

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Colliding Kingdoms

First Quarter 2026

REAL-TIME FAITH
TEACHER'S GUIDE
First Quarter 2026

World Sabbath School Directors:
Jim Howard
Daniel Ebenezer

General Conference Adviser:
Ted N. C. Wilson

Biblical Research Institute Adviser:
Clinton Wahlen

Design:
Review and Herald® Design Center

Circulation:
Rebecca Hilde

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REAL-TIME FAITH WRITERS

Troy Fitzgerald, Washington, U.S.A.

Vikki Montgomery, Maryland, U.S.A.

Trudy Morgan-Cole, Newfoundland, Canada

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Marklynn Bazzi, Lyndelle Chiomenti, Debbie Eisele, James Feldbush, Judy Shull, and the General Conference Stewardship Department.

**WHAT THE LESSONS ARE
ABOUT**

The emphasis of this curriculum is God's kingdom of grace, being a recruited citizen (steward) of that kingdom, and the battle between it and the kingdom of evil. Being in God's kingdom requires action—being doers and not just listeners (James 1:22) of how to live as God's citizens on this earth.

The first lesson of each quarter of the two-year cycle is a different section of the Sermon on the Mount which is "at once Christ's inaugural address as King of the kingdom of grace and also the constitution of the kingdom" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 322).

After the first lesson of each quarter each of the other lessons (or sets of lessons) are about a different challenge, right, or privilege in the "real time" of being a citizen of God's kingdom. A Christian never knows what he or she will be encountering next.

The curriculum includes two websites:

- www.realtimefaith.net where students and teachers can access additional resources.

HOW TO USE THE TEACHER'S GUIDE

- > > **STEP 1:** **Read through the entire preparation section of the Teacher's Guide to become familiar with the lesson concepts.** You will be best able to use the teaching material if you thoroughly understand the core concepts of the lesson.
- > > **STEP 2:** **Read the rest of the Teacher's Guide material for the week, including the student lesson.** Get an idea of the options provided for teaching the concepts. Go to www.realtimefaith.net to find additional resource material that might be available.
- > > **STEP 3:** **Choose the specific options you will use in teaching the lesson.** There are more options provided than you will be able to use. Try to choose something from each category: **Beginning, Connecting, and Applying.** Keep in mind that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.
- > > **STEP 4:** **Note when and how you will distribute or refer to the student lesson during the program.** The student lesson for each week is integral to the teaching process and will be referred to throughout. The lesson should be distributed to the students (if they don't already have it) a week in advance so that they may study it in preparation for Sabbath School.
- > > **STEP 5:** **Collect the materials you need to conduct the lesson.** Once again keep in mind that student participation is vital.
- > > **STEP 6:** **Prepare the student lessons.** If you keep the student Bible study guides at church, remove the appropriate student lesson for the week and prepare it for distribution. If the students take their Bible study guides home at the beginning of the quarter, make arrangements to be able to teach the lesson smoothly even if the students forget to bring that week's lesson back with them. (Have the necessary Bible references listed on the board, have additional copies of the student illustration available, etc.)
- > > **STEP 7:** **Keep the end in mind.** Plan to wrap up your lesson with a summary of what the students have learned.

The third Sabbath in March is Global Youth Day. To learn more about Global Youth Day visit www.youth.adventist.org. You may also want to download the Global Youth Day app. You can start planning with your Sabbath School class ways to get involved and participate in a community service project or a mission initiative on that day. The possibilities for service are endless. Some examples may include: visiting a nursing home, hospital, orphanage, or prison to comfort, sing, and pray for those who are sick, needy, and destitute; feeding the homeless; inviting people from the community to an open house event; and so forth.

Teachers, in your role as a discipler of youth, the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department wants to help you in every way possible to be equipped for this important work. You are encouraged to go to www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com. There you will find resources to help you be more intentional and fruitful in the discipling of your students.

OVERVIEW



Real-Time Faith Sabbath School for Earliteens

TEACHER'S GUIDE

JANUARY

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THE TWO KINGDOMS • 7 • / Not Those Boys

The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) portray the sharp contrast between choosing life in God's kingdom and the kingdom of evil.

10

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER • 19 • / "Make Me Like Joe"

Adherence to Christian precepts takes on its fullest meaning when we realize that they are based on eternal principles that are themselves based on the character (personhood) of God.

17

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY • 31 • / The Blind Men and the Elephant

A look at what it means to be caught in the cross fire of the cosmic spiritual battle, and how to safeguard the heart and mind in the quest toward eventual and eternal victory.

24

THE SINNER'S NEED • 41 • / Rock Bottom

Here's basic training on the plan of salvation and choosing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

31

GROWING IN GRACE • 51 • / Wilma Goes for Gold

A look at sanctification as the gracious ongoing work of God in our lives and how the spiritual disciplines serve as tools toward building a life of Christian character.

FEBRUARY

7

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 1 • 61 • / A Case of Missed or Taken Identity

Exploring, understanding, and embracing who you are as a result of Christ's intervention and continuing involvement in your life. Also how this impacts your relationship with Him ("vertical" interaction).

14

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 2 • 71 • / Thermostats and Thermometers

Knowing who you are in relationship with other people; your relationship "reference points" ("horizontal" interaction).

21

YOUR OWN PREJUDICE • 83 • / Look Beyond the Barriers!

A forthright biblical look at how Christians discern and deal with prejudice, in their own lives.

28

WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT • 93 • / The Real Issue

Developing an ability to see value in those you don't understand or whose circumstances you don't know. Essentially viewing others through Jesus' eyes of compassion, acceptance, tolerance, and love.

MARCH

7

TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT • 105 • / A Blue-Ribbon Attitude

Examining and overcoming the natural tendency to build ourselves up at others' expense. Put-downs and an acidic tongue have no place in the Christian's life.

14

HEROES • 115 • / What Happened to the Firing Squad?

Focuses on helping the student identify, in heroes, characteristics worthy to emulate rather than focusing on who the heroes are.

21

JESUS, THE ULTIMATE HERO • 125 • / We Know Him!

Jesus found His purpose and identity by the time He was 12. He is our hero. Through Him we can find our true identities.

28

YOU, A HERO? • 135 • / The Difference of One

Finding the spiritual motivation to see the hero potential that God sees in us. Being a dedicated disciple of Jesus can turn humans into heroes.

COLLIDING KINGDOMS

First Quarter 2026

REAL-TIME FAITH is a Sabbath School curriculum
offering an application-oriented study of Scripture
for earliteens.



1

THE TWO KINGDOMS

Not Those Boys

January 3, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) • “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Psalm 41:1 (NIV) • “Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the LORD delivers them in times of trouble.”

Psalm 84:12 (NIV) • “LORD Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.”

Psalm 112:1 (NIV) • “Blessed are those who fear the LORD, who find great delight in his commands.”

Psalm 119:1, 2 (NIV) • “Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.”

Psalm 128:1 (NIV) • “Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him.”

Proverbs 8:32 (NLT) • “And so, my children, listen to me, for all who follow my ways are joyful.”

“There are two kingdoms in this world, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. To one of these kingdoms each one of us belongs. In His wonderful prayer for His disciples, Christ said, ‘I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world’ (John 17:15-18) (Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 97).

(See additional passages in student material.
Also: *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 478; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 509; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 77.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “THE TWO KINGDOMS”

Followers of Christ live “in the world” but are loyal citizens of “another world.” The place where God’s rulership begins is in the hearts and minds of people.

There is one guiding principle that characterizes God's kingdom—that is love. And the struggle for us is to actually live out God's grace. In the kingdom of this world one principle seems to rule supreme—self first. And the struggle is for success. The focal point of one kingdom is self-interest. The focal point of the other is pleasing God and serving others.

The by-products of pleasing God are unmistakable—joy, peace, power, security, happiness. The kingdom of this world claws its way to happiness, only to have it slip right through its hands. But true happiness comes to those who are living their lives to put a smile on God's face. The Beatitudes describe people who are experiencing true happiness. And why are they happy? The Beatitudes are the constitution of God's kingdom. Citizens of God's kingdom are described as people who are "blessed," when they are living a life true to the constitution of their heavenly kingdom.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "THE TWO KINGDOMS"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand the nature and purpose of the Beatitudes.
2. Discover the benefits of citizenship in God's kingdom.
3. Practice these selfless principles in this self-centered world.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) Bibles, paper, markers, other art supplies; (Activity B) towel, basin, or plastic-covered table; raw egg; cup of water; scoop of crushed ice (or ice cream); means of cleaning up.

Connecting • Bibles, whiteboard/chalkboard, markers/chalk, student lessons.

Applying • Paper, pens or pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Prepare to have the students, divided into manageable groups, create an advertisement in one of the following forms that work best for your setting: radio commercial, bumper sticker, T-shirt, billboard, infomercial, political campaign advertisement. You might assign the form randomly or have students choose the one they will use from "a hat."

Be sure that they understand that (1) they are communicating citizenship in God's kingdom

over the kingdom of this world (or perhaps advertising the kingdom of this world satirically) and (2) they need to include the message of the Beatitudes in the ad or as many of the Beatitudes as possible.

Get set • Have the students find, and ask volunteers to read aloud **Matthew 5:3-12**. Then, in your own words, summarize the major thoughts in What's to Be Said About God's Kingdom in the Preparing section above.

Go • Say: **How would you advertise citizenship in the kingdom of God to someone else? Based on your understanding of the Beatitudes, what would be your tag line, your advertising gimmick, your approach to selling people on the kingdom of God versus the kingdom of this world? Include the positives and negatives (we want to be truthful in our advertising) of the kingdom.** Give them a time limit.

When the time is up, call them back together to share their creations.

Debriefing • Ask: **Based on the ads, what could you say about the character qualities of each kingdom?** (When we advertise God's kingdom, there are some potential negatives while we're living in the territory of the other kingdom, but the outcome is something we can sell.) **How do you think citizenship in God's kingdom is best advertised?** (People. The qualities of the kingdom are seen only in people.) **How are the ads for the kingdom of this world different?** (The world doesn't show you the final outcome, only what you get now for thinking first about yourself.)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will be using three students and some props to point out the tentative nature of happiness, and the likelihood of its slipping away if that is what you are trying to get hold of.

You can use any or preferably all of the following: an egg that has been cracked over a

saucer, water in a glass, a scoop of crushed ice (or ice cream). Do the activity over basin, towel, or covered table. Have a means of washing students' hands nearby. Choose volunteers who will not show off and take the attention from the point of the activity.

Get set • Ask for three volunteers. The object is to have the students try to get a secure hold of the items. The fact that these are, or will be soon, liquid makes it hard for them to be held on to.

Go • Water—ask the volunteer to hold out one hand while you pour a small amount ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) into it. They might be able to cup their hand and contain some of the water. Pour enough so that water begins to leak through their fingers.

The egg—with the egg out of its shell on a small saucer, ask the volunteer to pick it up without lifting or tipping the plate.

The scoop of crushed ice (or ice cream)—again, have the volunteer hold out their hand as you place a full scoop of crushed ice in it. In time the ice will begin to melt and drip.

Debriefing • Ask: **What was it like to try to hold on to these items?** (From the start I knew there was no way to be able to hold the water. Your hand is absolutely the wrong tool to try to contain water, eggs, or ice.) **In what ways is happiness hard to secure and hold on to?** (Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes not—it's all about how you look at life. Or happiness might come to you at times, but so do the hard times as well.) **What are the obstacles to happiness?** (Selfishness. I think people who are all about themselves rarely find happiness.) **To what degree do you think people are really "happy" in their struggle for happiness?** (I think some people are happy, but everyone gets disappointed sometimes and is not as happy as they hoped they would be.) **Is it possible to be perpetually happy in this life?** (Maybe, if you have the right attitude. Or, I don't think anyone can be perpetually happy as long as sin is still here.)

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

What Will My Reward Be? One day a fisherman was lying on a beautiful beach with his fishing pole propped up in the sand and his solitary line cast out into the sparkling blue surf. He was enjoying the warmth of the afternoon sun and the prospect of catching a fish.

About that time a businessman came walking down the beach, trying to relieve some of the stress of his workday. He noticed the fisherman sitting on the beach and decided to find out why this man was fishing instead of working harder to make a living for himself and his family. "You aren't going to catch any fish that way," said the businessman to the fisherman. "You should be working rather than lying on the beach!"

The fisherman looked up at the businessman, smiled and replied, "And what will my reward be?"

"Well, you can get bigger nets and catch more fish!" was the businessman's answer.

"And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman, still smiling.

The businessman replied, "You will make money, and you will be able to buy a boat, which will then result in larger catches of fish!"

"And then what will my reward be?" asked the fisherman again.

The businessman was getting a little irritated with the fisherman's questions. "You can buy a bigger boat and hire some people to work for you!" he said.

"And then what will my reward be?" repeated the fisherman.

The businessman was getting angry. "Don't you understand? You can build up a fleet of fishing boats, sail all over the world, and let all your employees catch fish for you!"

Once again the fisherman asked, "And what then will my reward be?"

The businessman was red with rage and shouted at the fisherman, "Don't you understand that you can become so rich that you will never have to work for your living again? You can spend all the rest of your days sitting on this

beach, looking at the sunset. You won't have a care in the world!"

The fisherman, still smiling, looked up and said, "And what do you think I'm doing right now?"—Wayne Rice, *More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 171.

Ask: What do you think is the central lesson of this story? (What some people strive after, others have already. The world can be a rat race.) **To what degree do you think people consider the long-term effects of the way they live their lives?** (I think in some areas of life they consider long-term outcomes, but for the most part I think people are just trying to get through the day.) **Why do you think the businessman was getting so mad?** (He saw someone who had a different value system, and it is easier to look down on someone than it is to learn from them.)

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: One of the most devoted citizens of any kingdom is a soldier. Soldiers believe in and live by a code of honor that protects and builds the kingdom. Their personal comfort and needs come second to the well-being of the kingdom, so much so that they are willing to give their lives for the kingdom. What is clear about soldiers is that they are loyal to their country and well aware of the nature of their enemy.

Ask: What other professionals put their duty before their safety and security? (Police, fire-fighters, kindergarten teachers!)

Say: John writes this message to a church full of Christians who are struggling to distinguish the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world. "Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do

not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever" (1 John 2:15-17, NLT).

Ask: How do you feel about this strong statement John makes about God? (It sounds a bit harsh, but I think God doesn't want us to get deceived.)

Say: As citizens of God's kingdom our code of honor is about how we relate to God and how we relate to the world around us. The "be-attitudes" are but declarations of "being." *Blessed* means "Oh, the happiness of the one who . . ." The Beatitudes are descriptions of "who you are and what you are like" because of the kingdom code (or rules) you live by. In a way, the Beatitudes are like a commercial on the benefits of being in the kingdom of God. Have the students find and read Matthew 5:3-12 together.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to tell or read the story from the Sabbath section of the lesson.

Ask: What relevance does this story have to our topic today? Encourage students to notice how both the students and the group leader had a change of heart. **What do you think caused the changes in their attitudes?** (The experience of thinking of others rather than themselves, their opportunity to serve others.) **Which of the Beatitudes do you feel are illustrated by this story?** Have the students turn to Matthew 5:3-12 to find and justify their responses.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Stacey wants to live her life boldly as a citizen

of God's kingdom. It is difficult to walk the fine line between being a positive influence and getting swept into her friends' critical conversations. They can be horrible to others, saying spiteful things behind their backs and often to their faces. She doesn't want to seem arrogant or better than they are, but she feels guilty for not standing up for her beliefs about treating others with compassion. She wants to include others who don't have many friends but who would definitely be the subject of misunderstanding or scorn. But these critical people are her friends! What does she do? She feels guilty. She feels ashamed. But she also feels committed to be true to Christ.

If students did not bring their lessons with them, supply them with copies of the Bible verses in Wednesday's section of the lesson.

Say: Based on these verses and the Beatitudes we've been reading in Matthew 5:3-12, let's list what we know about both kingdoms.

Ask: What do we know about God's kingdom? What does it look like? What are the rewards? As the students discover them and call them out, list the qualities where all can see.

- >> Has eternal rewards—Matthew 5:3-12
- >> There will be trouble—John 16:33
- >> It is totally different from the world—John 14:27
- >> We will win/overcome—1 John 4:4
- >> People know grace firsthand—Matthew 5:7; Psalm 32:1, 2

Ask: What do we know about the kingdom of this world? What does it look like? What are the rewards?

- >> The world will promote its ways as right—Proverbs 16:25
- >> Passes away—1 John 2:15-17
- >> Promises peace—John 14:27
- >> Will persecute and falsely accuse those who are different—Matthew 5:11

Ask: How do you see the principles about life in both kingdoms relating to Stacey's problem? (The connection is clear, but it is difficult to make the right choice. Your friends

are everything.) **In light of those principles, what do you think she should do?** (I think she should divide and conquer—it's easier to talk to each friend privately than in a group. It seems as if in a group it's difficult to be really honest about how you feel. Who knows, some of her friends may feel the same way.) **Can you think of similar scenarios that these principles apply to in your life?** (Honesty with grades, cheating, lying, and covering up stuff for friends. Everyone expects you to be loyal rather than honest.)

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Ask: Why are the words “In the beginning . . .” famous? (For introducing the Bible, for introducing people to the beginning of the world as we know it) **The Beatitudes are also one of the most memorized sections of Scripture. Why do you think that is? While the words of Christ to His citizens who choose to live in His kingdom are popular, they are rarely internalized.**

Divide the students into eight groups. Have each group paraphrase one of the beatitudes (one of the “blesseds” from **Matthew 5:3-12**) in their own words. (For smaller classes, either have fewer groups with each group paraphrasing more than one beatitude, or ask each person to paraphrase one.) You can give the tip that “blessed” means “happy” but instruct the students not to use any of the main words in the passage as it is now (they will have to use the same words necessary to construct sentences—*are, they, will, etc.*). Direct them to the Monday and Wednesday sections of the student lesson to give them ideas.

Give them a few minutes to write out their group’s beatitude, then have each group read their part in order. Collect all the parts to be written up as your class Beatitudes. (You might prepare this in an artful manner and post it in the room.)

Discuss with the students what they found in-

sightful or particularly meaningful about your class paraphrase. Be sure to affirm each response.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the short-term benefits of belonging to the kingdom of this world? to the kingdom of God?
2. What are some of the long-term benefits of belonging to the kingdom of this world? to the kingdom of God?
3. What are some real-life examples of people you know who live by the Beatitudes?
4. Think of someone you know who seems to be a living example of one of the beatitudes. Who are they and how do you see the beatitude lived out in their life?
5. What beatitude seems to be the hardest to live by? Why?
6. Rank the beatitudes in the order that you think they are needed in your world today. Explain your order.
7. In the Beatitudes Jesus doesn’t promise more than He can deliver. What promises does “the world” make that it can’t deliver?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

If you contrast Satan’s “empty promise kingdom” with God’s “real world kingdom” the difference is clear. Jesus delivers an engaging, exciting future for those who choose to be citizens of His kingdom. God does not promise that we will never face trouble. As a matter of fact, He all but guarantees trouble. But the benefits of citizenship in His Kingdom are still far better than the cheap, temporary, and virtually unreachable rewards that the world promises. The kingdom of the world advertises perpetual bliss but gives only short-term satisfaction. Anyone who looks long enough at the way of life that Satan advertises can see that behind

the cheese is a dangerous trap—a promise of fulfillment that never gets delivered. Satan’s kingdom is a sham to be exposed. How many athletes, movie stars, models, and media heroes do you think lie awake at night wondering

why they aren’t happy? Can you think of anyone who was a citizen of God’s kingdom and regretted it at the end? God is honest about the “real world” and what we can expect, both short-term and long-term.

STUDENT LESSON

A large, orange, glossy button with a metallic silver border. The number '1' is prominently displayed in the center of the button.

1

THE TWO KINGDOMS

Not Those Boys

January 3, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:**
"No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. . . . As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 19, 20

NOT THOSE BOYS

"Dear God, please don't send those boys to my van."

God wasn't listening, I concluded.

Several times a year the school devoted a day to community service. From my viewpoint, Kenny or Chris were not "service project" material. Plopping into the seats Chris complained, "Where are we going?"

Kenny chimed in, "Why do we have to do this?"

Although I wanted to say something else I calmly replied, "We're going to work at the battered women's shelter."

"Work?" Kenny snorted. "I didn't even sign up for this. I think it is stupid!"

It occurred to me that God was not answering my prayer. We arrived at the shelter and I met the director while the boys waited anxiously in the van.

"We really need help planting flowers and playing with the kids while the women go to a group session." She peered into the van and asked nervously, "Can your team do that for us?"

Team? I thought. The two stringy-haired, saggy-dressed teenagers that were half asleep in the van were anything but a team.

"Come on, gentlemen," I exaggerated. "I'm going to paint. Kenny, you are going to play with the kids. And Chris, you are going to plant the flowers."

I prayed one final prayer for God to stop punishing me, saying, "God, if You are there, I'm begging You . . ."

My prayer was interrupted by six screaming children running up to the van, chanting, "Duck, duck, goose!" Kenny was being pulled from the van to play a marathon of children's games. He looked back desperately for help as his best friend watched helplessly. I smiled and waved.

Chris looked in horror at the flats of flowers that littered the sidewalk where the fertile ground waited for their arrival. After the shock wore off, he examined the site and soberly began to plant.

As we got ready to leave, children were still clinging to Kenny's arms and legs as he dragged them laughing in the grass. Chris was wash-

ing his hands by the side of the house as the women came out of the building to a garden of flowers. I watched his eyes as he accepted their gratitude. All three of us received a passport to another world that morning. It occurred to me that being self-absorbed has many faces.

I thanked God for not answering my prayer.—Pastor Troy.

Sunday **RESPONDING**

- » Read James 2:5.
- » Imagine it's your first day at high school. There are a few people you recognize but many you don't. You start watching to see which kids hang out together. Which groups would you try to make friends with? Which groups would you feel uncomfortable to be a part of? How is the group you would like to join different from the ones you would not like to join? Why do you think you are making the choice you are?

Monday **BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST**

- » Read Psalm 23:4; Galatians 5:22-25; 2 Peter 3:18.
- » No matter where we are or what our circumstances are, God is with us. When we trust Him, we do not have to be afraid of anything in this world. As we learn more about Jesus and His love, the Holy Spirit helps us to grow more like Jesus—becoming aware and showing compassion to those who are hurting around us.
- » How can I reflect the loving kingdom of God in my life?

- » Unscramble the words and use them to fill in the following blanks.

baougdiin
trooed
hdtelsaseib
sJues
drceeiiev
erehfetor
ganskivghint
ihrCst

"As you _____ have _____
the Lord, so walk in Him, _____ and
built up in Him and _____ in the faith,
as you have been taught, _____ in it with
_____ " (Colossians 2:6-7, NKJV).

Tuesday **REFLECTING**

- » Read John 16:33.
- » The whole idea of a "kingdom" may seem unreal today. But even though God's kingdom isn't something you can touch with your hands, it is real. Jesus would even say it is more real than the world you are living in. The freedom you feel when you forgive someone is real. The joy people feel when they devote their whole lives to service is real. That's what makes the kingdom of God real.
- » Just look at the "real" world around you. Depression is common. Suicide is on the rise. Consider the music and movies that are popular today. Are people claiming to be happy, fulfilled, full of joy, certainty, meaning, and purpose? No, a lot of them are uncertain or disappointed about life.
- » Citizens of God's kingdom face many things, but always with certainty of their future. Always with the knowledge that suffering will end. Always with the joy that being of service in a forever kingdom is better than trying to be king of one that is coming to an end. Is it possible that so many people can be misled as to which kingdom is real and which king-

dom is temporary? Obviously they are, and it is for that very reason that we should wear our heavenly citizenship where everyone can see it.

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

» Listed below are Bible texts that talk about the lesson. Match the number with the phrase to which the Bible text belongs. You can find the various Bible versions at Biblegateway.com.

1. Psalm 32:1, 2 (NLT)
2. Proverbs 16:25 (NLT)
3. John 16:33 (NIV)
4. John 14:27 (NIV)
5. James 2:5 (NLT)
6. 1 John 2:15-17 (CEV)
7. 1 John 4:4 (NIV)

- A. ____ "Don't love the world or anything that belongs to the world."
- B. ____ "Oh, what joy for those whose obedience is forgiven . . ."
- C. ____ "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them . . ."
- D. ____ "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give . . ."
- E. ____ "There is a path before each person that . . ."
- F. ____ "Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters . . ."
- G. ____ "I have told you these things, so that . . ."

Thursday **CONNECTING**

- » Read 1 John 2:15-17.
- » Review the memory text.
- » The desire you have for joy and happiness is there because God put it in you. Life in

God's kingdom may seem foreign now, but the more you think about it the more real it will seem. The opposite kingdom is a place where there is never mercy, only a love of power. It's where everyone looks out for their own interests and never thinks of others. It's a pretty scary place.

» In the Beatitudes God seems to be sneaking us a peek of our future home in heaven. It is almost as if God is reminding us, "Don't make yourself at home in this world, because your home is somewhere else." Consider the rewards of being part of that kingdom—heirs to the King, children of an awesome Father. God wants us to experience joy more than we know, and while the path of God's kingdom has challenges, what an adventure to be a part of such a wonderful kingdom!

Friday **APPLYING**

- » Read Matthew 5:3-12.
- » Organize the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) in order of their relevance to your life. On the chart below, list the three beatitudes that you want most to live by this week. In the second column, focus on a specific arena of your life (example: best friend, teacher, problems with parents, someone who hates you). You might write the name of someone to whom you need to be merciful, or in what arena of your life you want to practice purity, humility, and so on. Be as specific as you can! As you practice the attitude, write in the last column your reflections on what happened and how you might continue to experience the real joy of being a citizen of God's kingdom.

BEATITUDE

ARENA OF LIFE

REFLECTION



2

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Make Me Like Joe"

January 10, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 5:17 (NIV) • "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."

John 5:36-40 (NIV) • "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

Matthew 7:12 (NIV) • "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

Matthew 22:39, 40 (NIV) • "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Romans 13:9, 10 (NIV) • "The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You

shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

James 2:8-11 (NIV) • "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker."

Galatians 5:22, 23 (NIV) • "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Galatians 5:13-15 (NIV) • "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other."

Acts 4:13 (NIV) • "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished

and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."

"An upright character is of greater worth than the gold of Ophir. Without it none can rise to an honorable eminence. But character is not inherited. It cannot be bought. Moral excellence and fine mental qualities are not the result of accident. The most precious gifts are of no value unless they are improved. The formation of a noble character is the work of a lifetime and must be the result of diligent and persevering effort. God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 223).

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "CHRISTIAN CHARACTER"

Some say that constructing a life of Christian character is about making good choices. Good choices will ultimately fall short until we realize that beyond **precept** (rules and laws) and **principle** (guiding truths for all times, places, and people) is the **person** (character qualities) of God. By our choice to obey His precepts we begin to be restored to His likeness, the way He created us. It is not uncommon in the early stages of life to teach children "Obey and don't ask why," but as children grow they need to understand that there is usually a principle behind "Because I said so!" It is also true with God's laws. "Because God said so!" may be all we need, but God has given us the principles behind His laws to help us see who He is and to help us live better and happier lives. In **Deuteronomy 6:1-9** God equips Israel with a way to keep each generation engaged fully in loving service to God. But still, God promised that our children would ask, "Why?" (**Deuteronomy 6:20, 21**). The answer to the question is a personal testimony about a deep relationship with a personal God. There is a God whose qualities inspire timeless truths (and precepts) to live by. This lesson is focused on helping the students to see the importance of developing

godly characters based on the person of God as we find Him portrayed in the Bible and through the life of Christ.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "CHRISTIAN CHARACTER"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Discover the meaning of the concept of character.
2. Consider the trends of character development through the principles in the Bible.
3. Look at character development as not only "obeying the rules" but as letting God transform them into His image (personhood).

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) large jar, bowl, or bucket; large rocks; pebbles; and dirt; (Activity B) food coloring or dirt, juice, glass, pitcher of water, baking pan or shallow tub large enough to hold the pitcher of water and yet shallow enough to see a glass inside, towel.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons, paper, pens/pencils.

Applying • Paper, pens/pencils, whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You need a large jar, bowl, or bucket; large rocks; pebbles; and dirt. You will be teaching the students the concept of “first things first” through a demonstration of trying to fit everything into the container.

Get set • You will need to practice this beforehand to make sure you have the proper amounts. While practicing, start with the rocks, then the pebbles, then the dirt.

Go • Say: I’m going to try to fit these items into the jar. The dirt, pebbles, and rocks all represent something. After pouring all of the dirt into the jar, filling the jar about one-third full, put the pebbles in. The pebbles should fill the jar to two-thirds full. **Say:** Now we will add the rocks. Obviously, the rocks will not fit.

Ask the students for suggestions on a better way to do it. There are two ways: 1. Start with the rocks, then add the pebbles, then add the dirt slowly, allowing the dirt to work its way throughout the crevices made by the larger items (shaking is allowed). 2. Start with a rock, then a pebble, then some dirt, and continue the pattern until it is filled.

