

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
DECEMBER162023

the golden age of Israel

Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 5:6-25; 6; 7; 9; 10.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 70.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The early years of David's reign were considered a "golden age" in Israel's history. After the years of conflict and civil war after Saul's death, David's coronation marked the beginning of a period of peace and prosperity. Israel defeated their old enemies, the Philistines. David showed mercy to the family of Saul. He established his new capital city at Jerusalem and brought the ark of the covenant back to that city. His eventual goal was to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem, but this was a goal that was to be realized not by David—but by his son Solomon. David's success as king was due to his faithfulness to God, but success also created temptations for David, just as it does for anyone—the temptation to trust in his own strength rather than relying on God's power as he had been forced to do during the long, hard years before he became king.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- *Know* that faithfulness to God is sometimes—though not always—rewarded with success in this life.
- *Feel* they can trust God with the success or failure of their dreams.
- *Respond* by thanking God for the blessings He has given and trying to use those blessings to bless others.

III. EXPLORE

Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 24: "There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle that the Lord set up and not humans. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. . . . It is a work of investigative judgment, which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. . . . This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Lev. 16; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Heb. 1:3; 2:16, 17; 4:14-16; 8:1-5; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; Rev. 8:3-5; 11:19; 14:6, 7, 12; 20:12; 22:11, 12.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

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

Divide into groups of three or four and give each group poster board, magazines and catalogues to cut up, scissors, glue, and markers. Ask each group to make a collage that illustrates the concept of "success."

When the groups have finished, discuss their post-

ers. Do the images they chose illustrate success from the world's point of view or from God's? Can the two ever be the same? Give examples of people who are successful both by worldly terms and on God's terms. What opportunities do such people have? What special challenges or dangers might they face?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A story is told of a rich man who was unhappy with his life. He had lots of money but had to travel and be away from his family all the time. His life was very stressful. He envied the lifestyle of his poor friend, who had almost no money but was happily married and content in his home life.

One day he told this to another man, who said, "If you wish your life could be more like the life your poor friend enjoys, why not try giving away some of your money to him?" The rich man immediately gave several hundred thousand dollars to his poor friend. He could easily afford it, and it was enough to transform the poor man's life.

At first, the poor man was ecstatic. But then he began to worry about where he should keep the money, how he should invest it, and whether it might be stolen. He and his wife, who had previously been so happy together, began to quarrel about how to spend the money. Finally they decided that the money was destroying their peaceful and happy life, and they agreed to give it back.

Blessings—money, success, other good things—can come into anyone's life, but they don't necessarily bring happiness unless they are accompanied by the proper spirit. In fact, success can be just as much of a spiritual problem as failure, unless we learn how to deal with it properly.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

A lot of times as Christians we focus on how to deal with hardship, difficulty, and failure. But how do we deal with the good things that happen? Hardship causes some people to lose their faith in God—but so does success! Sometimes when people get ahead in this world, they begin to trust in themselves rather than in God. They may forget to be grateful to God for His blessings, or forget to share their blessings with people who are less fortunate.

We all have hardships and difficulties. But we also have all been given blessings, talents, and abilities. This week's lesson uses the story of King David's most successful years to explore how we can respond when God is doing good things in our lives.

Out of the Story for Teachers

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

Brainstorm with the group about the qualities that you think make a good leader. Write them on a white/chalkboard as the group comes up with ideas.

- Would these be good qualities for a leader today?
- What about for a king in David's time?
- What differences are there between what was required for a leader then, and what we look for today? What are the similarities?

Discuss how David's personal qualities and experience measured up to the list.

- What made David a good king?
- In the light of difficulties David faced on the road to becoming king, what strengths do you think he gained during those years that helped him when he was king?
- How do you think becoming king changed David?

Look in the Bible passages for evidence to support the group's answers to those questions.

Sharing Context and Background

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

When God has blessed us with good things, the appropriate response is gratitude. One of the reasons that King David was a "man after God's own heart" was that he knew how to respond in joy and gratitude to the good things God had given him. The prayer David prayed after the prophet Nathan told him he was not called to build God's temple demonstrates that David realized all his success was due to God. He gave God credit for placing him on the throne and keeping him there.

David's name is associated with many of the beautiful ancient hymns in the Bible book we know as Psalms. Though David did not write all the psalms, he

is believed to have written many of them. The psalms David wrote express the whole range of human emotions, from fear and sadness to hope and gladness. Many of them are beautiful hymns of praise expressing King David's gratitude for all God had done for him.

There are many other interesting events that take place in the overall biblical passages for this week: 2 Samuel 5:6-25; 6; 7; 9; 10, with commentary in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 70. A few notes relating to other incidents besides *Into the Story* follow:

King's ownership of the city (2 Samuel 5:9): "The title 'City of David' may reflect the ancient practice that the capital city became not only the royal residence but the personal estate of the reigning king and his successors . . . much the same way that Omri bought the site for his new capital, Samaria (1 Kings 16:24)."—*Bible Background Commentary.**

David's activity (2 Samuel 6:14-21): "The verb translated 'danced' in verses 14 and 16 is used only in this passage. The use of the word in the related language of Ugaritic shows it to be something one does with fingers, thus suggesting snapping or waving fingers. The verb translated 'leaping' in verse 16 is used only here and in a slightly different form in Genesis 49:24, where it is a description of the agility of the arms. In the parallel passage, 1 Chronicles 15:29, the verb translated 'dancing' is only used of human activity twice (once parallel to singing and rejoicing, Job 21:11; and once opposite to mourning, Eccl. 3:4). It generally conveys swaying, trembling or vibrating movements. It is possible, then, that David is not involved in dance at all but is swaying his arms and snapping or waving his fingers."—*Bible Background Commentary.*

