophecies, and, tracing down the inspired record, they saw convincing evidence that the end of all things was at hand. In different lands there were isolated bodies of Christians who, solely by the study of the Scriptures, arrived at the belief that the Savior's advent was near" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 357).

keytext

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work."

(1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NIV)

what do you think?

Read the following definitions of “servanthood” and “stewardship.” Then decide if you agree or disagree. Explain why.

Servanthood is all about our heart toward God and our attitude toward ministry. According to 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, using our spiritual gifts without love accomplishes nothing. Authentic devotion to serving, honoring, and worshipping Christ is essential for effective ministry.

Stewardship has to do with accountability. Once we identify and grow in our understanding of our spiritual gifts, we must be responsible in the way we use them. First Corinthians 12:1 reminds us that it is our duty to identify what our spiritual gifts are because we will be held accountable for how we use them (1 Peter 4:10; Matthew 25:14-30).

did you know?

Each of us is truly unique.

Did you know that each of us has 100 trillion cells in our body? And for each of those cells, there is a DNA strand that holds 6 gigabytes of memory. So, each of us has the potential to house 600 trillion gigabytes of memory! Amazing! Also, DNA molecules can combine in an infinite number of ways.

The number is 10 to the 2,400,000,000th power.

There is no one like you! God made you special.

You have a God-given personal style and ministry passion. Understanding your unique gifts and style will enable you to thrive in your relationship with God and in your ministry.

INTO THE STORY

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. . . .”

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.”

(1 Corinthians 12:4-13, 27, 28, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Circle the gifts that Paul lists in the passages above. Who gives these gifts? Which one is the best and/or most important? Reinforce your answer with biblical texts.

Find definitions/descriptions for the following spiritual gifts:

- Wisdom

- Knowledge

- Faith

- Healing

- Discernment (distinguishing between spirits)

Who is the minister at your church? Reread 1 Corinthians 12:7. What would Paul say about your answer?

What might some of your spiritual gifts be? If you don't know, how can you find out?

What do you think the church would look like if everyone lived out their spiritual giftedness?

punch lines

"Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back"
(**Luke 6:38, NLT**).

"So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't"
(**Romans 12:5, 6, The Message**).

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (**1 Peter 4:10, NIV**).

"You shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb"
(**Psalms 139:13, The Message**).

"So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."
(**Matthew 25:28, 29, NIV**).

further insight

"Men are instruments in the hand of God, employed by Him to accomplish His purposes of grace and mercy. Each has his part to act."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 343

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* activity. The words “servanthood” and “stewardship” are misunderstood by many people. For some, servanthood means to allow others to dictate how we live our lives. And for others, stewardship refers only to money.

How were the definitions for *servanthood* and *stewardship* similar to your current understanding? How were they different? How would you rewrite the definitions?

Servanthood: _____

Stewardship: _____

Sunday

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13.

Read the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson, and answer the *Out of the Story* questions. The context in which the apostle was writing was that there were people in the church who thought that their spiritual gifts were superior to others' gifts. They had become proud. That's one reason he stressed love in 1 Corinthians 13. Without love, our gifts won't make an eternal difference.

But what do you do if you don't like the gifts you have? Or it seems as if everyone else has better ones? If we use our gifts out of a heart of love, can all giftedness—small or large—make a difference? Explain.

To take a spiritual gifts inventory, go to <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service> (retrieved July 16, 2025). After you've tallied your results, review them

with a trusted family member or teacher. Ask him or her for feedback: Which ones that you discovered do they see manifested in your life? How might they see you using your gift in service? What guidance might they have for you in regard to the “next step”?

Monday

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

Read through the *Key Text* for this week. It reveals a pattern to us:

Different gifts Same Spirit

Different service Same Lord

Different working Same God

What does this tell us about the Spirit? About Jesus? About God?

Tuesday

Read 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Read this week's *Flashlight* quotation. Ellen White tells us that Christians in different countries, who had no contact with each other, were coming to the same conclusions about Christ's second coming. Why? Because they were all studying the same book—God's Word—and were being led by the same Spirit.