Say: The rocks represent the person of God—the eternal qualities that make Him who He is. The pebbles represent the principles—timeless truths that apply in all situations over time. The dirt represents the precepts—the rules, laws, and regulations that convey specific directions on what to do.

If you start with the rules first, you sometimes never see beyond them to God’s character or person. It becomes very difficult to see the face of a personal God. Some people give up without even realizing that He wants to transform them into His image. This is why we begin with God, His person, His personality, His character.

Debriefing • Ask: What could this illustration teach? (There is a right way and wrong way to do this! Some things must go first if it is going to work!) **Say:** It’s the same with rules for developing character. They begin with a person (God). Since God is true, honesty becomes a way of life for me. If I apply that to any area of my life, the rules for character development aren’t restrictive, but simply tangible reminders of someone I want to be like.

Ask: When have you experienced the frustration of trying to make everything fit? What character qualities would you say are the biggest, most important traits to possess? How did Jesus deal with the problem of seeing “just the rules” for developing a good character? How do the following passages describe the relationship between the precepts, principles, and person of God? Have students find and read Matthew 7:12; Matthew 22:39, 40; Romans 13:9, 10.

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will need food coloring or dirt, a juice glass, a pitcher of water, a baking pan or shallow tub large enough to hold the pitcher of water and yet shallow enough to see a glass inside, and a towel (just in case). The object is to demonstrate the nature of character develop-

ment. It is not the extraction of the "bad things" but the inflow of good things. The only way to develop a godly character is to increase the inflow of God in your mind through Bible study and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Get set • Fill a small clear glass three-quarters full of water from a full pitcher. Add a drop of red food coloring or a handful of dirt and stir it up. The object is to make the water as clear as possible without emptying the glass.

Go • Say: How can you get the color out of the water without emptying the cup?

(You can't spoon it out. You can't tip it over. They might say "Boil it" or "Put iodine tablets in it," but none of us have a stove or iodine tablets with us, and even boiling it would not get rid of the color.)

Say: The only way I know how to purify the water in the glass is to pour more good water into it. Pour gradually at first so the glass overflows and some of the color is removed.

Did that help a little? Continue to pour more water into the glass, causing the glass to flood over more, and then stop and look at the color. Continue to pour the pitcher of water in a way that flushes the colored water out of the glass, replacing it with clear water. While all the red (dirt) may not be removed, the water should be clear enough to notice the difference.

Debriefing • Ask: What are some lessons about people you can draw from this experiment? How is the water and color (dirt) compared to the human struggle to grow to be like God? How does the amount of water being poured in affect the outcome? What would you say the water, the glass, the dirt, the pitcher, and the pouring represent?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

In 1985 product developers at Matsushita Electric Company were trying to develop a home bread-making machine. "But they were having

trouble getting the machine to knead dough correctly. Despite their efforts, the crust of the bread came out overcooked while the inside was hardly done at all. Employees exhaustively analyzed the problem. They even compared X-rays of dough kneaded by the machine and dough kneaded by professional bakers. But they were unable to obtain any meaningful data.

"Finally, software developer Ikuko Tanaka proposed a creative solution. The Osaka International Hotel had a reputation for making the best bread in Osaka. Why not use it as a model? Tanaka trained with the hotel's head baker to study his kneading technique. She observed that the baker had a distinctive way of stretching the dough. To imitate that, the engineers added special ribs inside the machine and developed a unique 'twist dough' method. In its first year on the market, their bread-making machine set a record for sales of a new kitchen appliance."

Some things can't be learned in a lab or with an X-ray machine. Some things one can only learn by spending time with another human being.—From: Ikujiro Nonaka, "The Knowledge-Creating Company," in *Harvard Business Review on Knowledge Management* (Harvard Business Review Press, 1998), pp. 26, 27.

Say: In this story it was only by observing the one who really knew how to make bread that others could come near to duplicating it with their machines. We don't really create Christian character unless we spend time with the real "baker."

Ask: What are some characteristics that make up the "secret" of a true kingdom citizen, an authentic one of God's children? (Kindness, fairness, joy, honesty, courage)

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: In life, the qualities we exhibit are marks of one kingdom or another. Ancient

tribes could be distinguished immediately by unique markings on the face and body. In the same way, citizens of God's kingdom have marks or qualities which show in their "character." As we seek to develop character qualities, we need to look at the source of those qualities. Not just the rules of the kingdom, but the King Himself.

Ask: When people witnessed the disciples' behavior after the Resurrection, what did they say about them? Let's find and read the answer in **Acts 4:13**. (The people could tell the disciples had been with Jesus.) **Jesus taught that the law was an outgrowth of what greater truth? We'll find the answer in these verses: Matthew 7:12; Matthew 22:39, 40; Romans 13:9, 10; 1 John 4:7-9.** (Jesus taught that the law is an outgrowth of a greater truth, called "love." And ultimately "God is love.")

Say: One Christian evangelist delineated this approach to truth as seeing the *precept*, *principle*, and *person*. Most of us can see the *precepts*—the rules, such as "Don't lie." **Ask: What is the principle behind this precept?** (The principle has to do with honesty, which is a guide for any place, time, or person.) **Where does the notion of honesty come from?** (Honesty is a quality that comes from the very person of God.) **Why should I be honest?** (Because God is truth, and through His Spirit He is transforming me into His image, renewing my mind [Romans 12:2].)

Ask: What are some rules (*precepts*) that seem clear in Scripture? (Ten Commandments. Don't kill. Don't lie. Our body is the temple of God, so we are commanded to take care of it.) **Can you name the principle that each rule is based on?** ("Don't lie" is based on the principle of truth or honesty, etc.) **How do you see this in the very person of God?** (God is truth. He doesn't deceive or lie.)

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to tell or read the story from the Sabbath section of the lesson.

Ask: Why do you think we can learn from the lives of others? (We can identify with people. We can see consequences.) **Who is a good example of this in your life? Whose life has made having a good character meaningful and positive for you by their example?** If you have not already discussed the concepts of **precept**, **principle**, and **person** outlined above, do so now.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Distribute the student lessons, paper, and pens or pencils. **Ask:** If you could hardwire into a person three character qualities that would impact the world for the better, what qualities would you implant? Why? Use the references in the Monday and Wednesday sections of your lesson as a starting point.

Say: On the piece of paper, make a list of the character qualities that grow out of Scripture that you think the world needs right now. Beside each quality, write the name of a Bible character who eventually portrayed that quality. Have students share their lists with the rest of the class.

Ask: What do you think is one of the most difficult character qualities to develop? Why? Consider the negative character traits through which the enemy causes the most damage.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY, Part 1

Get ready • First, discuss with your students the differences between character, personality,

and reputation. Use some examples from among them to distinguish the differences; *character*—the qualities that distinguish and mark your nature; *personality*—the style or way you act and interact to life and other people; *reputation*—what people perceive or think about you. Distribute paper and pens or pencils.

Get set • Everyone needs to know a little about everyone else. So if there are people who are new, or visitors, you might have them introduce themselves to the group and share a little about who they are, what they like to do, what they don't like to do, and so on. This activity can be done in pairs or in groups. However, if it seems as if grouping or pairs might be too threatening for your class, bring in an adult guest the class knows and use the same questions. Write the three questions on a whiteboard or chalkboard.

Go • Have students write positive descriptions of the character, personality, and reputation of their partner, the person to their right in their group, or the adult guest, whichever applies.

1. What are some *character* qualities that you see in this person?
2. How would you describe their *personality*? What words would you use?
3. What are some positive things you think others would say (*reputation*) about this person and the way they live?

Debriefing • Ask: Of the three, which does a person have the most control over? In other words, which can you develop and what can you change? (*Character* is who you really are, something that you and the Holy Spirit can work on and develop. *Personality* [the visible aspect of your character and how it impresses others] is more or less who you are. Obviously it will change some over time as your character changes. You can do things to have a good *reputation* or a bad one, but it is mostly dependent on what other people see and think, and you have only a certain amount of control over that.)

B. APPLICATION ACTIVITY, Part 2

Say: Now let's pretend that God is in this chair, and let's ask the same questions about Him. Refer to the questions on the board. Again in pairs, groups, or all together, have students answer them. Challenge them to be honest with the reputation section—What do others really say about God? What kind of reputation does He have among various groups of people? They can refer to the Monday and Wednesday sections of their student lessons as well as any other passages they might think of. Share the results with the class.

Debriefing • Ask: Why do you think it is good to consider the particulars of our character? (Sometimes we just go through life and don't notice if we are getting off track or not.) What passage in today's lesson speaks to your life the most right now? Why? If you were to develop one character quality this week, which one would you strive for? Why? How does knowing the Person behind the precept (rule) help you make better choices about life? (Sometimes the right choice gets fuzzy, and just a rule you memorize doesn't necessarily answer the "Why?" question. Knowing the Person gives you an idea of what the right choice looks like in person.)

C. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is the most difficult part of developing a Godlike character?
2. Agree or disagree and tell why: "Developing a Christlike character is more difficult today than in other generations before you."
3. In which of the ten commandments can you clearly see the precept, principle, and person of God? Which commandments are more difficult? Can you see the face of God in the rules you live with? Why or why not?
4. What passages from the Bible really

speak to you about your character?

5. How does the process of being “filled” (like the water exercise) relate to the fruit of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22, 23?**
6. Where does an inner sense of “justice” come from when you witness an innocent person being mistreated? Is this just a “human thing” that exists in society naturally?
7. What are some obvious character qualities that most cultures (Christian or non-Christian) would agree on? What are some unique qualities you think Christians should have? Why?
8. Is it more difficult to be who you are when no one is looking or someone you are not when everyone is looking? (Think of Ananias and Sapphira, and Peter with the Gentiles.)
9. The whole idea of “what goes in will come out” is often repeated to young people. To what degree do you think this principle is true? Can you give an example? Are there any exceptions? Explain.
10. A doctor once said, “Ninety percent of all depressions are caused by holding significant grudges toward God, self, and/or others.” What character quality would release “90 percent” of people from their depression?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

It seems to be a common belief that “rules change, times change, people change.” But consider the human heroes of history who have made the biggest impact in our world. What character qualities did they possess? Honesty, grace, justice, compassion, courage, and purity are all timeless principles based upon the person of God. Trace every good law back as far as you can, and you will discover that rules such as “Be nice” or “Thou shalt not murder” find their source in the person of God, who has made human life sacred. Why? God is the very source of life. It is no wonder that when people would question Jesus about the rules of “being good,” He would draw their attention to timeless portraits of His Father in heaven.

STUDENT LESSON

A large orange number '2' is centered within a silver circular frame, resembling a button or a coin.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Make Me Like Joe"

January 10, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 22, Christian Behavior:** "We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things that will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 91-93

"MAKE ME LIKE JOE"

Story 1. Prior to his conversion, Joe had gained the reputation of being a dirty wino for whom there was no hope, only a miserable existence in the ghetto. But following his conversion to a new life with God, everything changed. Joe became the most caring person those at the mission had ever known. Joe spent his days and nights hanging out at the mission doing whatever needed to be done. There was never any task that was too lowly for Joe to take on. There

was never anything that he was asked to do that he considered beneath him. Whether it was cleaning up the vomit left by some violently sick alcoholic or scrubbing the toilets after careless men left the bathroom filthy, Joe did what was asked with a smile on his face and with a seeming gratitude for the chance to help.

One evening when the director of the mission was delivering his evening evangelistic message to the usual crowd, there was one man who looked up, came down the aisle to the altar, and knelt to pray, crying out for God to help him to change. The repentant drunk kept shouting, "O God, make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe!"

The director of the mission leaned over and said to the man, "Son, I think it would be better if you prayed, 'Make me like Jesus!'"

The man looked up to the director with a quizzical expression on his face and asked, "Is He like Joe?"—Wayne Rice, *More Hot Illustrations for Youth Talks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), pp. 114, 115.

Story 2. At a national spelling contest in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., an incident occurred that made me wonder. In the fourth round of the contest Rosalie Elliot, then an 11-year-old from South Carolina, was asked to spell *avowal*. In her soft Southern accent she spelled it. But did the seventh grader use an *a* or an *e* as the next-to-the-last letter? The judges couldn't decide. For several minutes they listened to tape recording playbacks, but the critical letter was accent-blurred. Chief judge John Lloyd

finally put the question to the only person who knew the answer, "Was the letter an a or was it an e?" he asked Rosalie. Surrounded by whispering young spellers, she knew by now the correct spelling of the word. Without hesitating, she replied that she had misspelled it. She walked from the stage.

The entire audience stood and applauded, including half a hundred newspaper reporters, one of whom was heard to remark that Judge Lloyd had put quite a burden on an 11-year-old.

—James S. Hewitt, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1988), pp. 62, 63.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read John 1:47.
- » While shopping in a store, you notice a young boy acting suspiciously. Standing in the toy section, he hides an item in his pocket, thinking no one has seen him. What would you do? You could do nothing and let the kid learn his lesson the hard way. You might say something to him. If so, what would you say?

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

- » Read Philippians 4:8; 1 John 2:6; Philippians 2:4.
- » Our purpose in life isn't to satisfy our own desires. We should find fulfillment in helping others learn of Jesus. The more time we spend with Jesus, the more we become like Him. And the more we become like Him, the more others will see Him in us.
- » In what ways do you reflect God and His love to those around you?

- » Use the word chart to write out the text that tells us how we should treat others. To find the first word, find the word in the chart that correlates to E7. The second word will correlate to A5. Each word will follow the same pattern. Not all words are used.

"E7 A5 D2 F4, C2, B1 E3 C7 D4 B3, B6 D2 D6
A2 F3 A3 F7 A6, F5, C3 F1 B3, D8 E5 A2 C8
A1, E1 B4 D1 D3 E6 F1 F6 B7, E2 D3 C4 D7
E3 C6 D4 A2 B2, B6 D2 B5 F8 E4 E5 B6 D5
E1 C3 E1 A4 A8 D4 B3" (C5 C1 A7, F2).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	service	by	12:	not	and	to
2	your	mind	brethren	you	but	NKJV
3	a	God	acceptable	be	the	bodies
4	perfect	do	transformed	of	what	therefore
5	beseech	may	Romans	good	is	holy
6	sacrifice	that	renewing	present	conformed	this
7	1, 2	world	mercies	by	I	living
8	will	said	reasonable	which	love	prove

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Ephesians 5:1, NKJV.
- » Young people are clearly heard by the Savior when they ask, "What's the point of all this?" The Savior smiles and says, "I knew you were going to ask that! I made you in such a way that you would ask that question!" (Read **Deuteronomy 6:20**.) God's goal has never been for us to mindlessly obey a bunch of rules. God wants us to know Him, and to be changed into His image by getting a look at Him *through* His rules. God has given us some windows into His living room to see what He is like. So the question

"What's the point?" should be "Who's the point?" Often the question "Who gets to make the rules?" is asked in a sassy, confrontational way—challenging authority and demanding independence. But if it becomes an honest question about knowing the "who," then there is a God who is eager to reveal the answer to us.

- » In every culture there are values—written or unstated rules that people live by. Also in every culture there are heroes, people who are the very picture of what that culture believes to be good, right, and true. Christ is our greatest hero, who banishes the ridiculous claim that Christianity is all about rules. Christians are all about a Person. The marks of that Person (love, kindness, goodness, honesty, peace, courage, etc.) make the world a better place.

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

- » Look up the following Bible texts and fill in the blanks.

1. "But the _____ of the _____ is _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____. Against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23, NIV).

2. "When they saw the _____ of Peter and John and _____ that they were _____, _____, they were astonished and they took note that these men had _____" (Acts 4:13, NIV).

3. "And we have _____ and _____ the _____ that God has for us. _____ is _____, and he who abides in love

abides in God, and God in him. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is _____ in love; but _____, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 John 4:16-18, NKJV).

4. "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your _____ to indulge the _____; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire _____ is fulfilled in keeping this one command: '_____ your neighbor as _____. If you bite and _____ each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Galatians 5:13-15, NIV).

5. "Beloved, let us _____, for love is of God; and _____ is born of God and _____ God. He who does not love does not know God, for _____. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might _____" (1 John 4:7-9, NKJV).

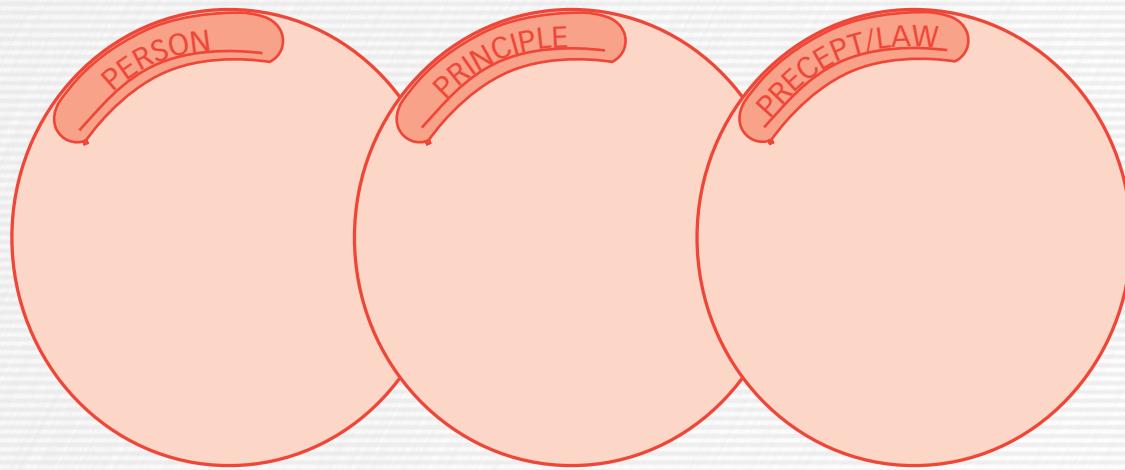
Thursday **CONNECTING**

- » Read Matthew 22:36-40.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Have you ever looked at a three-dimensional picture and tried to see the hidden picture? It can be difficult at times, but the more you do it, the better you get at seeing through the picture to the image behind. Sometimes we forget to see the person of God in the rules and the qualities of truth, purity, faithful-

ness, justice, and so on. But remember that God wants to reveal Himself to you through His Word. He isn't interested in your seeing "just" the rules. Even knowing why we should be honest is not enough for God. He wants you to discover Him! He is not some mystical cloud or a ghostlike force. He is our loving Father. He knows we will be better off becoming more like Him. He doesn't want us to become like others who are only pre-occupied with their own pursuits. What an honor to be a child of God. What a joy it is to follow in His footsteps. What a day it will be to see Him face to face and recognize Him because He is everything you have chosen to become.

Friday APPLYING

- » Read Titus 2:11, 12.
- » Choose one character quality you feel God is calling you to work on. Who do you know today that demonstrates that quality? How? Who in the Bible demonstrates that quality? How? How do you see that quality in the person of God? Reflect on other rules you live by and trace them back to the person of God, or, start with what you love about God and work your way toward what He says to do.
- » Choose a kingdom citizen/person you know that you want to be like. In the first circle, write their name and what you love most about them (**person**). In the second circle, write a general principle of life they live by (**principle**). In the third circle, write out a law that you think they would write about that principle if they were asked to write a law (**precept**).



3

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

The Blind Men and the Elephant

January 17, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 4:10 (NIV) • “Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”’”

Luke 10:17-20 (NIV) • “The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’ He replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’”

John 10:7-10 (NIV) • “Therefore Jesus said again, ‘Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.’”

Romans 6:16-18 (NIV) • “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that,

though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

Romans 8:28-31 (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. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

James 4:4 (NIV) • “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”

1 John 2:15,16 (NIV) • “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

“The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan’s deceptive power was to be broken.

This could not be done by force. . . . To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22).

(See also Ezekiel 28:13-19; Ephesians 6:10-18, and additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "THE GREAT CONTROVERSY"

This week we look at what it means to be caught in the cross fire of the cosmic spiritual battle, and how to safeguard the heart and mind in the quest toward eventual and eternal victory. The fight is about character—God's character. Some might imagine God and Satan dueling vicious blows back and forth. But Satan is a being created by God, and God could destroy the enemy in a heartbeat. But love is more powerful than might, and God is true to His system of government of love and freedom.

Several themes emerge from this supernatural scenario: (1) that God's character is questioned; (2) that human perceptions are narrow and shortsighted; (3) that Satan attacks from the inside and the outside; and (4) how God's citizens are to live in light of Satan's certain demise. Ultimately this lesson is about seeing God for who He really is and not just basing our perception of God on one-second snapshots. As we look more carefully, we see more clearly, and our loyalty to our King deepens.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "THE GREAT CONTROVERSY"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Observe the ways that perceptions govern relationships.
2. Distinguish the character qualities of both God and Lucifer.
3. Choose not to smear, but to clear God's name in their daily lives.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) an adult church member with an interesting life, strips of paper with questions to ask; (Activity B) bowl of mixed fruits* (or other items), paper, pens/pencils.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • (Activity A) Bibles, student lessons.

* Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Choose someone from your congregation who has an interesting life that the students already know something about. The object is to deepen and broaden the students' perception of this person by asking the person questions that give the students a much clearer sense of who this person is.

Get set • Give the students strips of paper with questions to ask the person, such as how they grew up, what their school experience was like, accomplishments that have gone unnoticed, hobbies, skills, embarrassing moments, and so on.

Go • Call on the various students with question strips to ask the questions one at a time.

Debriefing • Thank the person for participating and let them leave. Then **ask**: **What was your first impression of this person or original perception before they shared? What did you discover that was new? Think about how you form an opinion of someone. To what degree are first impressions true? And how can they be false? Why? What personal experiences can you think of in which your first impressions were true/false?**

Ask: Could it be that the reason people come to God or walk away from Him has to do with their initial impressions or perceptions of Him? How much knowledge do people need to make a truly informed decision about God?

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Bring a bowl of mixed fruits* (or any other combination of items). Have students sit in a circle around the bowl or items. **Say**: I want you to be observers and write a careful and thorough description of what you see in front of you. Have students read their observations and remark on the wide range of perceptions. Some will be detailed, some thematic, some general. (You might have them pair up with someone else to share their observations

before they report to the whole class.)

Ask: Everyone is looking at the same thing. However, everyone described it differently. How does this illustrate people and their perceptions of God?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

The Duke of Wellington commanded the victorious forces at the great battle of Waterloo that effectively ended the Napoleonic Wars. The story has been told that when the battle was over, Wellington sent the great news of his victory to England. A series of stations, one within sight of the next, had been established to send coded messages between England and the European continent. The message to be sent was "Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo." Meanwhile a fog set in and interrupted the message sending. As a result, people saw only "Wellington defeated." Later the fog cleared and the full message continued, which was quite different from the outcome that the people originally thought had happened!

—Michael P. Green, *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), p. 304.

Ask: How much of the message of God's character do you think we have received? (We probably don't have access to all of it, but enough to love and trust Him.) **Is the full message available?** (As much as we need is available in the Bible. We always have to trust Him about some of it.) **What part of the message usually gets fogged out?** (How much He loves us. That He does not bring evil on the world. That His love doesn't mean He isn't serious about getting rid of sin.)

* Be aware of any food allergies and adjust accordingly.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Imagine if the day before the Super Bowl or the World Cup you could speed forward in time and know the outcome of the game. If you knew who the winner was going to be, you could side with the winning team. Knowing the winner is kind of a strange luxury, but based on what we know from Scripture, God has already won the great controversy between good and evil. The game is over. The trophy is engraved. The hats and T-shirts are all printed. The parade is about to begin. But the war between God and Satan is not entirely like a ball game. God has conquered sin, He made provision for salvation, He died and paid the debt for humanity's sin, and rose from the grave victorious. It's over! Right? The game *is* over, in a way. But in a way it's not.

Ask: How is the controversy between Christ and Satan not over? The truth is, God may have conquered sin and death, but has He captured your heart? Does He alone have your loyalty and devotion? Everything depends on what you think of Him, doesn't it?

Say: God is right, but the devil does everything in his power to keep people from believing Him. To keep them from seeing the whole picture.

Ask: From what you have heard or what you might think, what are some issues people have that keep them from choosing God as their king?

(Distribute student lessons and refer to the Bible passages in Wednesday's section.)

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Tell, read, or ask a volunteer to read the poem "The Blind Men and the Elephant" from the student lesson.

Ask: How does this poem describe the power of perceptions? How does this relate to the perceptions people have about God? Can you think of some analogies? (The devil tries to blind people to the whole truth about God.) What are some things that people think God is like because of one quality they have experienced? (Perhaps they have experienced the death of loved ones and blame the evil on God because He did not prevent it.) How can they come to see and understand "the whole picture"? (Through God's Word, the works of His Spirit, and the life of His Son.)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Share the following anecdote:

A person is in line at the grocery store behind a mother and child. When the mother and child move away, the person steps up and sees the cashier taking money from the cash drawer and stuffing it into her pocket. The person suspects that the cashier is stealing, but the cashier smiles as if unperturbed.

Ask: What would be your first impression? (She's a thief, and not a very bright one. Maybe she cashed a check. Give her the benefit of the doubt!)

Share the rest of the anecdote:

As it turned out, the woman with the child had forgotten her wallet at home and had gone all the way through line before noticing. The cashier had paid for the groceries out of her pocket and the grateful woman had promised to return later to repay her. This was verified because the person who witnessed the cashier's behavior called the manager and told what they had seen. The cashier was questioned, and the manager called the concerned person back.

Say: That person's view was narrow. They failed to see the whole picture. The great

controversy between Christ and Satan is similar. We see only snapshots of God. Our goal is to be as fully informed about God as we can be by studying His Word, listening to the Holy Spirit, and studying the life of Jesus. Distribute the student lesson. Have the students look over the passages in Wednesday's section and put a check by the passages that challenge us to make an informed choice one way or another about which kingdom we will be loyal to.

Additional passages to help us be fully informed:

- >> The story of good and evil: **Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:13-19; Revelation 12:7-11.**
- >> God's character: **Jeremiah 31:3, 4; John 3:16; John 10:7-10.**
- >> People who don't know Him and therefore compromise: **Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 7:3; 1 Kings 18:20, 21; 2 Kings 17:33, 41; Matthew 6:24.**
- >> How to be informed citizens of God's kingdom: **Matthew 4:10; Luke 10:17-20; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 John 2:15, 16.**

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Say: In a discussion on the great controversy between Christ and Satan, one teenager responded, "So there's a war between God and the devil. What does that have to do with me? I'm a lover, not a fighter!" All of that may be true, but this controversy is an attack on God's character, and it is an attack on you.

Ask: How does Satan attack us? (From inside and from outside.) Let's find and read **Ephesians 6:10-18. How does he attack us from the outside?** (He pummels us by the working of his demonic forces.) Let's find and read **Romans 7:21-25. How does he attack us from within?** (We are attacked from within by our sinful nature, which has been a part of our

bloodline ever since Adam and Eve sinned.)

Present the following ideas in your own words:

If you recall from Friday's section of your lesson, the internal war for your loyalty to God is like having two lions living inside you—the lion of good and the lion of evil. They fight. If you feed and strengthen the bad lion and starve the good lion, who wins the fight? If you feed both lions equally, what is the outcome? A nasty, exhausting brawl of wills to be loyal to God or be loyal to the self-centered kingdom of Satan. Of course, what happens if you feed the good lion and starve the bad lion? The bad lion loses his ability to conquer day in and day out.

Ask: Of the passages in the Monday and Wednesday sections of your lesson, which one speaks to you personally? What does feeding the good lion inside look like in everyday life? (Prayer, Bible study, service, obedience.) What does feeding the bad lion look like in everyday life? (Giving in to selfishness, being disobedient, feeding our minds on propaganda from the other kingdom.) Do any of you who have already completed Friday's section of the lesson have other answers that you'd like to share with the class?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Agree or disagree: Most people never really think about what they believe to be true about God—they just believe what they see!
2. Either/Or: What do you think is more important to know about the great controversy, why God allows suffering or what He promises to do about it?
3. Continuum: From my viewpoint of the Bible, is God more just or more kind? (There is no precise middle. Pick a side.)

JUST	1	2	3	4	5	6	KIND
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4. What are some of the promises of victory in the Monday and Wednesday sections of your lesson?
5. How does knowing how the game will end and who will win help us in our daily fight?

What are some specific ways to keep this truth in front of us?

6. Can you think of examples of how people form serious opinions about God without getting accurate information?
7. What does God say about living a double life?
8. How do we overcome the advances of our accuser?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

The great controversy isn't really about Satan. It's about God. We all know that Satan is wrong, evil, and lost. But God's reputation is on trial. When we see only a small portion of the picture, it is difficult to choose to be in His kingdom. That is why we have Scripture. God wants more than anything else for you to know the truth about Him. The Scripture is His way of letting you see who He really is. The only way to really know is to look at what He has already revealed and let Him prove His goodness to us in an abiding friendship. Most people would never sign up to be best friends with the devil. But in the middle is where many stay—not committing one way or another. Now, does that make much sense? Again, look at the short-term and long-term benefits of being in God's kingdom. Imagine a time when we will be able to see Him for who He really is, more than just snapshots.

STUDENT LESSON

3

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

The Blind Men and the Elephant

January 17, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 8, The Great Controversy:**
"All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. . . . To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 109, 110

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

"It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

"The First approached the Elephant,
And, happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl,

'God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!'

"The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, 'Ho! What have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!'

"The Third approached the animal,
And, happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a snake!'

"The Fourth reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
'What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,' quoth he;
'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!'

"The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said, 'E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!'

"The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Then seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,

'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a rope!'

"And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

"So oft in theologic wars
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!"

—John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887).

Sunday **RESPONDING**

- » Read Romans 5:12.
- » The main reason people stay away from Christianity is that they have a hard time with what other people say about God and what they think they see God doing or not doing in our world. Here are three questions that young and old have shared as to why they don't believe in God or choose to follow Him:
 1. If God is good, then why do evil and bad seem to reign in the world?
 2. If God is all-powerful, why doesn't He do something about pain and suffering?
 3. If God is supposed to be so close, why do I feel only His absence?
- » How would you answer these questions? You may choose one or all.

Monday **BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE GREAT CONTROVERSY**

- » Read Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:12-21; 1 Peter 5:8.

» There has been enmity [hostility] between God and His children and Satan and his followers since Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden. The devil does not want us to trust and know God. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to resist the devil and follow God.

- » What do these verses say to you about the great controversy?

- » Unscramble the scrambled words and use them to fill in the blanks in the verse below.

lanelf	tehra	nrtoh
iLurfce	escand	nudrog
nngormi	rtsa	torhen
naeekdwe	rogenoatiang	ehhgosit

"How you are _____ from heaven, O _____, son of the _____. How you are cut down to the _____, you who _____ the nations! For you have said in your _____: 'I will _____ into heaven, I will exalt my _____ above the _____ of God; I will also sit on the mount of the _____ on the farthest sides of the _____; I will ascend above the _____ of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'" (Isaiah 14:12-14, NKJV).

Tuesday **REFLECTING**

- » Read Romans 8:19-22.
- » Have you heard songs on the radio or listened to people talk about prayer in the news, magazines, and in movies? The world is not afraid to talk about God anymore, but

what are they saying? The problem is that many know that there is a God, but rarely do people agree on what He is like. While many speculate, Christians have a message about God, and it is not just a snapshot; it is a view of the big picture. If you stand in front of a painting on the wall with your nose two inches from the canvas, you see up close but only a small portion.

- » The great controversy, as explained in the Bible, has been the most amazing topic for many because it paints the big picture, and when you step back to see it, you can make sense out of the little parts in the scene. What if someone had the answer to "Why is this world so bad?" Do you think people might listen? What if someone had the answer to the question "Will there ever be a time when there is no pain?" Do you think people might be curious? What if someone had a good answer to the heart cry "Is God really there, and does He know me?" Do you know some people who might listen? God has spoken to us through His Word, and while we don't know everything, we see enough of the truth to say, "Choose God. He's worth it."

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Match the words that go with the texts from the New International Version of the Bible. When you match the correct words with their texts, draw a line from the words to their text.

Revelation 12:7-11	LORD hearts serve Philistines
Romans 7:21-25	Israel Ahab Baal follow
Matthew 6:24	worshiped LORD customs nations
2 Kings 17:33	fallen throne clouds Most High
1 Kings 18:20, 21	ancestors Euphrates Amorites household

1 Samuel 7:3	heaven war Michael blood testimony
Joshua 24:15	serve masters God money
Isaiah 14:12-14	law work body Jesus Christ Lord sin

Thursday

CONNECTING

- » Read Joshua 24:15.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Young people often say, "I don't care what others think of me. If they don't like me for who I am, then forget them!" Is it really true that we don't care what others think of us? We do care. In fact, God created us with the capacity to care and feel hurt if others don't care. We may choose to live as if their opinions don't affect us, but we do care, especially if we are being misunderstood or falsely accused.
- » You can be sure that God cares what you think about Him. The most important thing a human can learn is what they believe about God. Why do you think God has stepped into our world to communicate to us what He is like and what His thoughts about us are? What about the times when God has spoken—at the Red Sea? in the fire from Mount Carmel? through David and Goliath? during Gideon's miraculous victory? with Daniel in the lions' den? at the feeding of the 5,000? the healing of the leper? the calming of the sea? What about Calvary?
- » God has spoken to you through His Word, and although everything has not been explained, you have enough information to say yes to God. God has more than said yes to you. He has endured centuries of people's misunderstanding Him just for your love and friendship.

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read Romans 7:21-25.
- » The internal war for your loyalty to God is like having two lions living inside you—the lion of good and the lion of evil. Here's a challenge. Pick three things you want to do to feed the good lion (things that feed and strengthen your connection to God). Also, consider what you normally feed the bad lion (things that draw you away from God and others) and choose to starve it this week. See how things go, and then reflect on the week and the way it has affected your awareness of the war between God and Satan and the role you play in that battle zone.



» **What am I going to do to feed the good lion?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



» **What am I going to do to starve the bad lion?**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

ILLUSTRATIONS: TERRY CREWS



4

THE SINNER'S NEED

Rock Bottom

January 24, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Jeremiah 13:23 (NIV) • “Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”

John 6:29, 30 (NIV) • “Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’ So they asked him, ‘What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?’ ”

Romans 3:23 (NIV) • “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Acts 2:37, 38 (NIV) • “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ ”

Acts 8:34-39 (NIV) • “The eunuch asked Philip, ‘Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?’ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?’ And he gave orders to stop the chariot.

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.”

Acts 16:30, 31 (NIV) • “He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’ ”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “THE SINNER'S NEED”

It's the most basic and important message in the whole Bible—salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Easy words to say, especially for lifelong Christians—but for someone in your Earliteen class, it might be a revolutionary new concept that hits them for the very first time.

As you teach this lesson, keep the students' focus—and your own—clearly on the fact that we need God. We can't earn salvation alone. Some people have to “hit rock bottom” before they can admit their need of God.

As Christian teachers and youth leaders our goal is to encourage young people to accept Jesus into their lives *before* they reach the point of failure and despair. Young people need to have a sense of their need for God, but also of the potential they can reach with His power.

Keep the focus clearly on grace in this lesson. We rightly spend much time with young people at this age talking about rules and behavior—at home, at school, even in church. But the message that grace is God’s free gift of love can’t be overemphasized. Hammer it home.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "THE SINNER'S NEED"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand that salvation is a totally free gift from God.
2. Know that they have a need for God, no matter how good or bad they may be.
3. Respond to a call to give their heart to Jesus.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) inexpensive gifts in gift-wrapped boxes, one better gift-wrapped treat; copies of your own puzzle, or the word search (p. 46); pens or pencils; (Activity B) sets of opposite words on slips of paper, cellophane tape or pins.

Connecting • Bibles, whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk, student lessons.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Bring a number of small gift-wrapped boxes to class—as many as you have students. In all but one of the boxes place very small, inexpensive gifts such as bookmarks, pencils, erasers. Have one more valuable gift you know most of your class members would like, such as a CD, a gift certificate, something they'll value.

Get set • As students come in to class, hand out the word search activity (see p. 46) or a copy of your own Bible quiz or puzzle. The activity is designed to be fairly easy; you can allow or even encourage students to work together so that everyone will complete it.

Go • The person who finishes first will probably announce that they have done so, but simply ask them to wait till everyone else has finished. After allowing enough time, announce that since everyone has completed the word search puzzle, everyone will get a prize. Hand out the prize boxes randomly, but make sure the most valuable prize does *not* go to the person who completed the puzzle first.

Debriefing • Ask: How did you feel about the gifts you got? (They were OK; nothing special.) How did you feel about the gift (name of person who got the valuable gift) got? (That was better.) Did they do anything to deserve that? (No) Ask the person who finished first if they felt cheated by not getting the better gift. How do we usually feel when we get good things we don't deserve? (Pretty happy and lucky) Is God fair? (Yes, no. We expect Him to be. Not if it means He gives everybody exactly what they deserve.) Does God give us what we deserve, or does He give us less or more than we deserve? There may be a variety of answers here if the students are being honest, because many of them are dealing with circumstances in their lives that do not seem fair, or that they don't deserve. Point out that you will be continuing to explore the answer to this question throughout the lesson.

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Make up lists of words that belong in pairs (for example: "bread-butter," "Adam-Eve" or "David-Goliath" or "Daniel-lions' den," "knife-fork," "sun-moon," etc.). When you have enough to be able to assign one word to each class member, write the individual words on small slips of paper.

Get set • Bring the slips of paper and some cellophane tape or pins to class. As students arrive, tape a word on their backs.

Go • They will have to guess what or who they are by asking only yes or no questions of other people, and then each person needs to find their partner. When all the pairs have found each other, sit back down and debrief.

Debriefing • Ask: How frustrating was it not knowing what word was on your back? Was it fun or annoying trying to find out? (Somewhat annoying because everyone was focused on their own need to find out what their word was.) Once you knew who you were, how difficult was it to find your partner? (Pretty easy then.) How

did it feel knowing you were supposed to "belong" with someone else in the group but not knowing whom? (Just wanted to find them.) Have you ever felt as if you were incomplete or something was missing from your life?

Ask: Some people believe we all have this feeling at times, and that it shows we have a need for God. What do you think about this idea?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Jeff and Sara are both attending a Christian school. Jeff is in school only because his dad pulled some strings with the principal. He got kicked out of his last school for cheating; over the summer he was arrested for starting a fight, and now he is on probation; and he is just back at school after a week's suspension for cutting class.

Sara is student council president, captain of the girls' volleyball team, and the top student in her class. She's active in her church's teen group, sings in the youth choir, and goes to church each week. She loves to be involved in school and church activities, although she doesn't consider herself "super-religious" or anything.

Ask: Who needs God more, Jeff or Sara? Whom does God care more about? Who would have a more difficult time giving his or her heart to Jesus?

Through discussion, lead students toward the idea that everyone has a need for God. No one is too "good" or too "bad" to be saved. Everyone needs Jesus in their lives—all they need to do is realize and admit they have a need.



CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

If you did Activity A for Beginning, start with the idea that today's lesson is about getting something you don't deserve—something that's

not available to just one person, but to everyone.

If you started with Activity B for Beginning, link with the idea that every person has a need for God whether they know it or not—this lesson is about how we fill that need.

Ask: Do you agree that everyone needs God?

(Some people seem to more than others.)

What about people who say they don't? (That doesn't seem right, but some people are pretty good.) **Are they just kidding themselves, or have they not realized they need God; or are there genuinely some people who can get by without God?** After students have discussed this for a while, read together **Romans 3:23**.

Say: The Bible tells us that everyone has sinned, and that even people who act nice and are happy and well adjusted still fall way short of God's glory. Yet God wants everyone in His kingdom. He looks at each person, messed-up as they may be, and sees a potential citizen for His kingdom.

Ask: How is God going to bridge the gap between what we are (sinful human beings), and what He wants us to be—citizens of His eternal kingdom? (Even if we are not sure how He does it, it is obvious that we can't do it ourselves.) Find and read **Jeremiah 13:23** aloud together.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Ask: Do you think most people need to hit "rock bottom" before they can make a change in their lives? Why or why not? Does God wait for us to hit rock bottom? (He is always calling us to let Him make a change in us.) **Can God save someone who's living a pretty good life and hasn't sinned all that badly yet?** (He can save them, but first they must realize that it isn't their "good life" that is able to save them.) **Can He save someone**

who has made a total mess of their lives?

(Yes, but they still may bear some of the scars that result from their choices.) **Can God save someone who says, "I'm fine the way I am. I don't need God?"** (He will never save someone against their will.)

Through discussion, bring out the idea that God can save *anyone*. We don't have to be at "rock bottom"—in fact, God would rather we come to Him when we're young and haven't made a mess of our lives—but sometimes people who have messed up badly are more likely to recognize their need of Him.

Say: The person most difficult for God to save is the person who doesn't recognize they have a need.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

A friend who attends another Christian church asks you, "Are you saved?" or "Are you born again?" What would you say?

Help the students formulate responses by posing the following questions: **Does your answer relate to whether or not you were born in a Christian family? whether you've been baptized or not? whether you've ever gone up front during an altar call at church, week of prayer, or youth rally?** (Point out that any or all of these may be an opportunity for you to give your heart to Jesus, but giving your heart to Him can also be a private experience between you and God, completely outside any church or religious setting.) **Is being "saved" always a one-time thing, or can it happen over a period of time?** (The experience of giving your life to Jesus is different for everybody. Just because we hear dramatic stories of people who were converted in a single moment doesn't mean it's that way for everyone.) **How can you be sure you've given your heart to God? Is there something inside—or outside—that can tell you for sure?** (Lead students toward the idea of having an assurance of salvation—if we've asked God to forgive us and accepted Jesus,

we can know in our hearts by faith we're saved right now because that is what He has told us in the Bible.) It is a good idea to begin each day in prayer, surrendering your heart and life to God.

Have volunteers find and read the following texts: **Acts 16:30, 31; Acts 8:34-39; John 6:29, 30; Acts 2:37, 38.**

Ask: What do these texts tell us about coming to Jesus? What do we need to do? Make a list of key points where all can see.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Divide the class into pairs. In each pair, one person is to role-play the part of someone who doesn't know anything about Christianity or how to become a Christian. Their partner should try to explain to them what it means to accept Jesus and how to do it, using Bible verses and whatever other examples or illustrations they find helpful. Direct the "non-Christian" partner to ask questions and make the exercise challenging for the "Christian" partner. When all pairs have had a few minutes to work through this exercise, invite a couple of pairs (how many will depend on time) who you know will be comfortable doing this to act out their role play for the whole class.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. If becoming a Christian is so easy, why do some people seem to find it so hard?

2. What would you say to someone who said they just couldn't believe in Jesus?
3. Could God forgive a serial killer? Why or why not?
4. If a person is basically living a good life, why do they need God?
5. What would you say to someone who says, "I gave my heart to Jesus, but I really don't feel any different"?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

God is recruiting citizens for His kingdom. He knows our potential. He can see us as we could be, as He wants to make us. He wants everyone, no matter who they are, what they've done, or where they come from. That means you. The only entrance requirement is that you let the Spirit convince you that you need God in your life. That means recognizing that you can't make it into heaven on your own—and also that you can't live your best possible life here on this earth without God's power. If you've never made that total commitment of giving your heart to Jesus, maybe today's the day to do it. And if you have made it before, remember that, like any relationship, your friendship with Jesus needs to be kept alive by talking to each other and doing stuff together regularly. Maybe it's time to renew that friendship and renew that commitment again today.

WORD SEARCH

FOR LESSON 4: This puzzle may be used for Beginning Activity A.

Find words from this week's Bible verses in the word search below. Words can be backward, forward, up, down, or diagonal.

FAITH

NEW PERSON

SINNERS

SAVED

DEMONSTRATES

LOVED

BELONGS

ETERNAL

DEATH

SIN

Q	F	A	I	T	H	W	E	R	N	T	Y	U	I	O	S
C	Z	A	S	S	D	F	G	H	E	H	J	K	L	P	R
X	C	V	B	N	M	E	Q	E	W	L	R	T	Y	U	E
M	N	B	V	X	Z	T	A	S	P	C	O	V	B	P	N
B	M	J	H	G	F	E	D	S	E	V	C	V	B	O	N
E	U	Y	T	R	E	R	W	Q	R	S	D	V	E	I	I
L	I	O	I	U	Y	N	R	E	S	E	D	W	N	D	S
O	O	P	D	E	V	A	S	D	O	S	C	E	M	U	Z
N	F	G	E	F	G	L	R	T	N	R	Q	A	K	Y	X
G	D	H	A	F	H	L	T	G	G	T	W	S	J	T	C
S	S	J	T	D	J	I	G	B	H	Y	E	D	H	R	V
U	A	K	H	S	K	F	F	D	J	U	T	F	G	E	B
Y	Q	O	Y	A	L	E	Y	Q	U	I	F	G	F	W	N
T	W	N	T	Q	P	U	T	W	I	O	I	H	D	Q	M
R	I	I	R	W	O	I	R	E	O	P	G	J	S	A	K
S	E	U	E	S	E	T	A	R	T	S	N	O	M	E	D

Answers at end of Student Lesson

STUDENT LESSON

4

THE SINNER'S NEED

Rock Bottom

January 24, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 10, The Experience of Salvation:** "Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. . . . Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 103-106

ROCK BOTTOM

Bill was a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army when he had his first drink. At 22 years of age he had a good career ahead of him. He was well on his way to making a success from a life that had gotten off to a rough start. His father's alcoholism had broken up Bill's parents' marriage when he was just a kid, and he'd been raised by his grandparents. But it looked as if Bill would overcome that rough start until he found out that, just like his dad, he loved to drink.

By the time he was in his 30s Bill was a

wreck. Whereas once he used to drink to celebrate a successful business deal, now he couldn't hold down a job. He and his wife were living in her parents' house because they couldn't afford a home of their own. Bill was so down and out that he sometimes begged for cash on the street. He was hospitalized four times to try to quit drinking.

One day in 1934 Bill gave up. He admitted that he couldn't do anything to break the power of alcoholism in his life. It was up to God to help him out.

Seventy years later the organization Bill W. founded, Alcoholics Anonymous, has more than 2 million members in 150 countries, as well as dozens of spin-off groups including Alateen. The very first steps of the program are to admit that you are powerless over your problem and to ask a higher power for help.

As Christians, citizens of God's kingdom, we know God is our higher power. Alcoholics talk about having to hit rock bottom, even if that means begging for money on the street, before they realize how much they need help. But we're not all homeless or down-and-out. Many of us are pretty well-off, popular, clean-living people, aren't we? Do we all need to hit rock bottom before we can accept God's offer to help us?

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read John 3:16.
- » It's the last evening of your church's Week of

Prayer meeting, and the pastor's making an appeal for people to give their hearts to God. The lights are low, the music is playing, the Holy Spirit is working.

- » But from your place in the back row you feel confused. Lately nothing seems to be going right at school, at home, even with your friends. You wonder if "giving your heart to Jesus," like the preacher says, would make a big difference. What would it even mean? What would your friends think if you stood up and walked to the front? How will your life change if you take this step?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

- » Read John 3:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Titus 3:3-7.
- » God loves you. He sent His Son to die in your place so you might live forever with Him. He has also sent the Holy Spirit to help you resist the devil and live a life filled with His goodness and love.
- » What in your life is holding you back from making the life-changing decision to live a life for Him instead of yourself?

- » Unscramble the words below and write out the verse on the lines below.

power forgiveness us have 13, 14 the conveyed whom blood His delivered NKJV we kingdom He through of 1: has of us of and love His of darkness Colossians from in sins the redemption the Son into the

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read Ephesians 2:8, 9.
- » What does it mean to "accept Jesus" or "give your heart to God"? Do you have to "hit rock bottom" first?
- » If you grew up in church, you've probably heard about "salvation" for as long as you can remember. Now it's time to find out what it means for you, personally.
- » It isn't just about getting baptized because you're "old enough" and all your friends are doing it. It isn't even about going up to the front after a special meeting when the preacher has everyone feeling kind of guilty.
- » It's about knowing in your own heart that *you need God*. That doesn't mean you have to "hit rock bottom." It just means knowing you can't live a perfect, holy, happy life all on your own strength. You need God to make you complete. You need God's power to become the person you were created to be. Most of all, you need Jesus' death on the cross for your sins as your only ticket to heaven.
- » See, eternal life isn't something we can earn or deserve, no matter how good we are. We're human, sinful, and born to die. Imperfect beings can't live forever in a perfect world unless we accept the prepaid ticket Jesus bought for us at Calvary.
- » "Accepting Jesus" means you get His power in your life today and the promise of eternal life in the future. All you have to do is admit you can't do it alone.
- » "But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government

in heaven and on earth" (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 24).

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

» Look up the Bible verses in the New King James Version and fill in the blanks.

1. John 3:16. "For God so _____ the _____ that He _____ His _____ begotten _____, that _____ in _____ should not perish but have _____ life."

2. Ephesians 2:8, 9. "For by _____ you have been _____ through _____, and that not of _____; it is the _____ of _____, not of _____, lest anyone should boast."

3. 2 Corinthians 5:17. "Therefore, if _____ is in _____, he is a _____; old things have _____; behold, _____ things _____."

4. Romans 5:8. "But _____ demonstrates _____ own _____ toward _____, in that while we were still _____, Christ _____ for us."

5. Romans 6:23. "For the _____

of _____ is _____, but the _____ of God is _____ in _____ our Lord."

6. Romans 3:23. "For _____ have _____ and _____ of the _____ of _____."

Thursday **CONNECTING**

» Read Revelation 3:20.

» Review the memory text.

» Sometimes we hear about someone's "search for God." Really, it should be the other way around. God is searching for *you*. He'll do anything to get your attention; He'll stop at nothing to make sure you notice Him.

» Why does He love you so much? He made you. Only He knows you inside out. He knows the worst about you and loves you anyway. And only He knows the person you're capable of becoming, with His help.

» What is He waiting for? Well, He won't force His way into your life. He's waiting for one simple thing: for you to respond to His Spirit and admit that you need Him, that you want Him in your life.

Friday **APPLYING**

» Read Psalm 51:10.

» Sit down and take a few minutes to write a letter to God. Write it out by hand in the space below, or type it on your computer as if you were sending God an email. Tell Him

the worst things that are going on in your life, and the best. Tell Him about the areas in which you need His help.

- » Finish up your letter by telling God that you need Him, and that you're willing to do whatever it takes to give Him first place in your life. Thank Jesus for dying on the cross for your sins, and tell Him you accept His sacrifice—His payment of your debt.
- » When you've finished, go back and read the Bible verses from Wednesday's section. Imagine God is answering your letter. Beneath your message, write God's reply. What would He say to you?



Answers to Word Search on page 46

Q	F	A	I	T	H	W	E	R	N	T	Y	U	I	O	S	
C	Z	A	S	S	D	F	G	H	E	H	J	K	L	P	R	
X	C	V	B	N	M	E	Q	E	W	L	R	T	Y	U	E	
M	N	B	V	X	Z	T	A	S	P	C	O	V	B	P	N	
B	M	J	H	G	F	E	D	S	E	V	C	V	B	O	N	
E	U	Y	T	R	E	R	W	Q	R	S	D	V	E	I	I	
L	I	O	I	U	Y	N	R	E	S	E	D	W	N	D	S	
O	O	P	D	E	V	A	S	D	O	S	C	E	M	U	Z	
N	F	G	E	F	G	L	R	T	N	R	Q	A	K	Y	X	
G	D	H	A	F	H	L	T	G	G	T	W	S	J	T	C	
S	S	J	T	D	J	I	G	B	H	Y	E	D	H	R	V	
U	A	K	H	S	K	F	F	D	J	U	T	F	G	E	B	
Y	Q	O	Y	A	L	E	Y	Q	U	I	F	G	F	W	N	
T	W	N	T	Q	P	U	T	W	I	O	I	H	D	Q	M	
R	I	I	I	R	W	O	I	R	E	O	P	G	J	S	A	K
S	E	U	E	S	E	T	A	R	T	S	N	O	M	E	D	

5

GROWING IN GRACE

Wilma Goes for Gold

January 31, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Romans 6:4 (NIV) • “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Galatians 2:20 (NIV) • “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

1 John 1:9 (NIV) • “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "GROWING IN GRACE"

Earliteens often get either discouraged or rebellious at the idea of living the Christian life. It's often presented to them only as a series of rules and restrictions. You have the opportunity to present them with the idea that living the Christian life—growing in Grace—is like being an elite athlete in training for gold-medal competition. (However, everyone can win the gold!)

Many teens who hate the idea of follow-

ing parental, school, or church rules can easily grasp that an athlete needs to accept a strict training regimen—restrictions on diet, leisure activities, even bedtime, and hours of practice—in order to make the team and stay on top. What's the difference? Why is it easier to accept the restrictions that come with sports training than those that come with Christian living? Maybe it's because in sports the emphasis is on the goal. Young athletes and their fans can see that all that hard work pays off.

We need to emphasize the “goal” of living the Christian life, too, not just the eternal reward. Important though that is, it can seem very far away to an earliteen. Besides, it's easy to become confused and think that heaven is something we earn by hard work and effort. We need to emphasize the benefits *in this life* of joining God's team and staying in training—that God wants to help us reach our “personal best,” and His training plan is Creator-designed to help us not only do that but also represent Him accurately to everyone in the bleachers.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "GROWING IN GRACE"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand that living the Christian life is our loving response to God, not an attempt to earn salvation.
2. Recognize that God offers power, support, and encouragement for living the Christian life.

3. Commit themselves to moving forward on the journey of grace, one step at a time.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) access to a kitchen, ingredients for a simple recipe; (Activity B) If possible, ask students ahead of time to bring pictures of sports heroes and other figures they admire.

Connecting • Bibles, whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk, student lessons.

Applying • Copies of "Old Life, New Life" worksheet (p. 56); pens or pencils; metal bowl or bucket, matches, water, or paper shredder and adjust activity as needed.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist Mission for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own pro-

gram with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

NOTE: This activity will take time. Be prepared to spend up to a half hour on it. It can also be very distracting. Your students and situation must be taken into consideration. Be aware of possible allergies and adjust the recipe accordingly.

Get ready • This activity requires access to a kitchen. Assemble the ingredients for a simple recipe—chocolate-chip cookies or something else that requires similar ingredients (flour, sugar, butter, eggs, etc.). If you can find a healthier recipe that will fit this activity, so much the better.

Get set • Have your class meet in the kitchen to begin the lesson study. If you have a small class, you can do this together as a group; otherwise, divide your class into groups of about four and give each group the necessary ingredients to complete the recipe. Do not provide them with a recipe, and do not measure out the correct amount of ingredients; provide more than they need.

Go • Tell them what they are expected to make, but give no instructions about how much of each ingredient to use, what order to combine them in, and so on. (For further variety, you can give them a few things that *don't* belong in cookies, such as cayenne pepper, and see if anyone's sharp enough to leave them out.) After group members have combined their ingredients and put their cookies in the oven (allow them to figure out at what temperature and for how long), proceed with the discussion while the cookies bake.

Debriefing • Ask: **What was easy about this**

activity, what was difficult? (It was difficult to figure out how to put the cookies together without a recipe.) **How did you decide what to use, and how much?** (Some in the group may have made cookies before and guided the group on what to use; if so, ask how it would have been different if no one in the group had had any experience. If your class was divided into more than one group, compare the experiences of different groups.) **Why do we need instructions and recipes? In what way is God's plan for us like a "recipe" for life?** (Note: whether or not you choose to conclude this activity by eating the cookies depends, in part, on how successful your group was at guessing the recipe!)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • If possible, ask students ahead of time to bring pictures of figures they admire. If you can't arrange this ahead of time, bring a large selection yourself.

Go • Lead them through the debriefing discussion below.

Debriefing • **Ask:** Why do you admire these particular people? What are their accomplishments? What do they have to do to prepare for games, competitions, and so on? Have any of you ever trained for a major sports event? What kinds of things do athletes in training have to do? (Note: be aware that there will be a few students in your group who are not sports fans; include other heroes such as musicians, actors, artists, and others who have to work/practice/prepare to succeed in their chosen field. Let the interests of your group members guide the direction of this part of the discussion.) **How is an athlete's training regimen, a musician's practice schedule, and so on, similar to the Christian's life? How is it different?**

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

Say: God has called us to be citizens for His

kingdom in this world. What does that mean? Many high-end jobs have strict requirements for working for them. Here are some of requirements that are needed: Post where all can see, or read aloud, the list below.

- >> Be of excellent character and unquestionable loyalty to your country.
- >> Have no record of convictions in court.
- >> Be a high school graduate.
- >> Complete training in your field.
- >> Pass a language test and a physical fitness test.
- >> Have never possessed or sold any illegal drug.
- >> Maintain a strict clean and professional appearance with shined shoes, appropriate attire, and well-maintained haircut.
- >> Be willing to work a lot of overtime and weekends.

Ask: Why do you think the entrance requirements are so tough for some jobs? (Because they want the best employees working for them.) **How do you think those requirements compare to the "entrance requirements" for becoming one of God's agents?** (In a way, God isn't as picky. He'll take anyone. But He has even higher expectations of us. However, He's willing to work with us to help us meet them.) **In what way might being a child of God be as demanding as a high-end job? In what ways does God require us to be in "top form" to serve Him?**

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: God has a plan for each of our lives. The Bible is our instruction book, our training manual. It's inspired by the Person who knows more than anyone else about what's good for us and how we function best—the One who created us.

Ask: Can we trust God with our lives? (That's the big question.) **If you think we can, why?** (He's already saved us by dying on the cross.)

Say: There's nothing more we can do, or have to do, to earn our way into heaven.

Ask: But if that's true, why does Christianity seem to be so full of rules about what you can or can't do? (Allow some responses to this question; get students thinking.)

Ask for volunteers to read aloud the verses listed in their student lesson or post the references where all can see and have students find and read them from the Bible. **Ask:** What, if anything, do these verses tell us to help us answer the question about rules?