At different times, in different places, God imparts the wisdom necessary for that situation. *Discernment* is one of the spiritual gifts that God promises to give. Do some research to determine what it means to have the spiritual gift of discernment. How can that gift be used to serve others?

Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*. There are several themes that you will find throughout these Scripture texts. Match the text with the theme.

Matthew 25:28, 29 Givers receive more than they give

Luke 6:38 Serving grace

Psalm 139:13 I've got to be me

1 Peter 4:10 God's math sure is different than my math homework

Romans 12:5, 6 God knew me before I knew me

Thursday

Read Romans 8:14.

How would an understanding of your spiritual gifts influence your future—your choice of career, spouse, ministry?

Friday

Read 1 Peter 4:10.

What God-given ability or personal experience can I offer to my community? In what ways can I see myself passionately serving others—and loving it?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 18, 19, 20.

**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

SEPTEMBER 12 2026

Scripture Story: Revelation 14:6-8; Matthew 25:1-13.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 21, 22.

final warning!



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"In all my labors," said Miller, "I never had the desire or thought to establish any separate interest from that of existing denominations, or to benefit one at the expense of another. I thought to benefit all. . . . My whole object was a desire to convert souls to God, to notify the world of a coming judgment, and to induce my fellow men to make that preparation of heart which will enable them to meet their God in peace" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 375).

keytext

"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)

what do you think?

Which of the following warnings are you MOST likely to believe and do something about? Place a 1 by the warning you'd most likely believe and so on until you get to the warning that you're MOST likely to disregard.

- ___ The government issues a terror alert telling everyone to avoid using public transportation.
- ___ Officials at your school are advising all students to get flu shots.
- ___ A friend tells you to get ready for Jesus' soon return.
- ___ Your mom encourages you to wear your seat belt in the car.
- ___ Your math teacher warns all students to study hard for the math final exam.
- ___ A bully at your school threatens to hurt you after school.
- ___ Weather reports say that a hurricane is headed your way.
- ___ A radio preacher warns people to prepare for the end of the world in May 2027.

did you know?

Did you know that on October 22, 1844, thousands of people across the United States gathered together awaiting the second coming of Jesus on that date? These believers, led by the preaching of a Baptist minister named William Miller and close study of the prophecies of Daniel and the book of Revelation, placed their faith where everyone could see it. They sold their possessions, renounced the world, and prepared to meet their God. They were wrong on the date of Jesus' second coming, but their Spirit-led love for the Second Coming helped birth the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

INTO THE STORY

The Bride and Her Groom

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom

came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

Warning! Warning!

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.'

"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.'"

(Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 14:6-8, NKJV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Circle the parts of the Scripture story that are new to you, the concepts you've never heard before.

The first part of the Scripture story for this week is a parable told by Jesus. Whom was Jesus speaking to?

The wise virgins prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. What did they do to prepare?

How are you preparing for the coming of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ?

What can be learned from the foolish virgins?

Sum up the message of this parable in your own words. What was He trying to say?

The second part of the Scripture story gives two solemn warnings to the world by God's angels. What is the message given by the second angel? What do you think that message means?

punch lines

"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (**Matthew 24:44, NKJV**).

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (**Revelation 22:14, NKJV**).

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready" (**Revelation 19:7, NKJV**).

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (**Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14, NKJV**).

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (**Romans 8:28, NKJV**).

further insight

"If God's professed people would receive the light as it shines upon them from His Word, they would reach that unity for which Christ prayed."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 379

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 26:64; Matthew 24:36.

Take a moment to complete the *What Do You Think?* activity. Each day we receive several warnings. Some are fairly harmless—nothing to lose a kidney over—but others are deathly serious. In this week's lesson we will examine one of the final warnings that God is giving humanity before He returns, and how humanity has responded.

What did Jesus say about His return to earth?

What did Jesus say about the time when He would return?

Why was Jesus so specific about His return?

Sunday

Read Romans 1:16, 17.