To wrap up the discussion, share the following thoughts in your own words:

Christianity isn't about rules for the sake of rules. It's about growing into the person God wants you to be—the very *best* person you can be. In that way it's really like training for the Olympics, or practicing for your oral report in front of the class, or entering the elite training program for God's representative here on earth. It's challenging. Sometimes it's tough. But it's all about reaching your maximum potential for the glory of God. And God doesn't ask us to go it alone. He's beside us every step of the way.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Ask: What does it take for a person to succeed against the odds the way Wilma did? Is her experience in any way like the Christian's life?

If you have not used "Connecting to the Kingdom" above, distribute the student lessons and discuss the Bible passages in the Wednesday section in light of the question above.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

A group of friends invite you to join them for a party. You hear them talking about it. There will be no adults around; somebody will be bringing some beer. All in all, it sounds like things will be getting pretty wild. Suddenly one of your friends turns to you and says, "You probably won't want to go, since you're a Christian and all. You're probably too holy to hang out with us, aren't you?"

You're on the spot. What do you say?

Ask: Do you want to go to the party? Are you comfortable with being labeled "a Christian"? How will you feel if you tell your friends, "No, I'm not too holy, it doesn't matter"? What impression of Christianity will your friends get if you decide to go to the party? if you decide not to go? How could you decline the invitation in a gracious way?

Invite volunteers to read the following passages: **2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4; Galatians 2:20.** **Ask:** What does it mean to have a "new life"? How do things change when you become a Christian? What happens if you don't always live up to the standard of being a Christian? Ask someone to read **1 John 1:9.** Why is it important to continue to try to live up to God's standard even though we know we'll make mistakes and fail? (Lead the discussion toward the idea that growing in Jesus is a *process*, not an instant change but something He works with us on throughout our lives.)

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Distribute copies of the "Old Life, New Life" worksheet (p. 56) to each class member. Give them time to work through it individually. Assure them that their responses will be completely private and they won't have to share

them with anyone, so they can be totally honest. Tell the students that they can draw from what they wrote in Friday's section of their lesson.

When everyone has had time to do the worksheet, invite everyone to fold it in half down the center. With the sheets folded, ask everyone to bow their heads. Lead the group in a prayer that God will work in each person's life to take away the things that need to be changed and help them grow more like Him.

After prayer, ask each person to tear their paper in half along the fold in the middle so that "Old Life" is on one half and "New Life" is on the other. Ahead of time, prepare a metal bowl or bucket, matches, and some water. Ask class members to fold up or tear up their "Old Life" pages and place them in the bowl, then set fire to them. Keep water handy to douse the fire.

WARNING: This may not be appropriate for your setting. Make sure that you are aware of fire codes and other regulations in your church. You want to illustrate that our old lives can be completely gone when we accept Jesus, but you want to illustrate this without burning down the church!

When the fire is finished, **say:** God wants all the bad things in your life—past and present—to be nothing more than a pile of ashes. He can forgive your sins and change your life, if you'll let Him. Remember, God sends other people into our lives to help us; if there's anything you wrote on that sheet that you really feel you need outside help dealing with, you can come talk to me after class, or talk to another adult you trust—a parent, a teacher, the pastor. God can change things for you. Ask them to fold up the "New Life" part of the page, take it home, and keep it in their Bible or another safe place.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What's the easiest thing about being a Christian?
2. What's the most difficult thing about being a Christian?
3. Why do you think some people seem to struggle with the same problems all through their Christian life and never get any better?
4. Do you think God will forgive you for the same sin again and again?
5. What's the best thing to do when you feel tempted to do something you know is wrong as a Christian?
6. How can we stay close to God even when things get really difficult for us?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Being in training for a special job, a big competition, an important report—it's not always easy. But it's exciting and rewarding. Being in God's kingdom-training program isn't always easy either. It requires you to fight your natural sinful tendencies. It also requires you to choose to stay close to Jesus no matter what's going on in your life. But He promised to coach you through every step of your training, so that as you win one prize after another, your life will become closer and closer to His perfect plan for you. The ultimate prize is still up ahead, when Jesus returns—but day by day, it's the most exciting journey you'll ever take!

FOR LESSON 5:
THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE APPLICATION ACTIVITY.

Old Life

1. The thing I'm most ashamed of having ever done is:

2. Something I got away with, but hope no one ever finds out about, is:

3. One bad habit I'd really like to get rid of is:

4. Something in my life right now that's coming between God and me is:

New Life

1. One good thing I'd really like to start doing is:

2. A goal I've set for myself this year is:

3. One person I'd like to be nicer to is:

4. One way I want to get closer to God is:

STUDENT LESSON

A large, orange, three-dimensional button with the number '5' in the center, surrounded by a metallic silver border.

5

GROWING IN GRACE

Wilma Goes for Gold

January 31, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:**
"Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us. . . . Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 98-100

WILMA GOES FOR GOLD

"I'm sorry, but your daughter will never walk again." The words sounded like a final sentence to the little girl and her mother. But they weren't. Wilma's left leg was twisted and weakened by polio. But her mother was determined Wilma would someday walk.

Week after week Wilma's mother brought her 50 miles from home to do physical therapy. At home her mother, brothers, and sisters helped her exercise her leg. Throughout her

childhood Wilma went to school with a heavy metal brace on her left leg. She used the brace, crutches, and a corrective shoe. And despite the doctor's prediction, she walked.

When she was 12, Wilma was finally able to walk without any assistance at all. That was when she made an important decision. She had already overcome tremendous odds. She was walking, even though doctors had told her she never would. But Wilma wanted to do more than walk. She wanted to run. She wanted to become a world-class athlete.

It might have seemed like a crazy dream for a poor African-American girl in the southern United States in the 1950s. Poverty, racial discrimination, and physical disability were all stacked against Wilma Rudolph, saying she'd never become a success.

But a strong will, a supportive family, and determination were on Wilma's side. Day after day she hit the track running, training to make her left leg as strong as her right. She ran until she could run as well as any other teenage girl, and then she ran until she was a lot better.

When she was 16 years old, Wilma went to her first Olympic Games and came home with a bronze medal. Four years later, in Rome in 1960, she became the first American woman ever to win three Olympic gold medals.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Matthew 5:48.

» "I don't want to be a Christian," your friend at school says. "It's too difficult, and it's no fun. Following all those stupid rules, and never getting away with anything!"

» You're about to open your mouth when a friend who attends a different church says, "You're nuts! Being a Christian is not hard; it's easy! Jesus saves us. I got saved in church when I was 10, and I don't have to do anything else about it. What's so difficult about that?"

» What do you think? Which friend do you agree with—or do you have another opinion? Is being a Christian hard, easy, or would you explain it some other way?

God	I	Son	which	and
now	of	life	the	me

Tuesday REFLECTING

» Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

» Is being a Christian difficult or easy? On the one hand, it's easy. Accept Jesus and you're saved. God does all the work.

» On the other hand, sometimes it seems as if there are so many rules and expectations. Go to church. Follow the rules. Set a good example.

» If it's so easy, why is it so difficult? The secret is that being a Christian is both the easiest and the most difficult thing you'll ever do. Getting right with God is easy. Just let Him know you want your sins forgiven. He does all the rest.

» But then God begins the work of shaping you into the person you were created to be. He takes you just as you are. But He loves you too much to let you stay in your sinful state. And just like an Olympic athlete in training, you put in the effort to run the race, keep your rebellious muscles surrendered to the program, stay in top form. Not because you want to earn God's approval or buy your way into heaven, but because you're starting to catch His vision of the kind of person He wants you to be—a gold-medal Christian, someone transformed into His image.

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST

» Read Romans 8:38, 39; Ephesians 6:12-18; 2 Peter 3:18.

» How wonderful that God has made a way for us to live and grow in His will. When we accept Him as our Savior, He sends the Holy Spirit to help us overcome sin. The Holy Spirit also works in us to transform us into God's image so we can live the lives God intended for us.

» List the ways you have seen the Holy Spirit work in your life.

» Put the words of this verse back in their proper order.

me	is	with	longer	NKJV
it	for	no	crucified	I
flesh	Christ	Himself	who	been
I	the	live	gave	have
2:	live		live	and
Christ	but	by	20	me
in	lives	loved	faith	in
Galatians	who	in	the	I

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

- » Match the text with the phrase that has been taken from the corresponding verse. You can find the different versions of the Bible at Biblegateway.com.

- A. 2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)
- B. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NCV)
- C. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)
- D. 2 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)
- E. Matthew 5:48 (NLT)
- F. Hebrews 12:1 (CEV)

- _____ "But grow in the grace and knowledge . . ."
- _____ "But you are to be perfect even as your Father . . ."
- _____ "Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us!"
- _____ "I have fought the good fight . . ."
- _____ "You know that in a race all the runners run . . ."
- _____ "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ . . ."

Thursday **CONNECTING**

- » Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Maybe sometimes you're the one who says, "Christianity's too difficult." You may look at the kind of life adults in church expect you to lead, and feel judged or criticized.
- » That's not God's attitude. God has high expectations for us, but He's pleased with every step we take toward Him. Remember Wilma Rudolph's story? When she first began to walk with her crutches and brace, do you think her mom said, "Pick it up, Wilma! You're not as fast as the other kids! And lose that limp!"?
- » Of course not. A loving parent wants their

child to become the best they can be. But that same parent stands beside you, supporting you at every step, helping you overcome difficulties, cheering you on.

- » That's the kind of parent that God is. He won't rest until you're the best you can be. But He doesn't expect you to do it alone. He gives you His Holy Spirit power every step of the way. And He doesn't criticize or judge you when you slip and fall. He's right there, helping you up again, cheering you on.

Friday **APPLYING**

- » Read Hebrews 12:1.
- » It's not New Year's Eve, but it's time to set some goals. This is a little different from making "resolutions," things you're determined you'll try to do even if it kills you! That's relying on your own strength. Growing as a Christian is different—you rely on God's power to get you there, even though you have to constantly choose to stay in touch with Him.
- » Take a few minutes to make a list of five things you'd like to change, accomplish, or improve in your life over the next six months. When you've finished making your list, go to a quiet place and pray out loud, telling God what you'd like Him to change in your life and asking for His strength to do it. To finish your prayer time, read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and claim God's promise to make you a new person.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)





OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 1

A Case of Missed or Taken Identity

February 7, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Romans 6:11 (NIV) • “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:6 (NIV) • “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1 (NIV) • “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 2:9, 10 (NIV) • “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) • “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

Ephesians 1:13 (NIV) • “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”

Romans 8:17 (NIV) • “If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Revelation 2:17 (NIV) • “To the one who is victorious, I will . . . give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”

Galatians 2:20 (NIV) • “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Genesis 1:26, 27 (NIV) • “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.’ . . . So God created mankind in his own image . . . ; male and female he created them.”

1 Thessalonians 5:4-11 (NIV) • “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we

are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

John 1:12, 13 (NIV) • "To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, PART 1"

As children develop into young men and women their sense of identity takes up much of their thinking. The experience of discovering "who they are" is often based on a variety of input—from parents, friends, classmates, even strangers. Some say, "You are what you think you are." Most teens aren't that secure, and it is more likely that their perceptions of themselves have a lot more to do with what others think than what they believe. In fact, many teens base how they see themselves on what they think others think of them. What is surprising is how teens (and adults) will let people who don't know or love them shape their identity and behavior. They base who they are on the perceptions of others. This lesson is focused on finding our identity in our relationship to Christ, and defining our identity by what He did for us and declares about us rather than what we think others think about us.

Relationship, rights, responsibilities. What God says about you as a citizen of His kingdom is a legal, binding declaration of your identity—just like a birth certificate, driver's license, passport, or adoption papers. This lesson is a look at how to develop a sense of your identity as a citizen of the kingdom. Your identity as citizens is in Christ. What He declares about your past, your present, and your future is what you are, no matter what Satan tries to whisper in your ear. (And you better believe he will try to talk your ear off!)

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, PART 1"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Deepen their awareness of their needs as young adult humans.
2. Encounter the identity crisis that occurs as the two kingdoms compete to claim them as children.
3. Discover that what God declares about them has power to shape who they are today and eternally.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) examples of documents that verify a person's identity; (Activity B) Bibles, pictures of famous and unknown people, paper, pens or pencils, whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Connecting • Bibles, paper, pens or pencils, whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk, student lessons.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults)

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Gather several examples of documents that verify a person's identity—birth certificate, adoption papers, driver's license, passport, Social Security card, school ID card, marriage certificate, lifesaving or first aid certification, and so on.

Get set • If you have enough items to provide one to each of several pairs/groups, give them a sample of identification and ask them to answer the following questions about each one. If the group is small, work through each of the IDs together.

Go • (1) What does this certificate declare about a person? (That you are human. That you were born. To whom you were born. Your name, date, place and time of birth.) (2) What does this certificate fail to say about a person? (Their personality; what people think of them; what they are like; their character; their hobbies.) After they have answered the questions they are to share their answers with the class.

Go deeper • Pose these questions about each of the certificates: What relationship does this certificate define, describe, or represent? What rights do you receive from this form of ID? What responsibilities do you have as a result of having this ID? Why do you think forms of identification are important? (So people don't forget who they are, the wise guy will say. So you can make sure

people don't misuse their rights and privileges.)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Cut out pictures of famous people and seemingly unknown people for students to identify. Give students paper and pens or pencils.

Get set • Give each student a picture and have them respond to some identity questions.

Go • Ask the students to make a short list of all they know about their person. Then ask them to make another list of what they might ask the person to get to know them better.

As a class, decide the top five questions needed to find out who someone really is. List the five where all can see.

Debriefing • Ask: **How is it that we so easily form impressions of people while knowing very little about them?**

You have heard the saying "First impressions are the most important." What are first impressions mostly based on? (Looks, dress, behavior, etc.) **How is that a fair assessment of who a person really is?**

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

There was once a young man who wanted more than anything to take a cruise aboard a luxury liner. He did not have much money, but eventually he saved enough to purchase a ticket.

As he packed, the young man knew he would be traveling with no money for food, so he carefully packed some bread and cheese for his meals. Although he truly enjoyed the cruise, as he walked around and watched people eating in the dining and banquet halls of the ship, his joy diminished.

After two weeks, his bread and cheese molding, the young man was starving. As he walked around, people noticed how painfully thin he had become. A man approached and asked the young man if there was anything

wrong. Slightly embarrassed, the young man explained that he did not have enough money for food. The gentleman took the young man by the shoulders and explained to him that the food was all paid for in the price of the ticket. The young man was astonished—all this time he could have been eating at the wonderful banquets, but he hadn't known it!—Jim Burns and Mike DeVries, *Intense Illustrations* (Gospel Light, 2002), pp. 53, 54.

Debriefing • Ask: Is it possible that Christians might not know their rights and benefits of being a child of God? Have the students find and read John 1:12, 13. **Say:** The difficult part is believing that in a moment of “believing and receiving” a person can go from being lost to found, orphan to heir. It seems unrealistic doesn’t it? Why do you think it is so difficult for people to imagine God is giving you a new identity with so little effort on your part? (Just like the young man on the cruise ship, they don’t understand. They jump to conclusions based on their limited knowledge.) Is it possible that Christians might not know their rights and benefits of being a child of God? Refer to the text again.

Say: What God believes about you and what God says about you is what defines who you are as a person. What God promises to do with you is what enables believers to accept their new standing. It is possible that for some, this new identity is too good to be true.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: In any country, becoming a citizen involves accepting your rights and responsibilities as a citizen of that nation. There is usually an oath you take and a declaration of your citizenship. In the moment the declaration is made, you have all the rights and

responsibilities as a citizen—a new identity.

Share the following oath from the United States with your students, or if you are in another country, find one that applies to you.

“I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.”—uscis.gov (accessed 3/13/2025).

Say: The same is true for a family. Whether you are born or adopted into it, you have rights and privileges simply because of who you are.

Ask: You are a citizen by birth or by an application process. Some grow up as citizens and some become citizens as adults. Describe how you think the two groups are different in their approach and appreciation of their citizenship?

Say: Paul was adamant that believers should get the message that upon becoming a Christian they attained a new identity in Christ.

Have students find and read Ephesians 2:19-22. **Ask:** In what way does a foreigner feel and act differently from someone who is a citizen?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Refer to the illustrations in the student lesson in your own words.

On a whiteboard or chalkboard, make three columns: (1) My Relationship as a Child of God, (2) My Rights as a Child of God, (3) My Responsibility as a Child of God. In a fourth column, list the following texts: Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6; Ephesians 2:19-22; Philippians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 2:11, 12; 1 John 5:18-20; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 2:6-10; 2 Timothy 1:6, 7; Matthew 5:13-15; John 15:5; John 15:15-17; Romans 8:17. You may also choose to use: Galatians 3:26, 28; Galatians 4:6, 7; Colossians 3:3, 12; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 John 3:1, 2; Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Ephesians 1:3-5; Colossians 2:11, 12.

Distribute paper and pens or pencils. Have students work in pairs, groups, or all together to find in which column each belongs. Conclude by sharing all the results and completing the chart at the front.

Conclude with the Application Activity in the next section of this teacher guide.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Karla is 12 years old and, sadly, she has been an orphan all her life. She has accepted the reality that she will probably not be adopted. So she helps to care for the other children and waits to be old enough to leave and start life on her own.

But Karla doesn't have to wait anymore because a family has decided to adopt her. She can't believe it! A normal family! They are not wealthy, but they have everything they need. There are brothers and sisters who seem interested in her and two loving parents.

1. What do you think some of her newfound joys would be?
2. What do you think would be difficult for her in adjusting to this new identity?
3. What changed as the adoption papers were signed? What didn't change?
4. Did she change when her name changed? How and in what way? In what way is she the same person?
5. When you receive Christ into your heart

and accept Him as Lord in your life, what can you expect to be different and what can you expect to change?

Have students find and volunteers read **2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:17; and Philippians 1:6.**

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Say: Clearly, being in a relationship with Christ affects our identity, not by what we can do, but by the way God values us.

With the students in their groups or as a class, **ask:** From each of the categories of relationship, rights, and responsibilities, choose one verse that you appreciate the most or that you most want to experience in your life. Which of the verses in each category speak to you and why? (I like the idea of being chosen! I think the responsibility of being a child of God is seen in the idea of being "the salt of the earth.")

Ask: Which of the ideas in these verses do you think would most appeal to someone who has not yet decided to accept the identity Christ offers them?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Who do you think has had the most influence on who you are today?
2. Agree or Disagree: "You are what you think others think you are." How might this be true/false?
3. What is the most difficult part of being a child of God?
4. Whom do you know that has made what God says about them the foundation for their sense of identity?
5. What Bible characters do you know that clearly based their sense of identity on what God said about them rather than on what others thought?

6. How has Satan, through the kingdom of this world, made finding our identity in Christ so difficult? What are some road-blocks/obstacles that clearly stand in the way?
7. How much of what defines people today are first impressions? Give some examples.

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

"I am who I am" can be either a positive or negative description of our sense of identity. By far one of the most difficult things to do is to go against the flow of popular opinion and rest in God's opinion of you. Everything has to do with the kind of ruler you use to measure your value in this world. Will you trust a shortsighted, superficial glance and a first impression, or will you consider the opinion of someone who really knows you? The choice that you make about who you are has to do with what you value—God's opinion of you or what the world might say? The more we know about what God thinks of us, the more we are enabled to strengthen our resolve to be who He made us to be.

STUDENT LESSON

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 1

A Case of Missed or Taken Identity

February 7, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth' " (Genesis 1:27, 28, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 7, The Nature of Humanity:** "Man and woman were made in the image of God. . . . When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76-78

A CASE OF MISSED OR TAKEN IDENTITY

Story 1. "Names Shouldn't Be Sold." Mark Cuban, owner of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, recently offered WGN Chicago radio sports-talk

host David Kaplan \$50,000 to change his name legally to "Dallas Maverick." When Kaplan politely declined, Cuban sweetened the offer. Cuban would pay Kaplan \$100,000 and donate \$100,000 to Kaplan's favorite charity if he took the name for one year. After some soul searching, and being bombarded by emails from listeners who said he was crazy to turn down the money, Kaplan held firm and told Cuban no. Kaplan explained: "I'd be saying I'd do anything for money, and that bothers me. My name is my birthright. I'd like to preserve my integrity and credibility."—Skip Bayless, "Radio Host Prefers Class Over Crass," *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 10, 2001.

Story 2. FBI agents conducted a raid of a psychiatric hospital in San Diego that was under investigation for medical insurance fraud. After hours of reviewing thousands of medical records, the dozens of agents had worked up quite an appetite. The agent in charge of the investigation called a nearby pizza parlor with delivery service to order a quick dinner for his colleagues.

The following telephone conversation took place and was recorded by the FBI because they were taping all conversations at the hospital.

Agent: Hello. I would like to order 19 large pizzas and 67 cans of soda.

Pizza man: And where would you like them delivered?

Agent: We're over at the psychiatric hospital.

Pizza man: The psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's right. I'm an FBI agent.

Pizza man: You're an FBI agent?

Agent: That's correct. Just about everybody here is.

Pizza man: And you're at the psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's correct. And make sure you don't go through the front doors. We have them locked. You will have to go around to the back to the service entrance to deliver the pizzas.

Pizza man: And you say you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. How soon can you have them here?

Pizza man: And everyone at the psychiatric hospital is an FBI agent?

Agent: That's right. We've been here all day and we're starving.

Pizza man: How are you going to pay for all of this?

Agent: I have my checkbook right here.

Pizza man: And you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. Everyone here is an FBI agent. Can you remember to bring the pizzas and sodas to the service entrance in the rear? We have the front doors locked.

Pizza man: I don't think so.

Click.

—Go to <http://www.snopes.com/medical/asylum/fbipizza.asp> to get more details of this true incident.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20.
- » Carlos is known for being funny, even though his jokes come at the expense of others. Nobody really gets close to him personally, but many want to be around him. How would a kingdom citizen go about reaching out to someone who seems "untouchable" and communicate what God thinks about him? How would you show Carlos his identity in Christ?

- » Share the specific problems in reaching people like Carlos. You may want to ask someone older what they think and share what you like about their answer or how that response may not be realistic.

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE NATURE OF HUMANITY

- » Read Genesis 2:7; Jeremiah 17:9; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20.
- » It is important that we realize we belong to God. We were created in His image, and He loves us more than we can realize. When our first parents sinned, the propensity (tendency, inclination) to sin became a part of us. However, God did not leave us in sin. He sent His Son to save us. When we accept Him, we are covered in Christ's righteousness (perfection). When Jesus comes, God's image will once again be fully seen in us.
- » When you look in the mirror, whom do you see?

- » What can you do today to reflect God's image in your life?

- » Can you match the concepts below to the correct verse?

Genesis 1:26, 27
Psalm 8:4-8
Romans 5:12-17
Acts 17:24-28
Psalm 51:10

We are sons and daughters of God

God's grace is a gift that gives us eternal life

We are made in God's image

God crowned humanity with glory and honor and made him a little lower than the angels

A prayer for God to make us clean and committed to living for God

Tuesday
REFLECTING

- » Read Ephesians 1:4-14.
- » Have you ever tried to join a conversation but not been able to get a word in? It's frustrating to have something to say and not be able to say it because everyone is talking. Imagine how God feels watching His children wander around wondering who they are and whom they belong to.
- » First of all, it's not easy to listen to what God thinks about you when the world is screaming at you. Also, if your identity is based on what you can do, how you look, or who likes you, then you have more than enough to keep yourself extremely busy.
- » Think about a world where you are valued simply because you are alive. What would it be like if we lived in a world where everyone focused on our potential instead of amplifying our mistakes? Can you imagine how loneliness and hatred and despair would just fade away? It's a world where we are valuable simply because the King died for us and claims us; not only claims us, but makes us children; not just children, heirs!
- » Back to the real world. Maybe our real world is in desperate need of a change in the way we think about ourselves. It seems as if we

have an identity crisis on our hands. And our making it through the crisis is based on the choice of to whom we listen. Don't you think it is time we gave God a chance to tell us who we are to Him?

Wednesday
BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Consider your identity, from God's point of view.
- » Read Psalm 139:13-18 (NIV) and answer the following questions.
 1. What phrase in Psalm 139:13-18 shows you what God thinks about you?

 2. Is there something in this text that tells you God is always with you?

- » What about our relationship, rights, and responsibilities? Read Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:4-14, NIV, and answer the following questions.
 1. According to this passage, what is our relationship to God?

 2. Because of our relationship to God, what rights do we have?

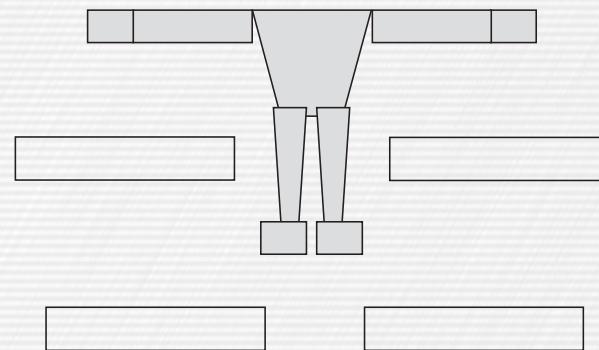
 3. What are our responsibilities?

Thursday
CONNECTING

- » Read Luke 12:7.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Try to stump God! Ask Him a question about you that He doesn't know. Give it a try. He knows things you don't even know: how many hairs are on your head, what you are most afraid of, what you wish your friends liked about you, what you want your parents to be able to say about you, and so on. And what God thinks about you has everything to do with "who you are."
- » For professional ball players to become famous, they have to become the best at playing ball. For musicians to get noticed, they practice and practice and hope for someone to notice them. Sometimes they get it; most of the time they don't; but ultimately "who they are" is defined by what they can do.
- » Not so with God. Who you are is defined by what Jesus did. You have a legal and undisputed relationship to the King of the universe through His Son. You have rights as His child to live joyfully without fear, worry, or anxiety about anything, even death. You have the right to call upon God anytime for anything in Jesus' name.
- » You also have a responsibility to expand the family name beyond yourself. You have the responsibility to wear your family name proudly in the open. Think of it as a citizenship oath. Raise your hand and pledge allegiance to God.

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read 1 Peter 2:9.
- » If you think about the stories of your life, can you come up with a few incidents that have made the most impact on you for better or for worse (spiritually or emotionally)? Think of five to 10. Fill in a very short description of that event in one of the body parts in the person on the right. In the boxes that surround the figure place Bible passages from this lesson that you feel define you. Write a paraphrase of the verses, starting with the words "God says I am . . ."





OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 2

Thermostats and Thermometers

February 14, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Romans 12:5 (NIV) • “So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

2 Corinthians 1:21 (NIV) • “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us.”

Galatians 3:26 (NIV) • “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.”

Galatians 3:28 (NIV) • “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Luke 10:1, 2 (NIV) • “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’ ”

Acts 13:2, 3 (NIV) • “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Luke 22:31, 32 (NIV) • “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

(See additional passages in student lesson.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, PART 2”

Resting fully in our identity “in Christ” we ask the question “How does being a child of God affect the way we see others—believers and unbelievers?” Teens experience an internal struggle between being preoccupied with becoming a significant individual and being a Christian with values that call for service to others. The goal of becoming assertive as a witness to others is reached when they practice team boldness. Being “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” not to mention “the aroma of Christ” and a “cup of cool water,” is all part of being a child of God. If we believe in our infinite worth to God, then we have to realize the infinite worth to God of those around us as well.

The focus of this lesson is the responsibility of kingdom citizens to be proactive in their relationships with others. Kindness, compassion, and service are part of the family (or kingdom) tradition. The Bible is filled with “one another” passages that connect kingdom citizens together and to the world in specific ways. Being anchored in our identity in Christ actually helps

us begin and build friendships that last. In a discussion of how to be influential, we will also address the tides that tend to pull our identity one way or another when we are around others.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, PART 2"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Develop a clear sense of the relationship between being *in* Christ and being *with* others.
2. Recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their relationships with others.
3. Fortify their resolve to live with certainty a life that goes against the flow of popular culture.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) salt and sugar in two (or more) saltshakers; (Activity B) some form of thermostat and thermometer (optional: source of heating or cooling).

Connecting • Paper and pens/pencils; whiteboard or chalkboard; student lessons; Bibles.

Applying • Paper and pens/pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will need at least two identical clear glass saltshakers. Empty one of the saltshakers and replace the salt with pure white sugar. Students will attempt to differentiate between the two from a distance. (As a rule they guess correctly half the time.)

Get set • Holding a shaker in each hand, stand as far back from the seated students as you can.

Go • Say: I want to test your vision and your judgment. I'm holding two saltshakers. First of all, how do you know this is salt? (We don't know for sure. It could be sugar.) As a matter of fact, one of these saltshakers doesn't contain salt; it contains sugar. Can you tell from where you are sitting which one is salt and which one is sugar?

Hold up the left hand and then **ask:** How many of you think this one is the salt? If you do, move to this side of the classroom. Those of you who think this one is the salt (Hold up the right hand.), move to the other side of the classroom. Move among the students (or have assistants help you), sprinkling a little of their choice in their hands. **Say:** Don't taste it until

I tell you! Have them taste their samples all at the same time. Find out who was right and who was wrong.

This can be repeated with you standing a few steps closer to them each time. (Adapt for a large group.)

Debriefing • Ask: **How is this exercise like our relationships with others?** (Everything looks OK on the outside—most of the time; you can start to tell differences if you look closely; the only way you can truly tell is if you taste it.) **Say:** Our lesson today is about how we, as certified children of God, relate to people around us in a positive, proactive way.

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You need a thermostat and a thermometer, and optionally a portable means of heating and cooling. Many classrooms will have both devices together on the wall, where the temperature is controlled. You will discuss the function of both the thermostat and the thermometer and relate them to the way being a child of God enables us to affect change around us.

Get set • If possible, demonstrate by turning the thermostat on the heating device way up, or by placing a thermometer in cold water. (A student can be a “heating device” if you take their temperature with an oral thermometer.) In some manner demonstrate the difference between the two devices.

Go • Ask: **Does anyone know the difference between a thermostat and a thermometer?** (A thermometer just tells us how hot or how cold something is. A thermostat works to increase or decrease the temperature.) **What happens to this room if the thermometer reads 72 degrees Fahrenheit (22 degrees Celsius)?** (Nothing.) **If the thermometer reads 41 degrees Fahrenheit (5 degrees Celsius), what happens then?** (Nothing—all the thermometer does is reflect the temperature.) **What happens when I set the thermostat to 82 de-**

grees Fahrenheit (28 degrees Celsius)?

(The heater will kick in and warm the room until it gets to that temperature.)

Debriefing • Ask: **How does the difference between a thermostat and a thermometer relate to being a child of God?** (As children of God, we want to set the temperature, not just to reflect the temperature around us.) **Can you think of times in your life when you have been both? How did that work? Have you ever witnessed someone who functions as a thermostat? What Bible characters were clearly thermostats? thermometers? How can you tell?**

Ask: **How is it possible to be an outgoing visible leader and still be a thermometer instead of a thermostat? How can the opposite be said about those who are not always up front or outspoken? How can they also set the temperature without even having to be dramatic? Give an example.**

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Peer Pressure. A few years ago psychologist Ruth W. Berenda and her associates carried out an interesting experiment with teenagers to show how a person handled group pressure. The plan was simple. They brought groups of 10 adolescents into a room for a test. Subsequently each group of 10 was instructed to raise their hands when the teacher pointed to the longest line on three separate charts. What one person in the group did not know was that the nine others in the room had been instructed ahead of time to vote for the second-longest line.

Regardless of the instructions they heard, once they were all together in the group, the nine were not to vote for the longest line but, rather, for the next-to-the-longest line.

The desire of the psychologists was to determine how one person reacted when completely surrounded by a large number of people who obviously stood against what was true.

The experiment began with nine teenagers

voting for the wrong line. The other one would typically glance around, frown in confusion, and slip their hand up with the group. The instructions were repeated, and the next card was raised. Time after time the self-conscious tenth teen would sit there saying a short line was longer than a long line, simply because they lacked the courage to challenge the group. This remarkable conformity occurred in about 75 percent of the cases and was true of small children and high school students as well.—Charles R. Swindoll, *Tales of the Tardy Oxcarts* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 1998), p. 434.

Ask: To what degree do you think this represents most young people? Why?

If you did not use Beginning Activity B above, explain the concept of thermostats and thermometers.

D. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Redwood Roots. The huge redwood trees in California are considered the largest things on earth and the tallest trees in the world. Some of them are 300 feet high and more than 2,500 years old. One would think that trees so large would have a tremendous root system reaching down hundreds of feet into the earth. The redwoods actually have a very shallow system of roots, but they all intertwine. They are locked to each other. When the storms come or the winds blow, the redwoods stand. They are locked to each other, and they don't stand alone, for all the trees support and protect each other.
—Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), p. 129.

Ask: How is a redwood forest like the Christian church? What are the strengths and weaknesses in the nature of the root system of the forest? How does this illustrate the church's relationship to God?

Say: We are focusing today on how we relate

to one another as children of God.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Have the students find and read **Matthew 5:13, 14**. **Ask:** Do you think Jesus was addressing those statements to one person, or to many people? (He was talking to a lot of people at the time, so we can assume that the "you" is plural.) **Say:** Even though just one person could take these words as addressing them personally, in the context in which they were said by Jesus they might have sounded like this: "When all of you come together for good, you are salt or light."

Say: Let's find and read **Luke 10:1, 2**. Read aloud. **Ask:** Why do you think Jesus called people to exert an influence on the world in teams? (God knows us. He made us to matter to each other.)

Say: Close your eyes and think of the five most important things in your life. (You could also do this with paper and pencil.) **Ask:** How many of you had friends in the top five? Have them raise their hands. **Say:** The way you value friendships is not a weakness that comes from being human, but a quality that comes from being in a family that values relationships. We already read how Jesus sent people in pairs to witness for Him. Let's also find and read **Romans 12:5** and then **John 13:35**. Have students read the verses aloud.

Say: The "one another" experience is probably the most prominent part of having our identity in Christ. When we are "in Christ" we are part of a body. And we saw in **Luke 10:1, 2** that Jesus' game plan is to use us together to reach still others.

Ask: What do you think are the advantages of

sharing the gospel in teams? What might be the disadvantages?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Have two student volunteers read the two anecdotes in the student lesson.

Ask: Can you describe what makes a person a thermostat and what makes a person a thermometer? Do you agree or disagree with the labels that were placed on the illustrations we just read? Why or why not?

Ask: Can you think of a time in your life when a friend's influence helped you choose wisely? Ask for examples to be shared. **Say:** Friends have extraordinary power. For good or evil, our friends will have a lot to do with our eternal destiny. Why? Why do you think gangs are so prevalent and so powerful?

Say: God made us to connect under common causes. It just so happens that many are united without God or His cause. Every group or team is made up of individuals, and the strength of the group has a lot to do with the courage of individuals. Knowing who you are in Christ generates a boldness that has the power to multiply in groups. So often it takes one to be proactive. Someone has to be the thermostat!

Ask students to think of people in your church that they think are thermostats. Ask them to share with another person who they chose and an experience that supports their choice.

Ask: What are some biblical examples of someone being the light/salt/thermostat? What qualities did they exhibit? What were the risks involved in their scenario?

Have the students find and read **Luke 22:31, 32**. Have them notice how Jesus was able to tell the truth to Peter, while still encouraging him to do great things.

Ask: If God were asking you to be a thermostat in one specific area of your life, what would He be asking you to do? Do you have friends who can tell you the truth no matter what your response might be? Point out that we are not talking about such truths as "those shoes look awful with that outfit," but about important areas of life, such as our choices about relationships with others in our peer groups, the way we treat our bodies, our relationship with parents, and our time with God.

Say: A good way to check your sense of identity is to test whether you are willing to tell the truth to a friend. Think of it this way: If your friend was living dangerously close to the edge of a cliff, would you say, "You can get a few inches closer to the edge if you're careful," or would you say, "Get as far away from the cliff as you can!"

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Kyle's friends are Christians and attend the same church as he does. They know they generally believe the same thing about God. No one really talks openly about their personal relationship with God, however, and the thought of expressing his desire to pray and study and share his faith more openly makes Kyle feel very uneasy. Kyle wants to grow, and he suspects his friends may want to as well. But where does he start? What would be the best way to be a thermostat in this situation? A bold announcement in front of everyone? An initial contact with one or two? Quietly be an example and let others ask?

Ask: How common do you think it is that young people want to express their desire to walk with Christ daily but are afraid that they might appear "holier than thou" to others?

Have the students look over the verses in Wednesday's section of their lessons. (Or list the verses on the board.) **Ask:** Which verses speak to the problems we face in our friendships the most? Encourage them to share their opinions.

Activity • Have the students write a note of encouragement to an anonymous friend, using a passage from this week's lesson. They should share the advice they think would help their friend grow and experience the joy of being in God's kingdom. Here's an example one teen wrote:

"Dear Friend,

"When you speak, people listen. I think you are a great leader. My prayer for you is that your words would build people up instead of tear them down as it says in Ephesians 4:29. This would make you so happy, as well as make a difference for others."

Collect the anonymous messages the students have written. Read the messages out loud so they can hear what they would wish for in each other.

Ask: What was difficult about this exercise? In what way were you surprised by the challenges and encouragement?

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Have students divide into groups to develop a group covenant or agreement.

Ask: If teens were to be proactive agents of influence in three to five areas of life, what three would make the most change in our world? Using the good advice that was written in the notes (see previous activity) from others and the advice from Scripture, help the students make three to five rules for themselves as a group that could help them accomplish great things for the kingdom.

Example: "As members of God's kingdom we will . . ."

Help them not to be too general. Instead of "As members of God's kingdom we will love others," suggest that they think of some

specific loving acts they can do for a specific group of people.

Have the groups share their team covenants with the rest of the class.

Debriefing • Ask: Did you hear any themes being repeated in the various covenants?

What kinds of themes were repeated? How do you think a group of young people could remember to keep these covenants? What kinds of things would they need to do to remember and foster their commitment to the covenant they make?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following comparisons to life in the kingdom of God. Discuss the ways the comparisons are different and how they are the same. Thermostat instead of thermometer; river instead of reservoir; gladiator instead of spectator.
2. In what way is being a citizen in God's kingdom a "team sport" as opposed to an "individual sport"? How is it the other way around?
3. In what passages of Scripture do we see God warning about the negative power of group identity? How do you see God using "group identity" as a secret weapon?
4. How can earliteens strengthen their sense of community on a weekly basis, besides Sabbath school?
5. Agree/Disagree: Our world tends to force people into becoming outstanding individuals instead of longstanding comrades. (How? Why? In what way?)
6. Someone said, "We rarely grow spiritually in isolation." How is this true? How might it be untrue?
7. How does the message of our identity in Christ affect such issues as equality, racism, hatred?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

God knows details about each of us that we can't even imagine. Each person is unique, yet

as God's children we are not the "only child" in the family. We are bound together as brothers and sisters and also for a purpose. We have a work to do together, a work that can be done only when we are together. Sometimes it takes one or two to stand up first, to say the words we all want to say, to be a thermostat instead of a thermometer, a river instead of a reservoir, a gladiator instead of a spectator.



STUDENT LESSON

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 2

Thermostats and Thermometers

February 14, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 12, The Church:** "The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. . . . The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 136, 137

THERMOSTATS AND THERMOMETERS

Thermometer. Have you ever heard of Bob Hayes, the man who was named "World's Fastest Human"? He was a hero of the 1964 Olympics, bringing home the gold medal in the 100-meter run, and being clocked at an incredible 8.6 seconds in the final 110 yards of the 400-meter relay run. After the Olympics he became an all-pro wide receiver for the Dallas Cowboys football team in the United States. His college coach said that if there had ever been a young man he wished was his, it was Bob Hayes.

Then, in April 1979, Bob was convicted of selling narcotics to an undercover agent. He received

two five-year prison sentences. He went from the pinnacle of success to prison. According to Hayes and those who cared most about him, his downfall was caused by his inability to choose good friends. The people he hung out with gave him bad advice and got him into trouble. As a rule, we usually reflect the thoughts and lifestyles of the people we spend the most time with.—From Sermonnotes.com published online by Alderson Press.

Whom are you spending time with?

Thermostat. Charles Osgood told the story of two women who lived in a convalescent center. Each had suffered an incapacitating stroke. Margaret's stroke left her left side restricted, while Ruth's stroke damaged her right side. Both of these women were accomplished pianists but had given up hope of ever playing again. The director of the center sat them down at a piano and encouraged them to play solo pieces together. They did, and a beautiful friendship developed. What a picture of the church's need to work together! What one member cannot do alone, perhaps two or more could do together—in harmony.

How do your strengths and weaknesses relate to the body of Christ?

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Hebrews 3:13, 14.
- » Ken's best friend, Mark, thinks he is in love.

While Ken is happy, he is concerned that Mark is becoming consumed with his new girlfriend. Mark is failing classes. He is not getting along with his parents either. Ken watches as his best friend changes, and he doesn't want to say anything because he doesn't want to seem jealous. He doesn't want to drive Mark further away, but he feels it is his responsibility to remind Mark of his other friendships. As time goes by they grow further and further apart. What do you think Ken should do? What would you say—knowing that *how* you say something is as important as *what* you say?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE CHURCH

- » Read Matthew 18:18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:9.
- » We are adopted sons and daughters of God. He loves His church, and when we have His Spirit in us, we will love others. He has given us gifts to use in helping others with their daily struggles as well as to tell others about Him. The church working together has a great responsibility in telling others of His soon coming.
- » How do you see yourself working as part of the church team in helping and telling others about Jesus?

» Fill in the blanks using the words from the word bank.

accomplished	all	be	church
fellowship	given	Ephesians	God
8-11	Jesus	known	least
make	now	of	preach
purpose	see	through	wisdom
eternal	grace	made	3
NKJV			

"To me, who am less than the _____ of all the saints, this _____ was _____, that I should _____ among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to _____ _____ what is the _____ of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things _____ Jesus Christ; to the intent that _____ the manifold _____ might _____ by the _____ to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the _____ which He _____ in Christ _____ our Lord" (_____ :____, ____).

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read Romans 12:10-13.
- » One teen said, "Why can't I just keep my relationship between God and me? It's personal." There is a difference between personal and private! There aren't any Bible passages that say, "Just believe and be quiet. Everyone will get there sooner or later." No, quite the opposite is true. God has made us to work together. We work best in teams, because our weaknesses get strengthened by others' strengths, and our strengths help other people who have weaknesses. We are not whole unless we are united.
- » Have you considered what God may be asking you to bring to the table? Are you wondering how to be someone who sets the temperature and doesn't just record it? The answer to our quest for boldness in Christ is in community. We are braver together than we are alone. We are smarter as a team than

we are as individuals. Each new member that we add to the family makes us more loving and compassionate, because each new member has a unique experience with God's grace. Each person is expected to participate. Each person is needed, but the whole is more effective than the individual parts. Why do you think Christ sent the disciples out in twos? Because when one is weak, the other can be strong.

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

- » Read the texts and match each one with a description. Some descriptions correspond to more than one text.

- Romans 12:10-13
- Romans 15:7
- Ephesians 4:32
- Hebrews 3:13, 14
- 1 John 1:5-7
- 1 John 4:11, 12
- John 13:34, 35
- Luke 10:1, 2
- Luke 22:31, 32
- Acts 13:2, 3
- Romans 12:5
- 1 Corinthians 1:11, 12
- 2 Corinthians 1:21
- Galatians 3:26-28

- A. Brotherly love
- B. Kind, compassionate, and forgiving
- C. Encourage one another
- D. Fellowship and loving one another
- E. Harvest and laborers
- F. Sift as wheat
- G. One body and perfectly joined, united
- H. All sons of God

Thursday **CONNECTING**

- » Read 1 John 1:5-7.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Everyone is hearing voices! No, it's not that we are all crazy. But we tend to become what we listen to. If you think that God listens to your prayers only when you behave properly, then you are not listening to God. If you think that the only way to really "be someone" is to get noticed, then you are not listening to God. If what others think about you is what will make or break you, then you are listening to someone other than God.
- » God has spoken, and He has declared you not just valuable but precious. He has announced publicly your honored position as His child. Your future is sure if your desire is to be counted as His child. Be counted, along with the many others who are signing up for the kingdom of God. Those who truly sense the surge of joy are those who step out and become agents of change around them. Thermostats, and not just thermometers! It's not always easy, but it makes all the difference. What about you?

Friday **APPLYING**

- » Read 1 John 4:11, 12.
- » Choose the three friends you love and respect the most. Answer the following questions about them.

» How are you like them in the following areas?

Lifestyle: _____

Beliefs: _____

Personality: _____

» In what ways are you different?

Lifestyle: _____

Beliefs: _____

Personality: _____

» How do you help each other grow closer to God?

» In what ways do you get in each other's way in your walk with God?

» What are some goals you want to set for these particular friendships?

» How do you want to pray for your friends specifically?

» What things do you want to pray about for them this week?

» What do you want to thank them for (by letter, email, or in person) for the way they inspire you to be what God has designed you to be?



8

YOUR OWN PREJUDICE

Look Beyond the Barriers!

February 21, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Proverbs 28:21 (GNT) • “Prejudice is wrong.”

Galatians 3:28 (NET) • “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

1 Timothy 5:21 (NET) • “Before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, I solemnly charge you to carry out these commands without prejudice or favoritism of any kind.”

1 Samuel 16:7 (NET) • “God does not view things the way people do. People look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

James 3:17 (GNT) • “But the wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy.”

Acts 10:34, 35 (NLT) • “Then Peter replied, ‘I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.’”

Leviticus 19:33, 34 (NIV) • “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat

them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

Deuteronomy 10:19 (NLT) • “So you, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.”

(See additional references in the student lesson.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “YOUR OWN PREJUDICE”

Prejudice is an attitude. When it results in an action, it becomes discrimination. Prejudice and discrimination combined form the basis for racism. However, racism is more than prejudice and discrimination. Racism is an ideology. It is an ideology of supremacy that places a negative meaning on biological differences, resulting in an objective, differential, and unequal treatment. Ideology is a system of ideas and beliefs about the universe to which people adhere in order to justify their attitudes and actions.

—Caleb Rosado, *Broken Walls* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1990), p. 29.

There are many other forms of prejudice besides racism. Christ pointed out that giving a wealthy person a better seat than a poor person, or giving a poor person more preference just because they were poor, was an act totally contrary to the principles of His kingdom. The ideology and the attitude of the kingdom of God

is to put all people at the same place—kneeling at the foot of the cross, and being a part of that kingdom results in actions of putting the interest of others before one's own. (This is in contrast to an ideology of supremacy.)

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "YOUR OWN PREJUDICE"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Recognize and acknowledge their own prejudices.
2. Understand the root of their prejudices.
3. Take steps to let Christ's love for all people change their hearts and minds.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity B) pillowcase or an opaque bag with pairs of objects that are similar in shape, size and/or texture (examples: a ball of yarn and a softball, a small cardboard box and a wooden block, a knitting needle and a chopstick, a small stuffed animal and a rolled-up pair of socks); (Activity B) whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Fill a pillowcase or an opaque bag with pairs of objects that are similar in shape, size, and/or texture (examples: a ball of yarn and a softball; a small cardboard box and a wooden block; a knitting needle and a chopstick, a small stuffed animal and a rolled-up pair of socks.)

Get set • Invite the students one by one to feel the bag (do not let them open it) and guess what the objects are.

Go • When everyone has had a chance, open the bag and display the items.

Debriefing • **Ask:** **Were you surprised at some of the contents? Why?** (Because they weren't always what they felt like.) **Why did you think some things would be different before we opened the bag?** (They felt like something I had seen or experienced before.) **How was this exercise like the way we sometimes treat people?** (We treat people based on what others have told us about them. We treat people based on our prior experience with them or someone like them.) **What is the**

danger of coming to conclusions based on what someone seems like? (We could misjudge someone or miss the opportunity to really know them. We could hurt their feelings. We could miss out on a good friendship.)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Appoint a scribe to record answers for the following exercise.

Get set • Say: I'm going to read a list of words. After I read each word, say the first word or phrase that comes into your mind. Our scribe will write them down.

Go • Read the list of words that follows on the left, pausing for a moment to allow the students time to respond and the scribe to write. (Possible responses are on the right.)

penny	whistle, loafer, candy, for your thoughts
rain	bow, dance, cloud, drops
black	box, light, dog, cat, sheep, man
whistle	blower, stop, while you work
white	house, man, light, fence, bread
that's	cool, tight, my line, the way things are
brown	cow, bread, shirt, cow knows how now brown cow, stone

Debriefing • Ask: Why do you think you answered as you did? (It reminded me of something I had heard, or seen, or experienced.) **Why do you think others answered as they did?** (It reminded them of things they had heard, seen, or experienced.)

Ask: What does it mean to react? (To respond quickly without thinking carefully about what we are saying or doing. To respond naturally.) **What is the danger in reacting?** (We can respond in ways that hurt others. We might act so fast that we don't have time to think about what a citizen of God's kingdom would do.)

Say: We react according to our experiences or to what we have been taught through the

words or actions of those around us, especially our families. When we react negatively to a person who is different from us, it is called being prejudiced.

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Jim was a Caucasian student working in Chicago, U.S.A., after graduation. To get to his office he had to go through a neighborhood unlike any he had ever been in. It was the first time he had ever been around people of another race, so he was cautious. On his first day of work he passed by a dark-skinned man who called out to him, "I'm Daleestades." Jim was frightened, so he avoided the man. The next day the same thing happened. Determined not to be confronted by the man again, Jim walked on the other side of the street the following day. Finally one morning Jim couldn't avoid the man. "I know you; you're Daleestades," Jim said. "Actually, my name is Arthur," replied the man. "The other day I was quoting you a verse from the Bible, I was saying I am "the least of these." Jim smiled and wondered to himself what he had been afraid of. After that Jim and the man spoke frequently and became friends.

Ask: Why do you think Jim avoided the man? (Because he was different than anyone Jim had ever met. He didn't know what the man wanted.) **Why was Jim afraid of him?** (He was afraid the man would hurt him or want something from him. He had never encountered a dark-skinned person before.) **What changed his mind about the man?** (The man's persistence. Jim couldn't avoid him any longer. Jim was curious about his name.) **Talk about a time when you had a similar experience. In what way did it change your thinking or actions?**

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: After God gave the law to Moses and the children of Israel, He very specifically spoke about how the Israelites were to treat a certain group of people. Ask three different persons or groups to find and read the following verses: **Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 19:33, 34; and Deuteronomy 10:19.** Who were they? (People who were not Israelites. These people were known as aliens.)

Say: An alien was not entitled to all the rights and privileges of an Israelite, so instructions were needed on how to treat them. Although the Israelites were the chosen people, God did not want them to think that their status gave them the right to treat others badly. These verses in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy all remind us that as citizens of the kingdom we are required to acknowledge, be kind to, befriend, reach out to, and love those who are different from us.

Ask: What kinds of differences among people do we experience today? (These differences could include country of origin, race, gender, color, hair texture, and language.) Who is considered an “alien” in our world today? (Allow the students time to respond.) How are they usually treated? How should you as a citizen of the kingdom treat them? (with kindness, with love, impartially, like everyone else, like God’s children, too, the way Jesus would treat them)

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Distribute the student lessons. Have students follow as you read the illustration story: “Look Beyond the Barriers!”

Ask: Do the students in your school sepa-

rate themselves into groups? In what way? (Allow time for answers.) Is there any other place in your life where the situation is similar—where people separate themselves into different groups? (parties, church, socials, etc.) Why do you think people separate themselves like this? (Because they are afraid. Because they don’t want their friends to think that they are strange. Because of the way their parents treat others.) What is the problem with only mingling with your friends or people who are like you? (That’s not what Jesus did. That’s not how the kingdom of heaven is supposed to be. It limits our opportunities to minister to others.)

Have students find and read together **Numbers 12:1-15**, in a modern translation if possible. It is the story of Miriam and Aaron’s prejudice against Moses’ wife, who was from a different culture. Then review the texts listed in Wednesday’s section of the student lesson.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Ian is with a group of friends. Someone tells a joke about a person of another race. He is uncomfortable with it, though others around him immediately burst into laughter. Soon others are telling their own jokes. The jokes are getting worse and worse. Ian says nothing. What could he do next time?

Give the students a chance to respond.

Ask: Why do you think Ian didn’t say anything? (He didn’t want to draw attention to himself. He agreed with the jokes. He was afraid of what his friends would think.) What have you done in the past when this situation has come up? Why did you do what you did? What should you do when someone starts telling jokes or talking negatively about people who are different from them? (A prayer for the Holy Spirit to give you strength and wisdom is important. You may be prompted to walk away. Say, “I’m not comfortable with the way you’re talking about people.” Change the subject. Say something nice about the people my

friends are talking about. Challenge what the person is saying by asking a question.) **How will you handle things differently in the future?** (Pray each day for the Spirit's guidance. Practice in advance what I might say. Get to know the person people are talking about so I can give them a different view.)

Say: God says we are to defend aliens. As children of God, we must always be prepared to interact with all kinds of people regardless of what others may think.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Give each student an object (wrapped hard candy, buttons, stickers) in one of three different colors (red, blue, yellow).

Ask the students to find someone this week that they don't know who is wearing one of the colors and say hello and ask them about themselves. Tell them they are to report back next week about what the response was, how they felt, what they learned about the person that was different than what they thought. Point out that these people could be a different age, religion, gender, nationality—there are many differences that we tend to react to.

Have the students role-play what they might say or do in one of the situations they might face. Discuss with them how and when to approach people and what possible reactions they may experience. Be sure to review with them whom they should or should not approach.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What may be possible reactions to your gesture?
2. What risks do you take when you defend the defenseless? (that either they or your usual friends will turn on you and you will be left with no one)

3. What are possible benefits to stepping outside your present circle of friends? (new friends, new understanding)
4. Why is a Christian's accepting and defending people who are different so important to God? (We are all part of God's family. Shunning others is an insult to God.)
5. Tell one thing you can change in your life to reflect God's love for those who are considered different in your circle.
6. Without telling anyone who it is, think of something specific you can do for one person against whom you know you have been prejudiced.

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Kermit the Frog, a character in Jim Henson's *Muppet Show*, says, "It's not easy being green." You can substitute just about any other word for green to understand how others who are different from you may feel. To avoid someone or to treat them badly because of the color of their skin, texture of their hair, or difference of their accent without getting to know them for who they are is called prejudice. And as we have learned from God's Word, it is just plain wrong. As citizens of God's kingdom, we are obligated to treat everyone as we would want to be treated. This week, ask God to give you wisdom, power, and a heart that will be open and accepting of *all* His children.

Reminder to Teacher: Global Youth Day is the third Sabbath in March. Have you started planning your Global Youth Day Service activity with your students?

STUDENT LESSON

YOUR OWN PREJUDICE

Look Beyond the Barriers!

February 21, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 14, Unity in the Body of Christ:** "The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 35-38

LOOK BEYOND THE BARRIERS!

Several decades ago, in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., an American teacher developed a simple classroom exercise to illustrate the power of prejudice to her students. She told the children that having blue eyes meant they were more intelligent, and gave greater privileges to the blue-eyed children. Very quickly she observed that the blue-eyed children were bullying and oppressing the

brown-eyed children, while those with brown eyes demonstrated fear and low self-esteem—even though she conducted the exercise for only one day! The next day, Ms. Elliot returned to her class and told the children that what she'd told them the previous day was untrue—it was actually brown-eyed children who were more intelligent and would have more privileges. The same experience happened in reverse—now the brown-eyed children began to oppress the others.

The experience opened students' eyes—both blue and brown!—to the power of prejudice and the divisions we create between people. It is very wrong to divide people up on the basis of race, language, culture, religion, and many other categories. We should never make distinctions between people based on our differences, nor try to determine who's "in" and who's "out," who's cool and who's not. Jesus saw past all those barriers. He chooses His followers from every race, culture, and background, and He asks us to look past those barriers too. A major part of being like Jesus is to accept others because Jesus loves each of us and wants to welcome everyone into His family.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Proverbs 28:21 (GNT).
- » Is your school like Chapin High School was at the beginning of the school year? Do groups of people sit together and exclude others

from joining them? List the various groups in your school and what binds each group together. Do you belong to a group? Why or why not? What are the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a group?

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- » Read Romans 12:4, 5; Galatians 3:27-29; Acts 17:26, 27.
- » Even though God has created us unique and individual from others, we are still one in Christ. All of us are united in Christ as brothers and sisters. Just as we care for and love our families, we should care for and love our world family. When we see someone different than ourselves, we should realize they are a child of God and that He loves them. Our hearts should be touched, and we should treat them as we would Christ Himself.
- » How do I see and treat others that are different from me?

- » How can I show and share my love for God with others?

- » Fill in the missing words.

" 'Go therefore and make _____ of all the nations, _____ them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, _____ them to observe all things that I have _____ you; and lo, I am with you _____, even to the end of the _____.’ Amen"

(Matthew 28:19, 20, NKJV).

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Acts 10:34, 35.
- » Although words such as *racism* and *sexism* (and in most translations even the word *prejudice*) aren't in the Bible, it's clear that God wants everyone to be treated equally. God gives us example after example of how to treat those members of society whom other members of society reject. This is so important to Him that it's even part of the law given to Moses.
- » Speaking of Moses, we see one clear example of prejudice in Moses' own family, when his brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, spoke against Moses' foreign wife. Miriam paid for her unkindness with seven days of shame living outside the camp with leprosy.
- » Jesus confronted every ism there was in the three years of His public ministry. Anyone was welcome to follow Him: women, children, tax collectors, old people, foreigners, those sick with contagious diseases, those who were crippled, and even traitors. He gathered around Him everyone that society said to avoid or ignore. Not only that, He told His disciples that it would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around their neck than to hurt someone He called "the least of these."
- » Prejudice is part of human nature, sometimes learned from our families, and absorbed from the society in which we live. But by God's power and grace we can become defenders, protectors, and friends to anyone.