Read the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson and answer the *Out of the Story* questions.

If being prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom (i.e., Jesus Christ) is important enough for Jesus to share with His disciples, shouldn't we take its message to the world?

Are you comfortable sharing this message with friends who are not Adventist?

Think about how living our faith every day fits with our Bible reading for today.

Monday

Read Revelation 14:6-8.

This week's *Key Text* represents one of the most important messages ever sent by God to fallen humanity. It is part of the handful of core truths that define Seventh-day Adventist Christians. The first of the three angels' messages is to fear God—that is, respect God and worship Him alone. The second message of warning—our focus this week—is Babylon is fallen.

While the disciple John was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos, Jesus revealed to Him events that would precede the end of the world and His second coming. One of the messages Jesus gave John is found in the second part of this week's Scripture story.

What warning is Jesus sending in verse 8?

In the Bible, the word "Babylon" is used to represent the world's system of sin, corruption, and confusion. According to Revelation 14:8, why is the world's system fallen?

Who do you think should warn the world of God's judgment?

Will everyone accept God's warning? Why not?

Tuesday

Read Mark 13:22.

Read this week's *Flashlight* quotation from Ellen G. White. The words you just read were spoken by William Miller, a Baptist minister who in the mid-nineteenth century traveled throughout the United States preaching about the second coming of Jesus.

Some of his followers set a date for Christ's coming back then—October 22, 1844. Sadly, they were wrong. Once the day passed, many who were led to Christ returned to their lives, rejecting the warning of God's impending judgment.

What is the difference between someone like William Miller and the people spoken about by Jesus?

Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*, all of which share important scriptural messages for those preparing to meet Jesus when He returns.

Briefly share what you would've done if you had been a follower of William Miller and lived through the Great Disappointment. Would you continue to believe in God? Explain.

Thursday

Read Luke 12:8.

Based on what you've learned from this week's Scripture story about preparing for the second coming of Jesus and sharing with the world God's final warning to come out of Babylon, share one thing that you'd like to do to help the following people get ready to meet God.

1. Your family: _____
2. Your best friend: _____
3. Your neighbors: _____

Friday

Read Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14.

Does the fact that people might ridicule or belittle your beliefs prevent you from sharing them? If you really believed that Jesus was coming soon, what would you change about the way you live your life?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 21, 22.

**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 [#.URlhF1rB09s](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books). By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 19 2026

Scripture Story: Hebrews 8:1-6; Hebrews 9:11-15, 18-25.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 23, 24.

cleaning up



Photo by Alden Ho

flashlight

"In the typical service, when the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, all Israel were required to gather about the sanctuary and in the most solemn manner humble their souls before God, that they might receive the pardon of their sins and not be cut off from the congregation. How much more essential in this antitypical Day of Atonement that we understand the work of our High Priest and know what duties are required of us" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 430, 431).

keytext

"And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.'"

(Daniel 8:14, NKJV)

what do you think?

Consider the following scenario carefully before responding. Pretend that you were convicted of a very serious crime.

Your guilty verdict means that you are subject to the death penalty, life imprisonment without parole, or some other remedy open to the judge's discretion. On the day of sentencing, the judge asks your lawyer and the prosecutor to join him in his chambers for a discussion regarding the verdict.

Which of the following would you do while awaiting the sentencing for your crime? *Place a checkmark* below by the statement that best describes what you would do.

- ☐ Cry hysterically for your mother.
- ☐ Pray earnestly for God to have mercy on you and set you free.
- ☐ Sit calmly and wait for your lawyer to return and give you an update.
- ☐ Take a nap.
- ☐ Ask God to forgive you.

did you know?

In the ancient Jewish sacrificial system, sins were washed away by the shedding of blood. A sinner would bring an animal to the Temple, confess his or her sin on the head of the animal, the animal would then be killed, and its blood taken by the priest and sprinkled on

the veil separating the holy place from the Most Holy Place. In

doing this, the sinner's sin would be transferred to the innocent animal, and then to the sanctuary itself. Jesus was the animal—lamb—slain for our sins.