Wednesday
BIBLE INSIGHTS

» Fill in the blanks after looking up the texts (if you don't have a particular version of the Bible, you can go to Biblegateway.com).

1. "But the wisdom from above is first

_____ , then _____ ,
_____ , full of _____ and
good _____ , unwavering, without
_____ " (James 3:17, NASB).

2. "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you _____ these things _____ prejudice, doing nothing with _____"
(1 Timothy 5:21, NKJV).

3. "There is neither _____ nor
_____, there is neither _____
nor _____ man, there is neither
_____ nor _____; for you are all
one in _____" (Galatians 3:28, NASB).

4. "Then Peter replied, 'I _____ very
clearly that God shows no _____. In
every _____ he accepts those who
_____ him and _____ what is
_____" (Acts 10:34, 35, NLT).

5. "Jesus said to his disciples: 'Things that
cause _____ to _____ are bound
to come, but woe to anyone through
whom they come. It would be better for
them to be thrown into the sea with a
_____ tied around their neck than to
cause one of these _____
to stumble'" (Luke 17:1, 2, NIV).

6. "To show _____ is not _____"

(Proverbs 28:21, NIV).

7. "God sees not as _____,
for _____ looks at the _____
_____, but the LORD _____ at the
_____ " (1 Samuel 16:7, NASB).

8. "So you, too, must show _____ to
_____, for you yourselves were
once foreigners in the land of _____"
(Deuteronomy 10:19, NLT).

Thursday
CONNECTING

» Read 1 Timothy 5:21.

» Review the memory text.

» Now is the time in your life that friends are becoming the most important people (MIP) in your life. Soon they may even edge out your family for that position. This is also the time you are finding out who you are. That's difficult, because you are changing rapidly every day (maybe even every hour!). Since you are so focused on this task, it may be harder than ever to be around people who are really different. But you must, because that's the way life is.

» Dealing with people from various backgrounds is necessary in a global society and a global church. Even though it's difficult, now is the time to look at what you've been taught about others and challenge those things you have found not to be true. Ask God to show you where you might have prejudices against someone or a group of people. Ask Him for the power to at least once a week seek out someone who is totally unlike you to interact with. Then stand back and watch Him work.

Friday
APPLYING

- » Read 1 Samuel 16:7.
- » Grab a pencil and finish the following sentences quickly, without stopping long to think about your answer. Put the first thing that comes to your mind.

Elderly people are _____

Immigrants always _____

Girls can't _____

When boys _____

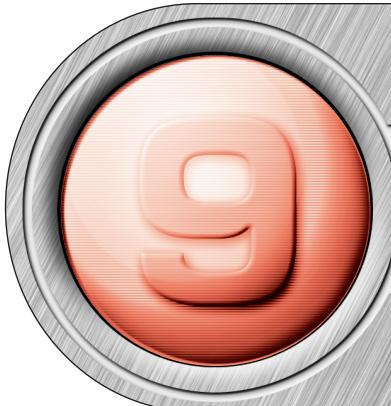
they _____

My country is _____

Other countries are _____

- » Now go back through and think carefully about your responses. Using a different-colored pen or pencil, change your responses to fit how a citizen of the kingdom of God should respond. Realize that we often react to people and situations according to the way we have watched others react or the way we have been told to. That's not always the best way because in God's kingdom a different kind of thinking is needed. Ask God to live in you so that you can treat others as He does—without prejudice or favoritism.





WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT

The Real Issue

February 28, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 7:1-3 (NIV) • “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

John 5:22 (NIV) • “The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.”

John 7:24 (NIV) • “Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.”

John 8:15 (NIV) • “You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.”

John 12:47 (NIV) • “For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”

Romans 2:1 (NIV) • “At whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”

Romans 14:10 (NIV) • “You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.”

Romans 15:1 (NIV) • “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak.”

James 2:12, 13 (NIV) • “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”

James 4:11, 12 (NIV) • “Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?”

(Additional passages in student lesson.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT”

“Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His relationships with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes.

. . . His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While he ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 12).

Jesus sets the example for us, as citizens of His kingdom. For further study on how Jesus treated people who were by law under judgment, see *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 84-92, "Days of Conflict."

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Value those they don't understand or whose circumstances they don't know.
2. View others through Jesus' eyes of compassion, acceptance, and love.
3. Withhold judgment as they realize that they will be judged in the same way they judge others.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity B) shoes; (Activity C) poster showing a complex picture with lots of things happening.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • Whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief high-

lighted this week.

3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project report

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Have someone read **Matthew 7:1-5**.

Say: In this passage Jesus uses a technique called **hyperbole**. Hyperbole is a figure of speech that overstates for emphasis. Separate into groups of three or four and take a couple of minutes to come up with your own expressions of hyperbole to make the same point that Jesus is making. When you are finished, your group will report to the rest of us. For example, you might say: **Get the beach out of your own shoes before you try to get the grain of sand out of mine.** Allow the students time to work, then hear their reports.

Debriefing • Say: What is the real message of this exercise? (We should not criticize others when we are guilty of the same behavior ourselves.) **What is it called when we criticize others for their behavior or circumstances?** (Judging) **What about when we continue doing the wrong thing but condemn others for doing**

the same? Hint: it's in the last sentence of the Scripture passage that we read. (Hypocrisy)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Either have the students take off their shoes and pass them to the person to the right of them or have an assortment of shoes of different sizes and styles (high heels, athletic shoes, sandals, etc.) for volunteers to try on.

Ask those with shoes other than their own to walk around the room once.

Debriefing • When everyone has finished, **ask:** **What was it like to walk in the other person's shoes? How do your feet feel now? your back? Would you want to do it again? Why or why not?** (It's too hard, painful, tiring.)

Say: A Native American saying goes like this: "Don't judge anyone until you have walked two moons in their moccasins." A variation on this says: Don't judge until you have walked a mile (or a kilometer) in their shoes.

Ask: **What are those sayings trying to tell us?** (Only when we have experienced what someone else has experienced can we fairly judge them.) **Is that ever really possible?** (Actually, we can only try to understand their lives and treat them with love and care.) Have the students find and read John 7:24.

Say: Jesus says to stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment. You can do that only if you live through the exact experiences that others do. Only Jesus was able to do that. Since our conduct and thinking are imperfect, we have no right to judge others.

C. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

You will need a poster showing a complex picture with lots of things happening, and a screen or blank wall. The picture should be something that the students have not seen before. You will show this scene for 10 seconds exactly.

Say: I want you to concentrate on this picture for 10 seconds. Uncover the picture or turn on the electronic equipment.

After they have looked, ask one student: **What did you see in the picture? Please be specific about the details.** Then invite other students who may have seen other things to offer their recollections.

Say: Witnesses to a crime often see the same scene differently because it happened so quickly. I showed you the picture for 10 seconds exactly. You all had the same amount of time to see it, but you saw different things. **Why is that?** (Allow time for responses.)

Conclude with the following thoughts in your own words: No two people see anything in the same way. Even when we are all observing the same reality with our eyes, we interpret it differently in our brains. Those interpretations are based on our experience, our culture, our perception, and so on. So even if two people physically see the same thing, they give it different meanings. When we give our meaning to something someone else does without understanding their meaning, we are judging them.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Ask: Have you ever watched a TV program with a friend, and when it was over and you talked about it, it was as if you had seen a different program? For example, something you thought was funny, your friend thought was sad. Or something you thought was exciting, your friend thought was boring. **Why do you think this is?** (Because of our backgrounds, experiences, and personalities, we see, understand, or perceive things differently.) **Have you ever gotten angry with your friend or put them down because they didn't see things as you did? Or has someone—perhaps a family member—ever done that to you?** (Encourage students to share personal experiences.)

Say: When people put us down because they don't understand our experience, they are judging us. As God's children, we are told not to judge, because we will be judged in the same way we judge others.

Ask: Do you avoid others or have you been avoided by others because you have judged them or they have judged you?

Say: Let's look at what the Bible says about judging others. Have students read Matthew 7:1-3; Romans 2:1; James. 4:11, 12.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

This week's illustration is based on the same basic parable used in lesson 3, about the blind men and the elephant. In that lesson the story helped demonstrate the fact that in the great controversy the devil has blinded people to the whole truth about God. This week the same basic illustration is used to point out that while there is an absolute "elephant" that doesn't change (the truth about God found in His Word), we do not each experience things in the same way and therefore shouldn't judge another person's experience.

You will find this week's version of the parable on page 98. You might have six students take the parts of the six blind men as you read the story.

Debriefing • Ask: Which description of the elephant was correct? (All were, to some degree. None were.) **What made it correct?** (The person's experience or perspective from which he felt the elephant.) **What made it incorrect?** (No one had seen the whole elephant.) **How is this like our lives?** (If the elephant is all possible human understanding of God, we have only partial understanding based on our experiences, culture, background, nationality, etc.) **(Note to teacher:** This is not to be confused with the idea that the devil is trying to convince humanity of, that there is no absolute truth as revealed to us in God's Word.)

Say: Only the Lord Jesus Christ lived the complete human experience. He was tempted, abandoned, rejected, hated, and scorned. Only He completely understands what we go through. Because of His experience on this earth, only He is qualified to judge others. Have someone find and read John 5:22. Continue: Only Jesus has the authority to judge others, because He will do so with complete understanding and kindness.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Tell the following story:

"A supply clerk checking in for the graveyard shift at his factory was warned of a small box that had been left on the loading dock. Printed on all sides were the words 'DANGER! DO NOT TOUCH!' Everyone had been told to stay clear of the parcel until management could check out the situation. The night clerk didn't even want to breathe near the thing. He was greatly relieved when a supply foreman arrived in the morning.

"The foreman put on gloves and safety glasses. Slowly, carefully, he opened the box. Inside he discovered 25 signs that read, 'DANGER! DO NOT TOUCH!' —Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 89.

Ask: Why did judging the box create such concern? (Fear, afraid the box contained something bad) **Ask:** How does the above story fit in with judging others? (We don't know the heart of others; we only see part of the story; we shouldn't jump to conclusions.) **Say:** Sometimes we think we know what happened, but don't have all the facts. At times we make judgments about someone when we don't even know them. **Ask:** What does this tell us about judging others? (We should be careful about judging others, as we don't always know what has happened and appearances can be deceiving.)

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Write the following seven instances of behavior on a whiteboard or chalkboard. Ask the students for their interpretation of each of the instances.

1. A person comes to a meeting half an hour after the scheduled starting time. (Sample response: This person is late and should at least apologize or give an explanation.)
2. Someone kicks a dog.
3. A woman carries a heavy jug of water on her head while her husband walks in front of her carrying nothing.
4. A male guest helps a female host carry dirty dishes into the kitchen.
5. While taking an exam, a student copies from the paper of another student.
6. A guest at a dinner party belches aloud after the main course.

After having the students share their interpretations or reactions, ask them to imagine the reactions of people from the following cultures: (Adapt the scenarios based on your culture.)

1. A culture in which people often arrive a half hour after the stated starting time.
A culture in which meetings start at least an hour after the stated time.
2. A country in which dogs tend to carry disease. A country in which many dogs are wild and vicious.
3. A culture in which carrying water is seldom done by men.
4. A culture in which men are never expected to enter the kitchen to help.
5. A culture in which students are expected to help each other.
6. A culture in which belching is seen as an expression of appreciation for the food.

—Adapted from *Interpreting Behavior: Expanding Our Point of View*, at www.peacecorps.gov/wws/culturematters.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Who is the only person who can judge and why?
2. What steps can you take to avoid judging others?
3. What steps can you take when you feel you have been unfairly judged?
4. What do you discover when you "walk two moons" in someone's moccasins?
5. In what way has the way you judged someone else come back to you?
6. Give an example in today's society of someone (an individual, group, nation) judging someone else unfairly and what the consequences were.

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Remember our Native American proverb that says, "Don't judge anyone until you have walked two moons in their moccasins." We can't be everywhere at every time. We cannot read minds; we can barely read actions. As children of God if we never judge, we will never be wrong. We can rest in the fact that we have an all-knowing Judge who has everything under control.

(That Judge, however, has given clear instructions in His Word about the behavior that violates His absolute law of love. He provides wisdom to discern sin while instructing us not to judge the sinner.)

FOR LESSON 9:

THIS STORY IS FOR CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION.

Long ago six old men lived in a village in India. Each was born blind. The other villagers loved the old men and kept them away from harm. Since the blind men could not see the world for themselves, they had to imagine many of its wonders. They listened carefully to the stories told by travelers to learn what they could about life outside the village.

The men were curious about many of the stories they heard, but they were most curious about elephants. They were told that elephants could trample forests, carry huge burdens, and frighten young and old with their loud trumpet calls. But they also knew that the raja's daughter rode an elephant when she traveled in her father's kingdom. Would the raja let his daughter get near such a dangerous creature?

The old men argued day and night about elephants. "An elephant must be a powerful giant," claimed the first blind man. He had heard stories about elephants being used to clear forests and build roads.

"No, you must be wrong," argued the second blind man. "An elephant must be graceful and gentle if a princess is to ride on its back."

"You're wrong! I have heard that an elephant can pierce a man's heart with its terrible horn," said the third blind man.

"Please," said the fourth blind man. "You are all mistaken. An elephant is nothing more than a large sort of cow. You know how people exaggerate."

"I am sure that an elephant is something magical," said the fifth blind man. "That would explain why the raja's daughter can travel safely throughout the kingdom."

"I don't believe elephants exist at all," declared the sixth blind man. "I think we are the victims of a cruel joke."

Finally the villagers grew tired of all the arguments, and they arranged for the curious men to visit the palace of the raja to learn the truth about elephants. A young boy from their village was selected to guide the blind men on their journey. The smallest man put his hand on the

boy's shoulder. The second blind man put his hand on his friend's shoulder, and so on until all six men were ready to walk safely behind the boy who would lead them to the raja's magnificent palace.

When the blind men reached the palace, they were greeted by an old friend from their village who worked as a gardener on the palace grounds. Their friend led them to the courtyard. There stood an elephant. The blind men stepped forward to touch the creature that was the subject of so many arguments.

The first blind man reached out and touched the side of the huge animal. "An elephant is smooth and solid like a wall!" he declared. "It must be very powerful."

The second blind man put his hand on the elephant's limber trunk. "An elephant is like a giant snake," he announced.

The third blind man felt the elephant's pointed tusk. "I was right," he said decisively. "This creature is as sharp and deadly as a spear."

The fourth blind man touched one of the elephant's four legs. "What we have here," he said, "is an extremely large cow."

The fifth blind man felt the elephant's giant ear. "I believe an elephant is like a huge fan or maybe a magic carpet that can fly over mountains and treetops," he said.

The sixth blind man gave a tug on the elephant's fuzzy tail. "Why, this is nothing more than a piece of old rope. Dangerous, indeed," he scoffed.

The gardener led his friends to the shade of a tree. "Sit here and rest for the long journey home," he said. "I will bring you some water to drink."

While they waited, the six blind men talked about the elephant.

"An elephant is like a wall," said the first blind man. "Surely we can finally agree on that."

"A wall? An elephant is a giant snake!" answered the second blind man.

"It's a spear, I tell you," insisted the third blind man.

"I'm certain it's a giant cow," said the fourth blind man.

"Magic carpet. There's no doubt," said the fifth blind man.

"Don't you see?" pleaded the sixth blind man. "Someone used a rope to trick us."

Their argument continued, and their shouts grew louder and louder.

"Wall!"

"Snake!"

"Spear!"

"Cow!"

"Carpet!"

"Rope!"

"Stop shouting!" called a very angry voice. It was the raja, awakened from his nap by the noisy argument.

"How can each of you be so certain you are right?" asked the ruler.

The six blind men considered the question.

And then, knowing the raja to be a very wise man, they decided to say nothing at all.

"The elephant is a very large animal," said the raja kindly. "Each man touched only one part. Perhaps if you put the parts together, you will see the truth. Now, let me finish my nap in peace."

When their friend returned to the garden with the cool water, the six men rested quietly in the shade, thinking about the raja's advice.

"He is right," said the first blind man. "To learn the truth we must put all the parts together. Let's discuss this on the journey home."

The first blind man put his hand on the shoulder of the young boy who would guide them home. The second blind man put a hand on his friend's shoulder, and so on until all six men were ready to travel together.—Retold by Donelle Blubaugh (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/guides/looking/story22.html>).

STUDENT LESSON

WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT

The Real Issue

February 28, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:1-3, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 24, Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary:** "The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 125, 126

THE REAL ISSUE

"As a captive in a foreign land, Daniel determined in his late teens to be true to God. Ushered into the luxurious banquet hall of the Babylonian king, he refused to worship the king's idols, drink the king's wine, or eat the king's unclean delicacies. Yet he did it with such

grace that he eventually won the hearts of his captors.

"Daniel's spiritual integrity continued throughout his life. When he was in his mid-80s, he faced perhaps his greatest test. Conniving coworkers schemed against him. They slyly influenced the king to pass a decree forbidding worship of any god except himself for 30 days. Obviously Daniel could not comply. The price for disobedience was high.

"The prophet did not make his decision based on the consequences of his actions. He made it based on faithfulness to God's Word. Had he considered the consequences, death in the lions' den, he might have yielded. Being torn apart limb by limb by ferocious bloodthirsty lions is not a very pleasant thought. Anytime the consequences of a decision become the driving force in making a decision, we are likely to yield.

"One of the most successful coaches in the history of professional football was Vince Lombardi, of the Green Bay Packers. A reporter asked why they gave so much of themselves each Sunday. He queried, 'Why is your team notably different? Why do you leave everything out on the field?' The players responded, 'We are not playing for the crowd in the stands or the millions in the television audience. We aren't overly concerned about what the news media says. We are playing for one thing: "the coach's eyes." When we review the film Monday mornings, we want to know we have satisfied Coach Lombardi.'

"Daniel did not play to the crowds. He lived to please his heavenly Father. He played for the 'Father's eyes.'

"When the final films of life are shown, living life to please God is what will truly count. The great heroes of faith all lived for a purpose. They stood above the masses. They viewed life from a different perspective. They did not live to please themselves or the crowd. The prime purpose of their life was to please God. In making this fundamental decision, Daniel lived a centered life. God's formula for true peace and lasting success is still the same today."—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, p. 206.

Sunday **RESPONDING**

- » Read Romans 2:1.
- » Joshua's dad and mom divorced. In the years after the divorce Joshua acted out his anger at his situation by getting into trouble with the law. After a few years he straightened out his life. He was doing well in school, had an after-school job, and was being considered for an athletic scholarship for a local private school. Eventually he might even receive a college scholarship, which would mean that his mother wouldn't have to worry about paying for college. Then some money was stolen from the place where he worked. Everyone acted as if Joshua had gone back to his old ways. Was that fair of them? Why or why not?

Monday **BIBLE ANSWERS ON CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY**

- » Read Hebrews 4:14-16; Revelation 20:12; Revelation 22:11, 12.
- » Jesus was tempted just as we are. Through prayer and trust in His heavenly Father He resisted the devil and lived a sinless life. He understands what we face and go through. He offers us help in dealing with our strug-

gles to overcome sin. He has the right to be our judge because He lived without sinning. And He knows us—everything about us! He knows what is in our hearts. We cannot deceive Him. He has begun the investigative judgment that will determine our faithfulness to Him.

- » What does God know about you and your heart?

- » How can you prepare to meet Jesus?

- » Fill in the blanks.

"Therefore, brethren, having _____ to enter the Holiest by the _____ of _____, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and _____ a _____ over the _____ of God, let us _____ with _____ in full assurance of faith, having our _____ from an evil conscience and our _____ with _____ water" (Hebrews 10:19-22, NKJV).

Tuesday **REFLECTING**

- » Read James 2:12, 13.
- » These are the years when what your friends think of you is probably more important than even what the adults in your life think of you. At this time in your life you probably have a specially chosen group of friends you like to be with. They probably share your interests, likes and dislikes, way of dressing, things to do in your free time, and music that you listen to. And there may not seem to be

room in your life for many other people. And that's OK up to a certain point.

- » Good friends will help you get through this difficult time in your life when it seems as if your mind and body aren't in agreement with each other about anything. Because you may feel awkward within yourself, you may not want to be around someone else who seems awkward in your social setting. Unfortunately, instead of being compassionate toward those who are unlike you, you may tend to exclude those people from your life based on what they seem like on the outside.
- » Jesus says we have to get over it. He was the ultimate example of not judging and not excluding. He treated everyone with respect and concern—even when He pointed out things in their lives that were clearly against God's law. You can make sure that people are included in group gatherings, that you refuse to participate when others talk about them, and that you give gentle hints that might help them get along better with others.
- » And if you don't? One day you may be in their position, and they may treat you the same way you've treated them. God says so.

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

- » In the Bible are texts telling us how God feels about judging. Below are a few of them. Please fill in the blanks.

1. "Do not _____, or you too will be _____. For in the same way you _____ others, you will be _____, and with the _____ you use, it will be _____ to you. Why do you look at the _____ of _____ in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the _____ in your

_____?" (Matthew 7:1-3, NIV).

2. "The Father _____ no one, but has _____ all _____ to the _____" (John 5:22, NIV).
3. "Stop _____ by mere _____, but instead _____" (John 7:24, NIV).
4. "You _____ by human _____; I pass _____ on no one" (John 8:15, NIV).
5. "At whatever point you _____ another, you are _____ yourself, because you who pass _____ do the same things" (Romans 2:1, NIV).
6. "Speak and act as those who are going to be _____ by the law that gives freedom, because _____ without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been _____. _____ triumphs over _____" (James 2:12, 13, NIV).
7. "Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks _____ a brother or sister or _____ them speaks _____ the _____ and judges it. When you _____ the _____, you are not keeping it, but sitting in _____ on it. There is only one _____ and _____, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to _____ your neighbor?" (James 4:11, 12, NIV).

Thursday **CONNECTING**

- » Read John 5:22.
- » Review the memory text.
- » God says He, through His Son, Jesus Christ, is the only one who can judge people. And rightly so. They created us, and Jesus lived the life that is ours in this world. No one else in history has had the range of experience of being tempted and rejected as He has. Only He understands the experience of every person who has ever lived and will ever live.
- » So if we can't have Jesus' experience, what gives us the right to judge? Nothing and no one. All we can do is to ask Him for the grace to look at others through His eyes, to listen to others' stories about their lives and act accordingly. Even when we can tell that they are doing something God forbids, Jesus asks us not to condemn but to help.
- » And what if we don't? Jesus Himself tells us that in the same way we judge others, we will be judged. Think of a time when you've had the experience of being wrongly judged. How did it feel? How would you do things differently next time?
- » Remember, God is a God of second chances—if you've judged someone unfairly before, determine through His power to not do it again.

Friday **APPLYING**

- » Read James 4:11, 12.
- » Remember the proverb “Don’t judge any man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins”? Think of experiences you have had being judged or judging others. Think of some other ways to express experiencing what someone else has experienced in order to understand them. For example, *Don’t judge a person until you have eaten the food they have eaten.* Grab a pencil and write out some of your ideas in the following space.





TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT

A Blue-Ribbon Attitude

March 7, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Proverbs 18:21 (NIV) • “The tongue has the power of life and death.”

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

Ephesians 4:22–5:20 (NIV) • “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. . . .

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. . . .

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God’s example. . . .

“. . . Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but

rather thanksgiving. . . . Let no one deceive you with empty words. . . .

“. . . Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. . . . It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. . . .

“. . . [Speak] to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Colossians 3:1-17 (NIV) • “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. . . .

“. . . But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other. . . .

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. . . . Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Philippians 4:4-9 (NIV) • “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do

not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, . . . whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. . . . Put it into practice.”

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT "TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT"

If put-downs were an Olympic sport, some young teens would be among the strong contenders. In an effort to fit in with their friends, to distance themselves from people who seem to be dramatically unlike them, or to help sort out their own feelings about the changes going on within themselves, many often use cruel verbal repartee as a normal conversational mode. The influence of the media doesn't help. Smart-mouthed adolescents are the norm rather than the exception in broadcast media. Verbal one-upmanship sells movies, videos, and cable channels. And teens this age—and often their parents—just don't seem to get the impact it may have on them.

The apostle Paul understood the influence of what people are exposed to and what they subsequently think on. He understood that what a person allows to occupy their mind will sooner or later make an impact on what they say and what they do.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Examine the tendency to put others down in order to build themselves up.
2. Understand that put-downs and an acidic tongue have no place in the Christian's life.
3. Explore ways to let the Spirit transform their behavior in this area.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) paper, writing utensils, scissors (optional: background music or soothing video playing in the background); (Activity B) Bibles, slip of paper with conversation-starting statement for each set of three students in the class; stopwatch or clock (optional: buzzer, whistles, bells, or other noisemaker for the conversation monitor).

Connecting • Bibles, pens/pencils, photocopies of the handout (p. 110).

Applying • A set of three ribbons with the words “Who I Am Makes a Difference” and a supply of pins, or some other token with those words, for each student.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project report

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—

Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • You will need to gather paper, writing utensils, scissors (optional: music or soothing video playing in the background). Before class list each student's name on a sheet of paper, leaving space between each name for a sentence to be written. (Option: If you have a very small class, write each student's name at the top of one sheet of paper, and let each student write their comment on the appropriate person's sheet. See below.)

Go • As the students arrive, give them each the sheet (or sheets) with all the names and instruct them to write the nicest thing they can about each person listed. When everyone is finished, collect the papers to compile and distribute later in the program. (Option: If you have a very large group you may want to create different lists—such as by gender or grade—and have only people in that same group responding.)

Debriefing • Ask: **Why do you think we did this activity?** (It has something to do with today's lesson.) **What do you think will be the result when people get to read what has been written about them? Why is it important to say nice things about people?** (God says we should love one another. It makes it easier to get along with them.) **What happens when we don't say good things about people?** (Relationships suffer.)

NOTE: Cut apart and compile these statements so that each student will have one sheet with the comments about them to take home. You can do this while they are working on the Application Activity, or have an adult helper working on this during the program.

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Write enough conversation-starting statements on slips of paper to have one for every three students in the class. Have a stopwatch or clock (optional: you might like to use buzzers, whistles, bells, or other noisemakers for the conversation monitor).

Get set • Have the students separate into groups of three. One person will be the conversation monitor and not talk, and one person will be given the slip of paper with the beginning statement to make (feel free to choose different statements that will work better in your setting).

Go • Tell the students that you are going to give one person in each group a statement to make to begin a discussion with one other person in the group. The third person will only listen and monitor the discussion. The topics themselves are not important. The important thing is *how* they talk about it. Each time one of the two in discussion says something negative about the other, puts down the other person's idea, calls the other person a name, or makes a negative sound or face, the conversation monitor is to stop the conversation and make the person restate their point. Allow them three minutes to talk.

Suggested topics:

- >> Women make terrible soldiers.
- >> Prayer should be allowed in public schools.
- >> The driving age should be raised to 21.

Debriefing • Ask: **How did you do? Was it difficult to stay positive? Why or why not?** **What does this activity tell us about ourselves?** (We are not in the habit of speaking nicely to each other.) Have students find, and a volunteer read, **Colossians 4:6.** **Say:** **This text says that our speech should be gracious—seasoned with salt. What does that mean, to be seasoned with salt?** (Salt flavors things, makes them taste good to eat. Nice words are easier to take than negative words. Salt is a preservative. It helps relationships go smoother.) **Is it possible to have gracious speech at all**

times? What keeps that from happening? (Being under pressure, we're not used to it. We don't hear it around us.)

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

A group of frogs were traveling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. All the other frogs gathered around the pit. When they saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead.

The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all of their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead. Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He fell down and died.

The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out.

When he got out, the other frogs said, "Did you not hear us?" The frog explained to them that he was deaf. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time.

Find and read **Proverbs 18:21** together. "The tongue has the power of life and death" (NIV).

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Put-downs are "negative or belittling words or actions that show disrespect toward a person or groups of persons. . . . Putdowns are used because of fear, anger, ignorance, jealousy, need for power, frustration, lack of alternative communication skills, insecurity, habit, modeled behavior, or humor. Putdowns are often disguised as humor—as seen in television sitcoms. Verbal putdowns are used both directly (to another person's face) and indirectly (to a third person about someone else)."—From No Putdowns at www.noputdowns.org.

Say: As God's children, we have no place for put-downs in our lives. As we will see, the Bible gives us specific instructions on how to think about and talk with one another.

Distribute or call attention to the student lesson, the Bible Insights section. Have volunteers take turns reading the passages.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to tell or read the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

Ask: What relevance does this story have to our topic today? (It shows the importance of speaking kindly to people.) Why is it so important for people, especially Christians, to speak kindly to one another? (We never know how it may help someone. God commands it. It gives us and them strength to fight the battle against evil. It's a way of following Christ's example.) What happens when we don't? (We may drive someone to destruction. Others can't see Christ in us. Christians become discouraged. We set a poor example for nonbelievers.)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Get ready • Distribute the handout sheet found on page 110 and the student lesson if you have not done so already. Call the students' attention to **Ephesians 4:29–5:20** and **Colossians 3:8–10** and have volunteers read the passages aloud.