Did you also know that in some cases sins were transferred to the priest himself? God commanded that the priests eat some of the sacrificial animals so that they would symbolically “bear the guilt of the congregation” (Leviticus 10:17, NKJV).

INTO THE STORY

“What I mean is that we have a high priest who sits at the right side of God's great throne in heaven. He also serves as the priest in the most holy place inside the real tent there in heaven. This tent of worship was set up by the Lord, not by humans. Since all priests must offer gifts and sacrifices, Christ also needed to have something to offer. If he were here on earth, he would not be a priest at all, because here the Law appoints other priests to offer sacrifices. But the tent where they serve is just a copy and a shadow of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent, he was told, ‘Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!’ Now Christ has been appointed to serve as a priest in a much better way, and he has given us much assurance of a better agreement.”

“Christ came as the high priest of the good things that are now here. He

also went into a much better tent that wasn't made by humans and that doesn't belong to this world. Then Christ went once for all into the most holy place and freed us from sin forever. He did this by offering his own blood instead of the blood of goats and bulls. According to the Law of Moses, those people who become unclean are not fit to worship God. Yet they will be considered clean, if they are sprinkled with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a sacrificed calf. But Christ was sinless, and he offered himself as an eternal and spiritual sacrifice to God. That's why his blood is much more powerful and makes our consciences clear. Now we can serve the living God and no longer do things that lead to death. Christ died to rescue those who had sinned and broken the old agreement. Now he brings his chosen ones a new agreement with its guarantee of God's eternal blessings!”

“Blood was also used to put the first agreement into effect. Moses told the people all that the Law said they must do. Then he used red wool and a hyssop plant to sprinkle the people and the book of the Law with the blood of bulls and goats and with water. He told the people, ‘With this blood God makes his agreement with you.’ Moses also sprinkled blood on the tent and on everything else that was used in worship. The Law says that almost everything must be sprinkled with blood, and no sins can be forgiven unless blood is offered.

“These things are only copies of what is in heaven, and so they had to be made holy by these ceremonies. But the real things in heaven must be made holy by something better. This is why Christ did not go into a tent that had been made by humans and was only a copy of the real one. Instead, he went into heaven and is now there with God to help us. Christ did

not have to offer himself many times. He wasn't like a high priest who goes into the most holy place each year to offer the blood of an animal."

(Hebrews 8:1-6; Hebrews 9:11-15, 18-25, CEV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Mark the parts of this Bible passage that are new to you.

When you think of Jesus, do you ever picture Him as a High Priest, decked out in all the priestly garments? Why or why not?

Place a checkmark by those verses where you see the love of Jesus.

The author of Hebrews in chapters 8 and 9 tries to make the connection between the sanctuary service given to Moses and the Israelites and the sanctuary in heaven. Do you see that connection? *Underline* the verses where you see the author comparing the two.

According to the Scripture story, why is blood important to our salvation?

What does it mean to be free from sin?

Write two lessons that this week's passage has taught you.

Lesson 1: _____

Lesson 2: _____

punch lines

"Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; who is so great a God as our God?" (Psalm 77:13, NKJV).

"But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24, 25, NKJV).

"This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you" (Leviticus 16:29, NKJV).

"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34, NKJV).

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9, 10, NKJV).

further insight

"It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement who receive the benefits of His mediation in their behalf."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 430

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Matthew 12:36, 37; John 5:24.

Did you complete the *What Do You Think?* activity? If not, go back and do so now.

The thought of facing a life sentence or, God forbid, the death penalty, has reduced many people to utter depression. Even the most hardened criminals break down on death row.

What do the verses in Matthew mean to you? Do they scare you? If so, explain why. (Remember, you have Notes pages in the back of your study guide to write longer answers.)

Does the verse in John give you hope? Explain your answer.

What powerful message does the verse in Romans 8:1 give you?

Sunday

Read Isaiah 53:6.