Get set • Have the students, in small groups, go through the passages and list on the handout sheets current-day examples of what is listed there. These can be song/rap lyrics, headlines, dialogue from movies or shows, or passages from books or magazines.

Go • Go through the worksheet with the students when they are finished.

Debriefing • **Say:** As you can see, we are bombarded with all the things the Bible speaks against. We need to be so careful that

we don't imitate what we hear. Or better yet, we need to alter what we expose ourselves to in order to live as citizens of God's kingdom.

Ask: What are some things we can do to keep from imitating the natural way of speaking and acting toward others? (Fill our minds with good things, limit our exposure to them by cutting down the time or type of stuff we listen to and watch, be aware of our speech and nonverbal communication. Really listen when adults tell us we have an attitude. Apologize and try again. Pray.)

Have someone read Philippians 4:8. **Say:** This passage gives us clear guidelines about what we allow inside our heads. Have someone read verse 9. Verse 9 says we should put into practice all of these things. Your challenge for the week is to develop the habit of looking for and speaking only of the good in others. By God's grace you can. You've made a pretty good start today. Remind them of the positive comment sheets that they created for one another in Beginning Activity one. Let them know you will be giving them the comments about themselves to take home with them.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

This activity is based on the student lesson illustration about the three ribbons. Have a set of three ribbons, each with the words "Who I Am Makes a Difference," and a supply of pins. If necessary, substitute some other token with the words on it.

Tell the students that you appreciate them, and that they make a difference in your life. (Try to be honest here.) With the help of your associates, pin a blue ribbon on each student.

Say: Let's start our own movement of building others up. Then give each student two more ribbons and challenge them to award one to someone else, and then to give that person the last

one to award to someone else. Ask them to be ready to report their experiences next week.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Can a put-down be nonverbal? Explain.
2. Can a compliment be as damaging as a put-down? In what way?
3. What should you do if someone starts putting you down?
4. Where does the tendency to put others down come from?
5. Do the verses in Colossians and Ephesians mean that we should sing only religious songs, read only religious books, and watch only religious programs or videos? Why or why not?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Though it is natural to do so, we have to guard against the tendency to put down others—or ourselves. Christ died for each one of us. We are all valuable in His eyes. When we put others or ourselves down, we devalue the gift He gave us in giving His life. Words may not kill immediately, but they can damage and ultimately be fatal to others. Let's start today allowing God to help us change our destructive ways of dealing with each other.

Reminder to Teacher: Global Youth Day is in two weeks! How are your plans for your Sabbath School service project coming along?

FOR LESSON 10:

THIS IS FOR CONNECTING TO LIFE.

Instructions: In the Negatives to Avoid and the Positives to Praise columns, under the words *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, list specific items from those passages (Ephesians 4:29–5:20 and Colossians 3:8–10) that a citizen of God’s kingdom

should and shouldn't be a part of or dwell on. Then in the Example column, place a current-day example of the positives that you are exposed to in the media around you. (This is more difficult than giving examples of the negatives, isn't it?)

NEGATIVES TO AVOID	POSITIVES TO PRAISE	EXAMPLE
Ephesians	Ephesians	
hint of immorality		
Colossians	Colossians	
compassion		

STUDENT LESSON

TRANSFORMING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT

A Blue-Ribbon Attitude

March 7, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!" (Psalm 106:3, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 22, Christian Behavior:**
"We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things that will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. . . . We are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 24-27

A BLUE-RIBBON ATTITUDE

A teacher decided to honor each of her students by telling them the difference they had made in her life. Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon that read "Who I Am Makes a Difference." Afterward she decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact

positive recognition would have on a community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons to go out and do the same for others. They were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom, and report back to the class.

One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company who had helped him with his career-planning project. The boy gave the junior executive a blue ribbon. Then he gave him two extra ribbons, and said, "We're doing a class project on recognition, and we'd like you to go out and find somebody to honor. Give them a blue ribbon, then give them the extra ribbon so they can honor a third person. I'll call you in a few days to see what happened."

Later that day the junior executive went in to see his usually grouchy boss. He told his boss that he admired him for being a creative genius. The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon. His surprised boss said, "Well, sure." As he gave him the last extra ribbon, he said, "Would you do me a favor? Would you take this extra ribbon and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbons is doing a project in school, and we want to keep this going and find out how it affects people."

That night the boss came home to his 14-year-old son and sat him down. He said, "The junior executive came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine. He thinks I'm a creative genius. Then he gave me this blue ribbon that says 'Who I Am Makes a Difference.' He gave me

an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about whom I would honor with this ribbon and I thought about you.

"My days are really hectic, and when I get home I sometimes scream at you for not getting good enough grades in school and for your bedroom being a mess. But tonight I just want you to know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You're a great kid, and I love you."

"Thanks, Dad," the boy managed quietly. "I was just thinking about whether or not it was even worth living, since I didn't think I'd ever be able to please you and make you love me."

Sunday **RESPONDING**

- » Read Colossians 3:8-12.
- » You and your friends are teasing each other, calling each other names, talking about your lack of abilities in various areas, and about family members. Then someone says something that hits a little too close to home. Suddenly things get ugly; a physical fight is about to start. How do you defuse the situation? Should you call in an adult? Why or why not? What do you do to keep it from happening again?

Monday **BIBLE ANSWERS ON CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR**

- » Read 2 Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 2:4; 1 John 2:6.
- » In everything we do, we should be like Jesus. Only kindness and care should ever come from us in dealing with others. In every situation and interaction, the person(s) we are with should see Jesus in us—including our parents. Jesus always demonstrated love.

His words were always kind and loving. This is evidence of whom we belong to and spend time with.

- » In what areas do you need the Holy Spirit's help in transforming your critical spirit?

- » How can you display the love and kindness Jesus did when in a difficult situation?

- » Unscramble the following words and place them in the correct blank.

ttiamrios
rhidecln
oelv
isleHmf
feifngor
srificeaic

"Therefore be _____ of God as dear _____. And walk in _____, as Christ also has loved us and given _____ for us, an _____ and a _____ to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:1, 2, NKJV).

Tuesday **REFLECTING**

- » Read Colossians 4:6.
- » "I was just joking." How many times have you said that? A wise man once said that half of all jest is the truth. For Christians, half-truths won't do. The put-downs, the comebacks, the wisecracks, the double messages have no place in the Christian's life—or in the life of anyone who is a member of the human race, for that matter.
- » Put-downs take many forms—verbal and non-verbal: dismissal or rejection in the form of critical or slighting remarks, words or actions

used as weapons, self-put-downs, tone of voice such as sarcasm or insincerity; body language: rolled eyes, curled lip, shrugged shoulders, sneering, mimicking or mockery; and stereotyping.

- » One way to get over our nasty human habit of besting each other with our tongues is to be careful of what we put into our brains. Since the way of the media is often to put people down and go for the negative, we have to be careful of what we watch, listen to, and read. We have to make a conscious effort to take in good stuff. Just as good food makes a strong body, good thoughts make a strong mind.
- » You've got to, as Philippians 4:9 says, "put it into practice" (NIV). And when you've gotten into the habit of filling your mind with the good, the good will come out in your speech and actions.

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

- » Fill in the blanks to discover what God wants us to know about "Transforming the Critical Spirit."

1. "Let your _____ be _____ full of _____, seasoned with _____, so that you may know how to _____ everyone" (Colossians 4:6, NIV).

2. "Whatever is _____, whatever is _____—if anything is _____ or _____—think about such things. . . . Put it into practice" (Philippians 4:8, 9, NIV).

3. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others _____ according to _____ needs, that it may benefit those who listen. . . .

Get _____ of all _____, _____ and anger, brawling and _____, along with every form of _____. Be _____ and _____ to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's _____. . . . Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of _____, or of greed. . . . Nor should there be _____, _____, _____ or _____, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. . . . Be filled with the _____, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:29–5:19, NIV).

4. "But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: _____, rage, malice, slander, and filthy _____ from your lips. Do not lie to each other. . . . Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly _____, clothe yourselves with compassion, _____, _____, _____ and _____" (Colossians 3:8–12, NIV).

5. "Let your _____ be _____ to _____ men. The Lord is at _____" (Philippians 4:5, NKJV).

Thursday
CONNECTING

- » Read Ephesians 4:29-32.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Are your mouth and your face getting you into trouble? Have your parents or other adults asked you to straighten your face, stop rolling your eyes, watch your mouth, adjust your attitude, or not talk to them in "that" tone of voice? And have you felt frustrated because you didn't realize what you were doing? Just like anything else, changing these habits of responding will take some effort on your part. After all the devil loves to get us to give in to our human nature. You may have to spend some quiet time thinking about what you do and why you do it, then praying that the Spirit will help you come up with alternatives. God (and hopefully the adults and friends in your life) is willing to forgive and give you the strength to adopt new and more positive ways of communicating.

Friday
APPLYING

(Consider doing this activity on a day other than Friday.)

- » Read Philippians 4:8, 9.
- » Our society seems to honor the put-down. Over the next several hours, keep record of all the put-downs you hear and all the things that build others up. These can be from people you live with or what you hear in the media (TV, internet, radio, magazines, or newspapers). Use the following chart to help you keep track. Put a star by the put-downs or buildups coming from your own lips. Whatever the ratio, ask God to help you eliminate put-downs and practice building others up. In fact, you can start by thinking of alternatives to the put-downs you have delivered or that you have heard. Remember, silence is always an option.

PUT-DOWNS

BUILDUPS

ALTERNATIVES

6:00 A.M. - 8:00 A.M.

8:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

12:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

4:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.





HEROES

What Happened to the Firing Squad?

March 14, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Acts 1:8 (NIV) • “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.”

2 Peter 1:3 (NIV) • “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

James 1:2, 3 (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.”

1 Peter 1:13 (NIV) • “Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

John 14:12, 13 (NIV) • “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “HEROES”

Most young people are searching for role models. This is natural as they begin to prepare for adult lives outside their own families. However, for parents and teachers this search for heroes is frightening, because a hero can lead a teenager in either of two directions.

This lesson is intended to see heroes from the students' perspective without being judgmental. Criticizing a student's choice of a hero may shut you out, leaving you no room to guide and direct. Throughout this lesson the teacher should focus on helping the student identify, in heroes, characteristics worthy to emulate rather than focusing on who the heroes are. In the next lesson they will be presented with Jesus as the best hero they can have.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH “HEROES”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand the role of a hero.
2. Identify characteristics of a hero.
3. Let God make a hero of them.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) copies of “Bible Hero Quiz” (p. 120), pens or pencils, (Activity B) paper, pens or pencils.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • Whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk, art supplies.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

Azariah = Abednego; (12) Abigail.

Debriefing • Ask: **Why do you think you didn't know some of the answers?** (They didn't have anything to do with me. I never studied about this in school. They are all from a different time or place.) **Say:** **People are looked at as heroes only in the context of time, relevance, and circumstance. For example, the heroes of my time may not have any meaning to you. Everyone has many heroes to choose from. Today we will look at ways to identify the characteristics of a hero and how they affect our lives.**

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Divide the class in two groups.

Get set • Have the first group pretend they are a board of trustees of a huge software company. They are looking for a new president and will compose a newspaper advertisement describing the type of person they are looking for. Have the second group pretend to be a band of angels looking for the best leader for the citizens of earth.

Go • They will compose a newspaper advertisement for the position. When they have completed the activity have each group read their advertisements out loud and compare the two.

Debriefing • Ask: **What was the difference between the two ads?** (They're completely different. They have some things in common. They would attract two very different people.) **What does this activity say about greatness in the world as compared to greatness in God's kingdom?** (God isn't impressed with worldly success. The world looks for people with power and talent, while God looks at people's hearts.) **What can this exercise show us about choosing heroes?** (Just as in looking for someone to fill a certain responsibility, the person we choose to be a hero changes depending on our needs, the context of the situation, and the circumstances.)

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Distribute the "Bible Hero Quiz" (p. 120) for each student to complete independently. Then read the answers out loud for the students to check. (Students will likely not know all the answers.) (1) Nehemiah; (2) Noah; (3) Rahab; (4) Daniel; (5) Barnabas; (6) Caleb; (7) Peter; (8) Esther; (9) Moses; (10) Elijah; (11) Hananiah = Shadrach, Mishael = Meshach,

Say: The heroes of my time may not have any meaning to you. In every generation there are people whom others tend to admire. Today we will look at ways to identify the characteristics of a hero and how those heroes affect our lives.

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

In the late 1940s an unknown missionary named Gladys Aylward returned from China to England. Alan Burgess, who was producing a series on war heroes for the BBC radio, visited her, hoping that the missionary could tell him about heroes she had heard about in China. She told him that she didn't actually know any heroes.

"What about yourself?" he asked. "Did you have any hazardous experiences during the war?"

"I doubt people who listen to the BBC would think I've done anything interesting."

"Didn't you even come into contact with the Japanese invaders?" he pressed.

"Yes," she answered cryptically. It wouldn't be very forgiving if she told Alan Burgess the Japanese had shot her down in a field outside Tsechow. Bombed her in Yangcheng. Strafed her near Lingchuang too. Smashed her on the head once with a rifle butt. Finally, put a price on her head. "Some Japanese are very nice, you know," she volunteered.

"Apparently your life in China was rather sheltered," Mr. Burgess grunted dryly.

Gladys had to offer the poor man something. "I did take some children to an orphanage near Sian."

"You don't say," grumbled the producer, not hiding his disappointment. "Kids? To an orphanage?"

"Yes, we had to cross some mountains."

Burgess perked up. "Real mountains?"

"Yes, I believe you would call them real mountains. The journey was made more difficult because we couldn't walk on the main trails. Oh, and then we had to get across the Yellow River too."

"Isn't that the notorious river that drowns so

many that it's called 'China's Sorrow'?"

Burgess was more and more aghast as Gladys detailed her trek. His voice choked. "You ran out of food? You had no money? Just you and 100 kids—many of whom were toddlers—trekked for one month across mountains, across the Yellow River, ducking Japanese patrols and dive bombers? And at Sian you were diagnosed with typhus and pneumonia and malnutrition? Yes, Miss Aylward, I think people who listen to the BBC would think you've done something interesting."—Adapted from www.heroesofhistory.com. Source: Alan Burgess, *The Small Woman*, (1957, revised edition, 1969).

Ask: What characteristics of a hero can you identify from this small section of Miss Aylward's life? (Humility, courage, care for others.) **Whose lives do you imagine she affected besides those of the children whose lives she saved?** (Many people have heard her story.) **How might those lives have been affected?**

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Ask: What do heroes have to do with God's kingdom? (Most students will not be able to see the connection!) **Say:** When a war is over and becomes a part of history, it is connected with war heroes—people who made a difference and brought victory. You and I are also in a war. And there are worlds watching to see how this is all going to end. When this war is over, it will be a part of the history of this universe.

Ask: Who will be the heroes in this war? (Missionaries, preachers, teachers, doctors, nurses, anyone can be) **Say:** As God's children in this world, it is our duty to be the heroes of this war, to be the kind of person that others would want to follow. When you are a hero in God's kingdom, your primary responsibility is to lead others to Christ.

Ask: What are you doing to fulfill your duty as a witness for God? (I go to church, I pray, I read my Bible occasionally, I'm a Christian—an Adventist.) **Say:** Even more important than doing the right things that identify you as a Christian is having a close, personal, one-on-one relationship with Jesus. The more "real" Jesus becomes to you, the easier it will be to be an effective citizen and soldier for God.

Have the students find and read the verses from "The Source" in the order they are listed: **Acts 1:8; 2 Peter 1:3; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:13; John 14:12, 13.** After each verse is read, discuss what it is saying about being a citizen of the kingdom.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Have students follow along in their Sabbath School lesson as you read the story, "What Happened to the Firing Squad?" (You may want to have copies for students who may not have their Sabbath School lesson with them.) Have students conjecture about how the story ended. Then **say:** Here's the rest of the story: With tears in their eyes, they lifted their guns and fired. Neither they nor Bruce realized that they were shooting blanks. The leader then told him that he would be released and that they would never forget him. The leader also said how much they had grown to respect him. After a 12-day hike out of the jungle, this hero for God was released.

Ask: What would you have done in Bruce's place? (Run for my life; I would never have gone to Colombia.) **If being in his place is too hard to imagine, how is Bruce a hero worthy to follow?** (Because he never gave up; he trusted God; he had faith; he always chose to do what God had before Him to do.)

If you have not already done so, have the students find and read the verses from "The Source" section in the order in which they are listed: **Acts 1:8; 2 Peter 1:3; James 1:2; 1 Peter**

1:13; John 14:12, 13.

After each verse is read, discuss what it is saying about being a citizen in the kingdom.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Read the following verses together:

1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 14:12; 2 Timothy 2:22; Matthew 5:14; John 13:15; Exodus 18:21; Colossians 3:17.

Say: Let's imagine it's a Sabbath afternoon and you are with a group of Adventist Christian friends sitting around doing nothing and being bored. Someone suggests a game—but it isn't about God or spiritual things, and it's still Sabbath. What do you do? Be honest. (Find an excuse to leave; play the game, all the while feeling guilty; play it, what's the big deal?; explain why you are not comfortable and then leave.)

Say: Being a hero for heaven is different from being a hero in this world. In this world you can sometimes be a hero just by having money, education, connections, and so on. But in God's kingdom being a hero often involves leaving your comfort zone. It requires you to do something you may not necessarily be comfortable with. Bruce Olsen, from your lesson, was definitely out of his comfort zone. Jonah was out of his comfort zone. Abraham was out of his comfort zone.

Ask: Can you think of others who were required to step out of their comfort zone in the making of a hero?

Say: Being part of God's kingdom may involve stepping outside of your comfort zone and doing something you may feel is embarrassing or awkward or scary.

Ask: What verses that we have read today make stepping outside of our comfort zones a little less frightening? (2 Peter 1:3; Acts 1:8) **What other verses can you think of?** (Matthew 28:20)

Say: As a child of God you have the assurance that God is with you regardless of your circumstances. You could be doing your everyday routine and have Him with you. Or you could be doing the most difficult thing you've ever done and still have Him with you.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Refer students to Friday's section of their lesson. Have volunteers read, or read together, the modern paraphrase of the Beatitudes.

Say: Today we've discussed some of the characteristics of a hero. We might consider the Beatitudes a list of the characteristics of a Christian hero. **Ask:** Who are some people in our church that fit this description of a hero? (Refer to Matthew 5:7-12. Answers will vary.)

Take students' suggestions and list them where all can see. As a group decide on a way to recognize a specific number of these heroes of God's kingdom. You might create special bookmarks, or awards of excellence, and so on. Let the students come up with a plan and put it into effect.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Why do people often look to heroes?
2. What are some characteristics of a hero?
3. Define the ultimate hero.
4. Do the heroes we follow affect our lives? If so, how?
5. Compare Bruce Olsen and Jonah.
6. How can you be a hero worthy of being followed closer to Jesus?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

The ability to be a hero is in all of us. **John 14:12** says, "*Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these*" (NIV). God has given His children the potential to do amazing things. There is no need to look for opportunities to do something out of the ordinary. All you have to do is live your life for God. When you live to do what He has planned for you, opportunities will come your way. Great things will happen. And whether you realize it or not, you will be a hero worthy of being followed closer to Jesus.

Reminder, next week is Global Youth Day. Are you ready?

BIBLE HERO QUIZ

1. Who appealed to a leader and won the leader's backing to return to his homeland and help rebuild it?

2. Who was the man who trusted God and preached a message that made him unpopular among his contemporaries?

3. What woman joined God's people by saving Hebrew spies?

4. What man gladly faced lions rather than give up worshiping God?

5. Who looked past the mistakes of a man named Paul, saw his potential, and gave him a second chance at becoming the man God wanted him to be?

6. What spy, even when he was old, stepped out in faith to answer God's call?

7. What man of God, despite his failures, followed Christ—even to death on a cross?

8. Who risked her life by going before a king unsummoned and saved her people?

9. Who, after escaping slavery himself, went back and helped his people out of slavery?

10. Who went before a king and pronounced destruction on his land?

11. What three friends were willing to suffer a terrible death rather than worship an idol?

12. What woman pulled together a peace offering and saved the lives of those around her?

STUDENT LESSON

HEROES

What Happened to the Firing Squad?

March 14, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds" (Psalm 77:11, 12, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 11, Growing in Christ:** "In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 82, 83

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FIRING SQUAD?

At only 19 years of age, Bruce Olson knew exactly what he was meant to do. God was calling him to become a missionary to Colombia. Despite knowing little about Colombia, Bruce courageously left his home with the faith that God had plans for him.

He began his work in Colombia with the Motilone tribe. For 28 years he worked with these people. Through great struggles and tremendous joy, God was with him. At 47 years of age he was captured by two dozen Communist guerrillas. They accused him of being a CIA agent for the United States and a helicopter pilot who had killed thousands. He was taken to a camp deep in the jungle, where he was tortured and beaten.

But through this ordeal, Bruce's faith remained strong. He earned the trust of his captors and taught them to read and study the Bible. Every time he was caught evangelizing, he was moved to another location. Bruce was moved 12 times, but during all that he witnessed to around 200 of his captors.

After eight months of captivity he was sentenced to be executed. Tied to a tree, he faced 18 guerrillas—some of whom he had led to Christ. He knew, however, that they would be put to death if they didn't carry out their orders. Crying for their friend, they lifted their guns and fired.

How do you think this story ends?

(If you haven't heard, ask your teacher. The teacher's lesson contains the rest of the story.)

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Proverbs 14:12.
- » Suppose there is an artist whose music is very popular. Everyone you know is listen-

ing to him, and he is getting great reviews. You listen to him, and his music is definitely something you enjoy. But the lyrics aren't anything you're sure you agree with. Because you like the music so much, however, you feel you can just listen to it and tune the words out. What are the dangers in doing so?

- » Now switch from music to people. Is it possible to pick and choose just the specific characteristics of a person (hero) that you would like to emulate? Explain.

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON GROWING IN CHRIST

- » Read Matthew 20:25-28; Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27.
- » Jesus came to "seek and save that which was lost." He left His Father and home in heaven and came as a "missionary" to earth. He didn't come seeking comfort and looking for servants. He came to serve, help, and save. He is our example. As children of God we should be looking for opportunities to serve and help others.
- » How has Jesus' example and the things He did touched your life?

- » As you look around, what types of service can you do for your family, neighborhood, school, church, and community?

- » Below are two verses that have been mixed together. Can you separate them? Hint: The first word belongs to the first verse; the second word belongs to the second verse; and each word will follow the same order. Follow this pattern to separate the verses.

But As grow you in therefore the have grace received and Christ knowledge Jesus of the our Lord Lord so and walk Savior in Jesus Him Christ

Verse 1: _____

Verse 2: _____

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read John 13:15.
- » Like many people surveyed, you may not think you have any heroes. This lesson is not meant to make you feel that if you don't have a hero, something's wrong with you!
- » Whether or not you've ever had a hero, what is important is that you see the importance of where you look and whom you look to for guidance. Whose opinions do you value? If you had to imitate someone's life, whose would it be? Do you really have what it takes within you to be completely sure that you are doing the best thing without guidance?
- » So even if you're a person who doesn't have specific heroes, it is important to be around different people who support you with their knowledge and experience.
- » Think of instances in the past six months when you relied on feedback from someone else.

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Fill in the blanks below. You can go to BibleGateway.com to look up the verses.

1. "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the _____, but the LORD looks at the _____" (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

2. "There is a _____ that _____ to be _____, but in the _____ it leads to _____" (Proverbs 14:12, NIV).

3. "Now _____ from youthful lusts and _____, _____ and _____, with those who call on the Lord from a _____ heart" (2 Timothy 2:22, NASB).

4. "I have set you an _____ that _____ should _____ as I have _____ for you" (John 13:15, NIV).

5. "But select _____ men from all the _____—men who fear God, _____ who _____" (Exodus 18:21, NIV).

6. "And _____ you do, whether in _____ or _____, do it in the _____ of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17, NIV).

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read Matthew 5:14.
- » Review the memory text.
- » It is important to realize that there is someone you can look to as an example. Christ is a flawless role model. There is nothing in His

character that is questionable or undesirable. And just as He sets an example for us to follow, we also should be examples for others. In other words, your role as a citizen of God's kingdom is to be a hero to someone. You may ask why anyone would consider you a hero. But think about it: you may have a little brother or sister, or a friend who looks up to you. Even an adult may see a reflection of Jesus in you. Being a hero in God's kingdom is about reflecting Jesus.

Friday APPLYING

- » Read Colossians 3:17.
- » *The Clear Word* paraphrases the Beatitudes in a way that helps us understand the qualities considered heroic in God's kingdom:

"Happiness comes from having a humble attitude. If you feel your need of God and trust Him, you have the kingdom of God within you" (Matthew 5:3).

"Happiness comes from grieving when you sin. Confess your sins and you will be forgiven and peace will spring up in your soul" (Matthew 5:4).

"Happiness comes from being submissive. When you acknowledge God as the source of life and abilities, you will feel heaven's joy. One day, people like this will fill the whole earth" (Matthew 5:5).

"Happiness comes from longing to do what is right. Those who do right will have an inner satisfaction that nothing else can give" (Matthew 5:6).

"Happiness comes from being compassionate and forgiving. People will remember your loving kindness and return the same to you" (Matthew 5:7).

"Happiness comes to those with pure hearts and motives. Such people will one day have the privilege of seeing God and talking to Him face to face" (Matthew 5:8).

“Happiness comes from being a peacemaker, for such are God’s children” (Matthew 5:9).

"Happiness even comes from being treated badly for doing what's right. Just remember that no matter what happens, your place in heaven is secure" (Matthew 5:10).

"Strangely enough, you'll find yourself blessed even when people insult you, persecute you and lie about you because you have accepted me" (Matthew 5:11).

- » This is a description of the kind of heroes that heaven applauds. Make a list of adults in your church that fit one or more of the descriptions. Think of a way to let them know that they are heroes of God's kingdom, and carry out your plan (e.g., Mr. Lee; thank him for the time he takes to coach soccer).

PERSON'S NAME

WAYS TO LET THE PEOPLE KNOW THEY ARE HEROES





JESUS, THE ULTIMATE HERO

We Know Him!

March 21, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV) • “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

John 3:30 (NIV) • “He must become greater; I must become less.”

Philippians 2:5-7 (NIV) • “Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

Hebrews 12:1, 2 (NIV) • “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “JESUS, THE ULTIMATE HERO”

When He was only 12 years old, Jesus knew two things for sure: (1) that His Father was God; and (2) what His lifetime occupation would be.

People search a lifetime to find their identities. But Jesus found His by the time He was the age of your earlieens. Jesus Christ should be our great example. He is our hero. Through Him we can find our true identities.

Jesus knew His identity and purpose in life because He allowed His heavenly Father to direct His steps. He was tempted in all things, yet without sin. He fulfilled the Word of God so that you and I can enjoy life as children of God, carrying out our Father’s business.

C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH “JESUS, THE ULTIMATE HERO”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Understand that Jesus is truly the ultimate person to emulate.
2. Realize that the power to live a life with Jesus as a hero comes from Jesus alone.
3. Accept the cost of being a follower of Jesus.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) whiteboard or chalk-

board, markers/chalk, sticks, pieces of bread, jar of oil, piece of wool, various containers, queen's crown, stuffed lions, five smooth stones, pillow, leather belt, honey, small toy tent, bright light, carpenter's tools, cross, crown of thorns.

Connecting • Bibles, student lessons.

Applying • Paper, pens or pencils.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for *Adventist Mission* for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Have a bag with several items in it. These items will represent a Bible hero—someone who had courage, faith in God, and/or helped others. Some suggested items are: sticks, piece of bread, or a jar of oil (Elijah and the woman of Zarephath—1 King 17:8-15); fleece or piece of wool (Gideon—Judges 6:36-40); jar of oil, various containers (Elijah and widow's oil—2 Kings 4:1-7); queen's crown (Esther—Esther 2:17; 5:1-3; 7:3); stuffed lions (Daniel—Daniel 6); five smooth stones (David—1 Samuel 17:40, 50); pillow (Joseph—Matthew 1:20-24; 2:13, 14, 19-21); leather belt, honey (John the Baptist—Matthew 3:4); small toy tent, bright light (Paul—Acts 13:9; 18:2, 3); cross, crown of thorns, carpenter tools (Jesus—Mark 6:3; Matthew 27:28-30; John 19:17).

Pull one of the items out of your bag and have the students guess who might have used the item. With each item, talk about how God used the hero to help others. **Say:** God uses the man or woman, boy or girl, who is willing to serve Him. God grants to those who are willing to live for Him the special power of His Holy Spirit.

Say: Even today we have men and women who honor God, help others, and risk their lives to save someone they don't know. We call them heroes. Every human hero has problems, shortcomings, triumphs, and failures. But Jesus is a hero to all of humanity. He died so that all could be saved. He has given everything He has to offer, and has held nothing back that would help us have eternal life.