Read the *Into the Story* section of this week's lesson, and respond to the *Out of the Story* questions. You probably noticed that the sacrificial system was a messy process—animals were being killed, blood spilled and sprinkled. Why do you think God instituted such a system to cleanse people of sin?

If you had a pet that you loved dearly and something you did caused that pet to die, how would you feel?

Jesus died for our sins, and every time we sin, His blood covers us. That is what He is doing in heaven for us right now.

Monday

Read Leviticus 16:9.

Did you check out this week's *Key Text*? Think about what you learned about the earthly sanctuary yesterday. Blood was sprinkled on the inside of the sanctuary in a symbolic gesture transferring the person's sin to the actual sanctuary itself. Can you

imagine the sounds that were heard around the Temple? Can you picture the sight of priests with blood spots on their clothing?

Once a year the high priest would petition God on behalf of the nation to clear all sins away from the sanctuary. From our reading today, we can now understand what Daniel is talking about in this week's *Key Text*. But there's one catch to Daniel's prophecy. The Temple that Daniel wrote about was lying in ruins at the time, so his prophecy pointed forward to a time when God would cleanse another. Based on this week's Scripture story, where is this sanctuary located?

This work of cleansing is currently going on. What should we be doing while Jesus is revealing to heavenly intelligences those deemed worthy through Christ to be saved?

Tuesday

Read Matthew 22:1-14.

This week's *Flashlight* quotation is a very serious one. Read it carefully. Do you understand what it is saying?

Why was the king upset with the guest who came dressed in the wrong clothes?

The king had provided proper attire for the guests, but this guy chose to wear what he wanted to wear. When you go before a king, you don't always get to do what you want to do.

During the Day of Atonement, the people of God had to be sure that they were "dressed" to meet their king; they had to have on the wedding garment of righteousness provided by God. They couldn't just wear whatever they wanted to wear. Are you ready for your big moment? What will you wear?

Wednesday

Read Psalm 77:13.

Which of the *Punch Lines* catches your attention? Take a closer look at Psalm

77:13. What "way" do you think King David is talking about? What "way" do we learn about when we look at God's sanctuary?

To better understand King David's statement, read Psalm 77:7-11. King David wondered if God would cast him off forever. The answer? No. How did he know that? He looked at what happened in the sanctuary service. In that service, God provided a way to remove sin, to get right with Him again, to be freed of guilt. This act of love touched David's heart, and it should yours too.

Thursday

Read John 15.

Knowing all the details about the sanctuary and what Jesus is doing on our behalf in heaven is good to know. But knowing Jesus is more important than simply knowing His roles.

Read John 15 and then ask yourself: How would my life be different if Jesus and I were really, really close?

Friday

Read Matthew 22:37-40.

Do you fear the final judgment? Why not pray and ask God to show you how to make your life right with Him now.

In two sentences, describe briefly how you would look, feel, and live if you did not fear God's final judgment.

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 23, 24.

**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

SEPTEMBER 26 2026

Scripture Story: Matthew 5:17-22.

Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 25, 26.

the imprisonment of truth



cornerstoneconnections 53

flashlight

"It was to keep this truth ever before the minds of men, that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden; and so long as the fact that He is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship Him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 438).

keytext

"For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

(Matthew 5:18, NIV)

what do you think?

Write down the top seven reasons that you think people use to justify not keeping the Sabbath. Then, in your personal notebook jot down some of the main reasons you love the Sabbath.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

did you know?

A Roman Catholic catechism states that the Bible never does away with the Sabbath and that, in fact, the Catholic Church itself changed the day from Saturday to Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection.

"You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctified," says James Cardinal Gibbons (*The Faith of Our Fathers*, 1917 edition, pp.

72, 73). He is also quoted as saying, "*The Catholic Church . . . by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday*" (*The Catholic Mirror*, official organ of Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 23, 1893).

No power has been given any church to modify the law of God (see Matthew 5:18).

INTO THE STORY

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

"For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to

judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

(Matthew 5:17-22, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Examine the first few verses of Matthew 5. To whom was Jesus speaking when He talked about the importance of God's laws?

Why do you think Jesus spoke so strongly about keeping God's laws?

What's the difference between "abolish" and "fulfill"?

What does this passage tell us about the seriousness of our example?

In Isaiah 58:13 the Bible refers to the Sabbath as something that we should *delight* in. What does it mean to *delight* in the Sabbath? If you're having a tough time coming up with an answer, look up the definition of *delight* in a dictionary.

Jesus makes the point that those who practice obeying God's laws and teach others to do so will be called great in heaven. Can we effectively share the Sabbath truth if we ourselves do not practice it, or find no joy in it? Explain your answer.

If you were ever put into a situation in which you had the opportunity to defend God's law and the fourth commandment, how would you do so?

punch lines

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15, KJV).

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10, KJV).

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:20-24, KJV).

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8, KJV).

further insight

"The confession of faith made by saints and martyrs was recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations."—Ellen G. White,

The Great Controversy, p. 459

"We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 460

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read **Leviticus 23:3**.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section. What are some of the reasons that people give for claiming that they no longer have to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy? Two passages referenced from Scripture are found in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16.

Notice the distinction between the ceremonial special days and sabbaths, and God's Sabbath that is part of the moral law. The law that Jesus said would never pass away was the moral law, the Ten Commandments. The ceremonial laws would be fulfilled in Him.

Sunday

Read **Luke 4:16-21**.

Read the *Into the Story* section and respond to the *Out of the Story* questions. Jesus specifically told us that no part of His law will ever be taken out of effect until all be fulfilled. Many people think Jesus is saying that this means when He died on the cross all was fulfilled, and thus we are no longer under the Ten Commandments. Rather, they say, we are "liberated" to a higher and more spiritual law of Christ. But how does keeping the Sabbath reveal Christ? How does it remind us of our liberation from sin?

Monday

Read **Matthew 5:18**.

The *Key Text* tells us that "not the least stroke of a pen" will disappear from the law until all is fulfilled. In the original language of the New Testament the word "iota" is used. This is the ninth letter of the Greek alphabet, and is equivalent to the "yod," the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus apparently wanted us to know that even the smallest letter of the law was important and, thus, how much more so is the Sabbath.

Read **Matthew 12:10-12**, **Mark 3:1-6**, and **John 9:13-16**. Notice that Jesus observed the Sabbath. It was His custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, just as we might go to church on Sabbath. If Jesus was planning to change the Sabbath day, why then did He keep it during His lifetime? What does **Luke 4:16** tell you about how special the Sabbath was to Jesus?

Tuesday

Read **Genesis 2:1-3**.

Read the *Flashlight* quotation. According to Ellen G. White, what impact does keeping the Sabbath have on those who observe it? Why is this the case?

What did God do after He finished six days of "work"?

Every time we come aside to rest, we honor God as our Creator and Sustainer. According to **Romans 1:18-23**, what happens to people who reject the laws of God, who remove God from their lives?

Wednesday

Read **John 14:15**.

Read through the *Punch Lines*. Why is God linking obedience with love? How does one prove their love to another person? Do they prove it by doing what they think will make the other person feel loved, or do they pay close attention to what pleases the other person and then do that?

God's law was so unbreakable that Jesus had to die to meet its demands. Yet, this "keeping" the law through death was motivated by

Jesus' love for us. What does **John 10:11** tell you about Jesus' love?

Thursday

Read **Philippians 2:13-15**.

What is it about the Sabbath that you think causes people to be so opposed to it? Is it a matter of wanting to do our own thing and not have anyone, including God, telling us what we should or shouldn't do? Is it a matter of people honestly believing the Bible did away with the Sabbath? Or a bit of both? What do you think?

Friday

Read **Isaiah 58:13**.

Do you ever find yourself seeing the Sabbath as an unwanted inconvenience? Have you ever caught yourself wishing that the sun would set so you can get on with doing your plans without feeling guilty? These thoughts have crossed many people's minds.

In what ways can we truly come to appreciate and look forward to the Sabbath?

this week's reading*

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