Debriefing • [Note: the objective of this debriefing is to help the students figure out that Jesus is the best hero to have.] **Ask:** **What strengths and qualities do these heroes have?** (followed God; listened to God; did what God told them; had courage; trusted God; were willing to die for others)

On a whiteboard or chalkboard, combine all the qualities the students come up with. **Say:** **Jesus had the qualities that made Him the best hero of all. He lived His life as an example for us.**

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

In Friday's section of the student lesson the students were asked to assume the role of Jesus' talent agent. They are to think of different strategies to promote Jesus in society today. For this exercise, have them create a strategy for promoting Jesus in Jerusalem in His own time.

Say: **Imagine that you are living in Jerusalem during Jesus' ministry on earth. You are a talent agent. You hear about Jesus from here and there. You believe that He is the answer to all of the world's problems. So you decide you are going to be Jesus' publicist—His agent. You are going to sell Jesus. What would you do? Remember, the Romans are trying to get rid of Him, the Pharisees think He's a heretic, the women think He's the best, and some fishermen are now unemployed because of Him! How are you going to sell Jesus as the superhero for the world?**

Brainstorm together for a while.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

Let's talk about a man who marketed Jesus. He did this after he chose Jesus as the ultimate hero. That one decision changed him so much that even his name was changed to forever remember his new life with the ultimate hero. From being Saul he became Paul. In the first phase of his life he had everything—power, prestige, lineage, education, influence, opportunity, personality, skills, money. His life as Paul took on

special meaning because he focused on imitating Jesus. He wanted to be just like his hero. Ellen White refers to Paul as a hero of faith.

Ask: **What type of soldier would a general pick to be part of their army? (Strong, loyal, brave)**

Say: **In the battle between the two kingdoms, Jesus is the general of God's army. What a winning team Jesus would have if every recruit were like Paul!**

Ask: **Do you think that Jesus is looking for people like Paul today? (Some will say yes; others will say no.) How do you know that you are in God's army? (Sometimes it is as simple as being confident in who you are and what you are doing with your life. Sometimes it is knowing that everything will be all right when things really aren't. It's believing that God is in control of your life.)**

Say: **Jesus loves us so much that He doesn't expect us to be on the waiting list to join His army until we are "worthy." In love and grace Jesus accepts us as we are. We don't have to meet any requirements or standards. All we have to do is to accept Him as Savior—and we're in. Then He does His work of transforming us into His elite forces.**

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to tell or read the story from the student lesson. Have them present it now. Ask students to discuss how they feel each of the following verses relates to the story just read: Philippians 2:5-7; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 5:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 3:3; Micah 7:8; Mark 10:45; Luke 2:40; 1 Peter 2:21. You may want volunteers to read each verse aloud.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Tell the following anecdote in your own words:

There was a tightrope walker who would cross Niagara Falls to entertain thousands

of people. He never fell once. His secret? Throughout his walks he kept his eyes fixed on a large silver star he had hanging on the other side. By keeping his eyes on the star, he was not distracted by the crowds of people or afraid of what might happen. The star helped him get to the other side.

Ask: What helps someone achieve a goal? (Focus, determination, concentration, passion)

Have a volunteer find and read **Hebrews 12:1**. **Say:** The one thing this tightrope walker and Paul had in common was that they were always focused on something. While the tightrope walker used a star, Paul used Christ. For Paul, Jesus was the ultimate hero. He spent his entire life striving to become more like Him.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Say: When Jesus is your hero, you are definitely going to be vulnerable. If you are going to associate yourself with Jesus, you will be the object of attacks. You may be ridiculed, chased, disowned, or thrown in jail.

Divide the class into groups. Supply paper and pens or pencils. Have each group make a list of situations and scenarios in which it would be very difficult to be a follower of Jesus. Next to each situation, have them use Monday's or Wednesday's section of their lessons to find solutions to these situations. Finally, have each group share their problems and solutions with the rest of the class.

Have someone read **Matthew 5:14-16**. Ask

for suggestions for other more contemporary analogies that could be used in this passage besides a "light" and "a town built on a hill" (NIV).

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can you show Jesus that He is your hero?
2. How can you make sure that Jesus is a real presence in your life? Explain.
3. Why do followers of Jesus get attacked when doing what's right?
4. Why does Jesus ask total commitment of His followers?
5. If Jesus is such a perfect hero, why don't more people follow Him?
6. What is the boldest thing you've done as a follower of Jesus?
7. What part of following Jesus most frightens you?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

Close by reading this quote from Ellen G. White.

"Christ came to this world to show that by receiving power from on high, man can live an unsullied life. With unwearying patience and sympathetic helpfulness He met men in their necessities. By the gentle touch of grace He banished from the soul unrest and doubt, changing enmity to love, and unbelief to confidence" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 25).

Christ was all about helping and saving humanity from sin. He saved me; He is my hero. He saved you. Is He your hero?

Today is Global Youth Day!

STUDENT LESSON

JESUS, THE ULTIMATE HERO

We Know Him!

March 21, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 4, The Son:** "He [Jesus] lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 134, 135

WE KNOW HIM!

When Efe was a child, he was drawn to adventure stories. This fascination continued through his secondary school years. In high school his father would give him money to buy textbooks, and with the leftover change, Efe would purchase novels. He enjoyed unraveling plots and mysteries. When Efe enrolled in university-level studies, he became acquainted with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He experienced the joy of salvation as he learned about Jesus through His Word and was baptized!

Through the years Efe had built up a small library that mostly contained novels. After his conversion, he discovered that such books were not helping him grow spiritually. Thus, he de-

cided to review all the titles in his little library and burn any book that he knew had a negative effect on his appetite for spending time with Jesus in prayer and studying His Word. So, into the fire went the novels!

Efe believes that God rewarded his stand for Jesus because shortly afterward he received a shipment of books by Ellen G. White. He had requested some used or donated books, and in reply he received more than he requested. Efe donated in turn many of those books to others. Then he wrote, asking for more, and again he received boxes full of precious books. The second shipment contained a great variety of Ellen G. White's books. They were all hardcover books, designed to last! Efe now had volumes of books about Jesus and the love of God in his library that he could share with others who were thirsty for the water of life.

Efe has a deep concern for today's young people who are missing the blessing of Christ-centered books. He writes: "I urge you, dear friend, to read that which nourishes the soul." Take time today to read the Bible and a book by Ellen G. White and you will grow closer to Jesus. In turn He will enable you to be a light for Him in this world!—Adapted from *Encountering God's Grace*, p. 156.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read Ephesians 5:1, 2.
- » Even adults would find it difficult to stand up

and speak of Jesus in certain settings—such as a board meeting. Why do you think this is so? It's not as if He's a bad guy or has a bad rep. When you are asked in school to stand up and talk about your hero, do you say Jesus? If so, why, and if not, why not?

- » As Christians, adults and young people alike, sometimes we hesitate to be identified as part of the Jesus Fan Club. From your perspective, why is that? Any suggestions to fix this problem? Share your thoughts.

Monday

BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE SON

- » Read Isaiah 53:4-6; John 1:14; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19.
- » First, Christ left His Father and His heavenly home to come and live among humanity. Second, He loved, cared, and served the people around Him who were suffering. And He wanted to give us an example of how we should live and be of service to others. Third, He suffered and died for sinners. He wanted to give us the opportunity to be restored to God's image. Can there be a better description of a hero?
- » How have Jesus' life, example, and death changed your life?

- » What can you do today to follow Jesus' example of service to your family, neighborhood, school, church, and community?

- » Fill in the blanks.

"Finally, _____, whatever things are _____, whatever things are _____, whatever things are _____, whatever

things are _____, whatever things are _____, whatever things are of _____, if there is any _____ and if there is anything _____—meditate on these things"

(Philippians 4:8, NKJV).

Tuesday

REFLECTING

- » Read 1 Peter 2:21.
- » Some old Roman coins have a picture of an ox on them. The ox faces two things—an altar and a plow. On the coin is also an inscription that reads: "Ready for either." The ox symbolized the fervor of Rome. It was ready either for the supreme moment of sacrifice on the altar or the long labor of the plow on the farm.
- » We can learn something about Christian living from this. Like the ox, ready for both slaughter and service, when you earnestly follow Jesus as your hero, you must be ready for anything. There may be times when you suffer, when you are ridiculed, when you are left alone, when nothing seems to be going your way. After all, Satan will do his best to keep you from Jesus. But in spite of it all, you will be totally content with life. Does this sound strange—hard to believe? But think about it. Ask yourself how much Jesus is worth to you. This week, take time to talk to the adults in your life about the hardships they have faced for the sake of their Christian life.

Wednesday

BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » In this week's lesson we are learning about what makes following Jesus worth our while. Fill in the blanks using the New International Version.

1. "In your _____ with one another, have the same _____ as Christ Jesus: who, being in very _____ God, did not consider _____ with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself _____ by taking the very nature of a _____, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:5-7, NIV).

2. "For we are God's _____, created in Christ Jesus to do _____, which God prepared in _____ for us to _____" (Ephesians 2:10, NIV).

3. "Follow God's _____, therefore, as dearly loved _____ and walk in the way of _____, just as Christ _____ us and gave himself up for us as a _____ and _____ to God" (Ephesians 5:1, 2, NIV).

4. "You show that you are a _____ from Christ, the result of our _____, written not with ink but with the _____ of the _____, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of _____ hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:3, NIV).

5. "Though I sit in _____, the LORD will be my _____" (Micah 7:8, NIV).

6. "For even the _____ of Man did not _____ to be served, but to _____" (Mark 10:45, NIV).

7. "And the child grew and became _____; he was _____ with

_____, and the _____ of God was on him" (Luke 2:40, NIV).

8. "To this you were called, because Christ _____ for you, _____ you an example, that you should _____ in his _____" (1 Peter 2:21, NIV).

Thursday **CONNECTING**

- » Read Luke 2:40.
- » Review the memory text.
- » The most important thing about being a part of God's kingdom is knowing that you belong in that kingdom. It is not enough just to feel as if you're part of it some of the time—such as when you are in church or reading your Bible. God's kingdom needs soldiers—ready for battle at any time. Being part of His kingdom means that you believe 100 percent that you belong with Him. No doubts, no maybes. Just confidence in who you are in Him.
- » Study the life of Jesus—if not straight from the Bible, remember the stories you've heard growing up. Jesus knew, without doubt, who He was, what He was to do, when He was just 12 years old. Not because He was God, but because He was a kid just like you—but a kid who was always connected to the Person He belonged to. The secret is "connection" with the kingdom through Jesus.

Friday **APPLYING**

- » Read 2 Corinthians 3:3.
- » You believe that Jesus is the answer to all the world's problems. So you decide you will be His publicist, His agent. You are going to sell the ministry of Jesus—now, today, in this

society. What would you do? How would you go about it? Would you advertise on TV or the internet? How would your marketing

ideas differ from those you would have used if you had been His agent in Jerusalem during Jesus' time?

LOGO: _____

SLOGAN: _____

STRATEGY: _____

MARKETING TECHNIQUES: _____





YOU, A HERO?

The Difference of One

March 28, 2026

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Proverbs 29:18 (NIV) • “Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom’s instruction.”

Isaiah 8:20 (NIV) • “Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”

Acts 9:15 (NIV) • “This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles.”

Philippians 4:6, 7 (NIV) • “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12 (NIV) • “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22 (NIV) • “But test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.”

(See additional passages in student lesson.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “YOU, A HERO?”

Children associate heroes with fictitious characters or real people doing unreal, noteworthy things. They usually don’t see themselves as having any kind of hero potential. The past two lessons have focused on the qualities of heroism, and on Jesus, the ultimate hero. This lesson is about giving the students the spiritual motivation needed to see the hero potential they have through the power of Christ. Christian heroes are merely disciples, disciples of Jesus. Just as ordinary men and women with flaws helped Jesus change the world, ordinary earlieteens have what it takes to change the world. Heroism is not a lot of hypothetical idealism. It is real, very real, when you are a hero for Jesus.

While you are teaching this lesson it is important to build the confidence of your students and to present Jesus as a very accessible person with a genuine interest in young people. This is one lesson in which the atmosphere should be one of seriousness. Ensure that you have enough adults to keep things under control and to make sure certain students are not ridiculed by others.

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “YOU, A HERO?”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Realize that by being a disciple of Jesus, they are a Christian hero.

- Accept the fact that heroes for Christ are continually challenged.
- Understand that God is looking for willingness to be transformed, not perfection.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) index cards, pencils; (Activity B) paper shields, pens, crayons.

Connecting • (Kingdom) whiteboard or chalkboard, markers/chalk, (Life) "Revision of the Hebrews 11 Hero Database" handout (p. 140); pens or pencils.

Applying • Bibles, student lessons.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

- Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
- Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
- Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist Mission for youth and adults at www.realtimefaith.net)
- >> Service project reports

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students

need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Give each student an index card and a pencil. Have them think of things that make a person important—such as being a millionaire, having a sports car, finding the cure for cancer, and so on. Have each person write on their card one thing that makes a person important.

Go • Next, have them play "rock, paper, scissors" in an attempt to collect as many cards as possible. If the students don't know how to play the game, explain that every round of the game involves two people. At the count of three, the two students must show either a "rock" (fist), "scissors" (two fingers), or "paper" (a flat hand). Rock breaks scissors, scissors cut paper, and paper covers rock. If both students show the same item, they start over. The winner gets the loser's card. Repeat for a few minutes, rotating partners and making sure each student has the same number of chances. Then see who has the most cards.

Debriefing • Ask: Who ended up with what? If all you had in the world were the items listed on the cards in your hands, how would that make you feel? (Note: Some students may have nothing in their hands. So expect a variety of answers and different levels of enthusiasm.) Money is something the world values a lot. If you had an infinite supply of money, what would you do with it? (I would buy myself everything I've ever wanted; I'd buy stuff for my family; I'd give to the church; I'd save; I'd give to the poor.)

Say: It's great to have or accomplish all these things. They make us feel good about ourselves. But it is important to remember that God does not base His evaluation of our worth or significance on accomplishments. He sees not what we have or what we have done, but what we can become through His

power. He doesn't look at what you are now, an earliten who has to rely on parents for so much. He sees all that you can do with Him for the kingdom.

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Fill a piece of paper by drawing the shape of a shield. Make copies enough for all the students. Distribute them. On the back of the shield, have the student write their name. On the front, in the middle of the shield, have the student write the initial of their first name prominently in the middle of the shield.

Get set • Say: Pass the shields around. When you get someone else's shield, think about something that person has done that reflects Jesus or a talent that they have that can be used for Jesus. Write a note about it on the shield and pass it on. Pass the shields around until they get back to their owner. (If you have a large class, you may want to do this in smaller groups.)

Go • Say: Read the list of all your assets, all your potential. Now that you have this affirmation from your friends here, do you think you are ready to face the world and be a hero for Jesus? Most will say no or hesitate.

Say: It's OK if you don't feel ready yet. Being a hero is easier in theory than it is in practice! But the Bible gives us simple guidelines to help us get some of the courage we need. Have someone read **1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22**. Discuss different scenarios in which this simple advice could help you be a hero.

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

Most treasures are not sitting out in the open waiting to be found. Usually precious stones, metals, and natural resources have to be searched and dug for. Often tons of dirt must be moved out of the way before finding

these treasures.

Ask: How does this illustration show God's search for heroes? (God doesn't deliberately come around looking for flaws, warts, and blemishes. He looks for the gold He created that is under all the grime of fallen human nature. In fact, we wouldn't even still be considered gold if He didn't come looking for us.) **How can we reflect God in how we look at people?** (The more God-given qualities we look for in other people, the more likely they are to let God uncover more.)

Ask someone to find and read **Acts 9:15**. The man that God is referring to in this text is Paul. **Ask:** How would you feel if you heard a voice from heaven say something like this about you? (Scared, freaked out, surprised, etc.) **Say:** Of course, once you realized it was really the voice of God, you'd be crazy not to respond positively. Even if you were scared, you'd want to do the right thing. **Ask:** So what would you have to change in your life to respond positively to God? (Let Him help me use my time more wisely, be more careful how I choose my friends, try to make better decisions in my life, be honest in sharing Jesus with others.)

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Ask three students to come to the whiteboard or chalkboard and draw an illustration for you. One is to draw a rowboat, one a sailboat, and one a steamboat. When they are finished, thank them and proceed.

Say: By now you have a pretty good idea of what it means to be part of God's kingdom, part of God's army, and part of the great controversy. The question to ask yourself—especially in the context of this lesson—is what are you going to do with all this information? No one can force you to be 100 percent for God. The decision is yours.

Tell the students that someone once said that when you understand what God wants you to do, you can react in three ways. The three ways are compared to different types of boats, to help you remember it better. Circle the appropriate boat on the board when you make each of these statements. **Say:**

- 1. You can be a rowboat Christian and wait to be pushed before you make a difference.**
- 2. You can be a sailboat Christian and go with the wind, with the crowd.**
- 3. You can be a steamboat Christian and go where you have to without a push and without the wind of others, simply filled with the steam of the Spirit.**

Whenever you have the opportunity to be a hero, ask yourself what kind of "boat" Christian you are.

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to tell or read the stories from the student lesson. Ask: What do these stories tell you about being a Christian? (You cannot pick and choose the times you want to be a Christian. The responsibility of being a Christian goes beyond living your life. It is about reflecting Jesus to others all the time.) **When Jesus was on earth, He was a constant witness for His Father.** **Everything He did spoke of His relationship with God. What is the importance of being consistent in your witnessing for God?** (When people look to someone as a leader, it is important that they see a consistent quality worth following. If you are a good example only sometimes, it reflects on your relationship with God. Being part of the kingdom and following Christ should be evident throughout your life.)

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Share the following quotations from Ellen G. White.

"Christ's followers have been redeemed for

service. Our Lord teaches that the true object of life is ministry. Christ Himself was a worker, and to all His followers He gives the law of service—service to God and to their fellow men. Here Christ has presented to the world a higher conception of life than they had ever known. By living to minister for others, man is brought into connection with Christ. The law of service becomes the connecting link which binds us to God and to our fellow men" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 326).

"The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328).

"The Lord has a great work to be done, and He will bequeath the most in the future life to those who do the most faithful, willing service in the present life. The Lord chooses His own agents, and each day under different circumstances He gives them a trial in His plan of operation. In each true-hearted endeavor to work out His plan, He chooses His agents not because they are perfect but because, through a connection with Him, they may gain perfection" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 330).

"Let the youth who need an education set to work with a determination to obtain it. Do not wait for an opening; make one for yourselves. Take hold in any small way that presents itself. Practice economy. Do not spend your means for the gratification of appetite, or in pleasure seeking. Be determined to become as useful and efficient as God calls you to be. Be thorough and faithful in whatever you undertake. Procure every advantage within your reach for strengthening the intellect. Let the study of books be combined with useful manual labor, and by faithful endeavor, watchfulness, and prayer secure the wisdom that is from above. This will give you an all-round education. Thus you may rise in character, and gain an influence over other minds, enabling you

to lead them in the path of uprightness and holiness" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 334).

"The humble worker who obediently responds to the call of God may be sure of receiving divine assistance. To accept so great and holy a responsibility is itself elevating to the character. It calls into action the highest mental and spiritual powers, and strengthens and purifies the mind and heart. Through faith in the power of God, it is wonderful how strong a weak man may become, how decided his efforts, how prolific of great results" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 354).

Say: When we live like Jesus and for Jesus, it can result only in positive things for the kingdom of God.

Divide the class into groups. Give each group a copy of the hero database on page 140 and a pen or pencil. When they have completed the exercise, ask each group to share their list, giving an explanation for each inclusion. Encourage and compliment them on their ability to see the positive in others.

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Say: Imagine a guy who is impulsive, scared of everything, a failure, unreliable, a party lover, self-centered, nosy, and unliked. (Note: these are descriptions of Jesus' disciples from Friday's section of the student lesson.)

Ask: What kind of job would you give this guy? (Maybe a job that requires continuous supervision. Probably wouldn't give him any kind of job. He would be a big risk.) **How effective a leader would this type of person be?** (No one would want to follow someone who doesn't inspire and motivate.) **Would you like to have someone like that as your youth pastor?**

Say: This man I've described has all the descriptions listed in Friday's section of your lesson. Refer them to it if you have not already done so. **They are not positive qualities. Yet**

they are qualities found in Jesus' disciples. Despite all their faults, Jesus entrusted these men with the job of spreading the gospel all over the world. And it is because of these originally unreliable, self-centered, nosy men that we are Christians today. God changed and used these men in amazing ways. He can do the same with you.

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What are some ways you can be a Christian hero?
2. How can you make Jesus' presence in your life obvious to those around you?
3. Read **John 14:12-14**. Is this meant to be taken literally? Just how much can we expect from God?
4. Why doesn't God use only beautiful and recognizable people to work for Him?
5. Why is it difficult to be open about our faith?
6. What are the pros and cons of being a silent Christian—one who loves the Lord in their heart but does nothing to demonstrate their faith to others?
7. What obstacles might prevent you from becoming an effective disciple?

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

Being a hero for Jesus takes a lot of courage. One king of Poland always carried with him the picture of his father. And when he had to do something important or difficult, he would look at the picture and pray that he would never do anything unworthy of his father's name which he also bore.

Reading the Bible is like looking at the face of God. The more we get to know God, the easier it is to go about our Father's business. Don't you want to be sure that you never do anything unworthy of your heavenly Father's name?

Conclude by reading **Proverbs 29:18; Isaiah 8:20; Philippians 4:6, 7**.

FOR LESSON 13:

THIS IS TO BE USED WITH CONNECTING TO LIFE.

REVISION OF THE HEBREWS 11 HERO DATABASE

Hebrews 11 lists people from the Bible who God says are worthy to be in heaven's hall of fame. It is certainly not a complete list. There have also been other people since Bible times who qualify. Think of other people—from the Bible, from your history books, from your church, from your school, and from your community who you think are worthy to be included in the "Hebrews 11 Hero Database."

HERO QUALIFICATIONS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

STUDENT LESSON



13

YOU, A HERO?

The Difference of One

March 28, 2026

Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 17, Spiritual Gifts and Ministries:** "God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. . . . These gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people."
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 41-44

THE DIFFERENCE OF ONE

One makes a difference. After years of service in South Africa, the famous missionary Robert Moffat returned to Scotland to recruit helpers. When he arrived at the church, he was disappointed that only a small group was there to hear him. What bothered him even more was that only women were there. They wouldn't be able to leave and go as missionaries without their husbands and families. He was hoping to challenge men. Even his text for the sermon

was "Unto you, O men, I call" (Proverbs 8:4, KJV). Way in the back, in the loft of the church, was a little boy pumping the bellows of the organ. He was too young to be a missionary in Africa, but he listened with great interest. Meanwhile Moffat preached with frustration, knowing that no one in the audience would be following him back to Africa.

But God works in mysterious ways. Years later that little boy who pumped the organ during Moffat's service went and ministered to the unreached tribes of Africa. His name was David Livingstone! Because of David, millions today know Jesus.

One could have made a difference. A Christian baroness lived in the highlands of Nairobi, Kenya. Being very wealthy, she had many people working for her. One was a young boy who ran errands for her. One day the boy came to the baroness saying that he was not going to be working for her anymore and that he would like a reference letter. The baroness was surprised. She paid the boy well. He had a comfortable home. She really liked him. So she offered to pay him more if he'd stay. But the boy replied that he was not leaving for more money. He told her that he had come to work for her three months earlier to observe the ways of a Christian. Now he was ready to work for a Muslim to observe their ways. At the end of the next three months he was going to decide to become a Christian or a Muslim. The baroness was flustered. She began to think of all the things she would have done differently over

the past three months had she known she was being watched so closely. And all she could do now was exclaim, "Why didn't you tell me at the beginning?"

Sunday **RESPONDING**

- » Read Philippians 4:6, 7.
- » Sometimes surviving in school is all about "camouflage." You try to blend in, not stick out. You don't want to do things that make you seem different. Unfortunately, you cannot be a Christian hero and go unnoticed. There is no such thing as an "invisible" disciple of Jesus. First, with all the pressures in your school and social life, is it even possible to be a hero in the popular sense, and a disciple of Jesus at the same time? If your answer is yes, give at least one example of a situation in which this is possible. If your answer is no, explain why.

Monday **BIBLE ANSWERS ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND MINISTRIES**

- » Read Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Ephesians 4:11-16.
- » Jesus is our example. He daily used the gifts and talents He was given. He healed the lame, restored sight and hearing, raised the dead, and preached hope of a better life. In following His example, we are to learn what our gifts and talents are. We are to use our gifts helping others. And we have been given the commission to tell others who Jesus is. We can tell them about a better life—a life without sin, suffering, and death. And we can tell them that Jesus is coming soon and that anyone ready to meet Him will go and live with Him eternally.
- » What are you doing to develop the gifts and

talents God has given you?

- » Unscramble the following words and place them where they go in the verse below.

lal	ytiliba	sretsinim	deifirolg
kaeps	deviecer	noinimod	retsanim
sdrawets	selcaro	rehtona	enoyna
seilppus	teePr	yrolg	

"As each one has _____ a gift,
_____ it to one _____, as good
_____ of the manifold grace of God. If
_____ speaks, let him _____ as
the _____ of God. If anyone _____,
let him do it as with the _____ which
God _____, that in _____ things
God may be _____ through Jesus Christ,
to whom belong the _____ and the
_____ forever and ever. Amen"

(1 _____ 4:10, 11, NKJV).

Tuesday **REFLECTING**

- » Read Hebrews 11.
- » Notice the items reported in the media. Nobody talks about the ordinary, everyday things that go on. The world takes note of things out of the ordinary. And this phenomenon is not limited to this world. Heaven also takes note of the extraordinary that some people will let God do through them. Enoch walked with God, and Heaven noticed. Noah stood out among his peers, and Heaven noticed. Moses led a nation, and Heaven noticed. Throughout history you can find ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Whether those things were stupid or heroic, the world stood up and paid attention.
- » Be a hero of any kind, and the world will

surely take notice. But be a hero and a citizen for God's kingdom, and both earth and heaven will take notice. What this means is that being a Christian and following God will take you places you have never dreamed of. You will have adventures that you know God led you through. It means God will use you to make a difference in this world and in the next!

Wednesday **BIBLE INSIGHTS**

» This week you are learning that God is looking for persons of integrity. If you find yourself doubting that you could ever do anything great, remember the stories in the Bible. They are about people, most of them just as ordinary as you and me. What made them stand out as heroes? What kept some from becoming heroes? Fill in the blanks of the Bible verses that follow; then on the line following the text, answer this question for each verse: What did they do or not do that made them heroes?

1. "I have found _____ son of Jesse
a man after my own _____. he
_____ do everything I want him to
do" (Acts 13:22, NIV). _____

2. "And the boy _____ continued
to _____ in _____ and in
_____ with the Lord and with people"
(1 Samuel 2:26, NIV). _____

3. "The king talked with them, and he
_____ _____ _____ to
_____, _____, _____
and _____" (Daniel 1:19, NIV). _____

4. "Now _____ was a very _____
man, more _____ than any-
one else on the _____ of the
_____ " (Numbers 12:3, NIV).

5. "Ahab son of Omri did more _____
in the eyes of the Lord than _____
of _____ before him" (1 Kings 16:30,
NIV). _____

6. "Eli's sons were _____; they had
_____ for the Lord" (1 Samuel
2:12, NIV).

7. "There was a man _____ from God
whose name was _____. He came
as a _____ to _____ concerning
that _____, so that _____ him all
might believe" (John 1:6-8, NIV).

8. "Therefore _____ and _____
disciples of all _____, baptizing them
in the _____ of the _____ and
of the _____ and of the _____
_____ " (Matthew 28:19, NIV).

Thursday **CONNECTING**

» Read Judges 6.

» Review the memory text.

» In Judges 6 an angel visits Gideon, who at the time was hiding from the armies of Midian. He calls upon Gideon to be a mighty warrior

and deliver Israel from her captors. Think about that for a minute. An angel asks a guy hiding in a cave to be a mighty warrior and deliver a nation from an entire army of fierce soldiers? It doesn't make sense. But to God it made perfect sense. For He sees us through divine eyes. He sees the potential in us to be used by Him. When God looks at you, He sees a young person full of potential. Will you let God use you and fulfill the plans He has for you?

» God is still looking for Gideon-type leaders today. They may not be obvious leader material. They may be hiding in a cave. But God sees beyond the cave and into hearts. He can tell who will let themselves be used by His Spirit. Today's war is not one fought on a battlefield—it is one fought between good and evil. And it is not a war over land, but one fought over souls. You are an agent in

this battle. God used Gideon thousands of years ago, and He can use you today. Will you join His team and let Him use you?

Friday APPLYING

- » Read Matthew 28:19, 20.
- » Good disciples make good heroes. So figure out if you have what it takes to be a disciple and a hero. Below are texts that describe the disciples of Jesus. First, decide on the trait that the text is describing. Next, on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 being nothing, 10 being a lot), mark how much of this quality you think you have. Finally, ask yourself—What does this say about the kind of disciple Jesus is looking for?

TEXT	DISCIPLE TRAIT	HOW MUCH OF IT DO YOU HAVE?
1. Matthew 10:42	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. Mark 4:40	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. Luke 12:22	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. John 8:31	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. Matthew 17:14-21	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6. John 13:35	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. Luke 11:1-4	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. Matthew 16:24-26	_____	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