David's action contrasted to normal (2 Samuel 9:7): "Mephibosheth had good cause to be afraid of David. There is wide precedent in Mesopotamian texts for the elimination of all rival claimants to the throne when a king comes to power (compare Baasha's murder of Jeroboam's family in 1 Kings 15:29). Such purges

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Arts and Crafts

Although many high school-aged youth feel that they've outgrown "arts and crafts," students have a variety of learning styles. Making a collage, as suggested in the opening activity for this lesson, allows those whose skills are more visual than verbal to explore the lesson ideas in their own way. Be sure to provide a variety of magazines to cut up that you know will contain pictures relevant to the subject of the collage. For example, for a collage about success, you might choose business and celebrity magazines that will contain pictures of wealthy and powerful people, as well as mission magazines that will show pictures of people who have found success through serving others.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Patriarchs and Prophets. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

also occurred years later as a form of revenge for political opposition or rebellion attempted against previous rulers. For example, Ashurbanipal mutilated, executed, and fed the bodies of his grandfather's rivals to dogs as part of his first official acts as king of Assyria. David, however, treats Mephibosheth, the only surviving male member of the royal family, as the rightful heir to Saul's estates. His generosity is coupled with the command to eat at David's table. In this way Mephibosheth is treated with honor, though some have noted it also keeps him under observation should he be inclined to subversion."—*Bible Background Commentary.*

III. CLOSING

Activity

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

Read Psalm 63 together as a group. You may read in unison (making sure everyone is using the same translation) or assign a verse at a time for people to read. When the psalm is done, ask: What does this psalm tell us about David's relationship with God? How did he relate to God in good times and in bad times? What can we learn from David that will help us when we deal with both good times and bad times in our Christian lives?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Every life includes highs and lows. For David, the early years of his reign were a "high" time when he finally experienced victory and success after years of waiting and struggle. These years were a "high" time for Israel, too, as the nation experienced unity, strength, and prosperity unlike anything they had known before.

We all know we need to cling to God during the low times, but what about when things are going well? That's when we need to praise God for what He has done for us. That's when we need to share His blessings with others, as David did by ruling Israel justly and showing compassion to the relatives of his defeated enemies. Most of all, our successful times are the times when we need to continue trusting God, recognizing that our success is not our own achievement but a gift from Him. When hard times come again—and they will—we need to know we still have God's power to rely on.

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Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 70.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 2 Samuel 5:6-25; 6; 7; 9; 10.
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the golden age of Israel



Photo by Terrill Thomas

flashlight

"The kingdom of Israel had now reached in extent the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, and afterward repeated to Moses: 'Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.' Genesis 15:18. Israel had become a mighty nation, respected and feared by surrounding peoples. In his own realm David's power had become very great. He commanded, as few sovereigns in any age have been able to command, the affections and allegiance of his people. He had honored God, and God was now honoring him" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 716).

keytext

"Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

(2 Samuel 7:16, NIV)

what do you think?

Choose the best response to the statements below:

When things are going well for me, I feel . . .

a. guilty
b. worried that it can't last
c. excited
d. grateful

I think that God has blessed me . . .

a. a little bit
b. not that much, right now
c. a great deal
d. not at all

did you know?

Historians think King David probably ruled from about 1004-965 B.C. It was during his reign that Israel became recognized as a nation rather than just a collection of tribes. King David established Israel's power in two ways: first, by defeating Israel's enemies, particularly the Philistines, and second, by forming alliances with friendly neighboring countries. "His authority was recognized from the borders of Egypt and the Red Sea to the banks of the Euphrates." (See www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org.) He united the 12 tribes and established the nation's capital at Jerusalem. David's reign was later looked back on as the "Golden Age" of Israel's history.



INTO THE STORY

"After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, 'Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent.'

"Nathan replied to the king, 'Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you.'

"But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying:

" 'Go and tell my servant David, "This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' " '

" 'Now then, tell my servant David, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

" ' "The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." ' "

(2 Samuel 7:1-16, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What was the secret of David's success as king?

_____
_____
_____

Once David had established peace in Israel, what was his next goal? Why was this important to him?

_____
_____
_____

Why did God not want David to build a temple for Him? (See 1 Chronicles 22:8-10 for more detail.)

_____
_____
_____

What had God done for David in the past?

_____
_____
_____

What promises did God make to David for the future?

_____
_____
_____

How do you think David might have felt after receiving this message from the Lord? Read 2 Samuel 7:18-29 for David's response.

_____
_____
_____

How do you think you would feel receiving a message like this?

_____
_____
_____

What has God already promised you in His Word that compares?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"He gives his king great victories; he shows unfailing love to his anointed, to David and to his descendants forever" **(Psalm 18:50, NIV).**

"I will sing a new song to you, my God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you, to the One who gives victory to kings, who delivers his servant David" **(Psalm 144:9, 10, NIV).**

"And now, LORD God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever" **(2 Samuel 7:25, 26, NIV).**

"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" **(Luke 1:31-33, NIV).**

further insight

"Truth, uprightness, purity, have been pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these principles."—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 253.

"Success in any line demands a definite aim. He who would achieve true success in life must keep steadily in view the aim worthy of his endeavor. Such an aim is set before the youth of today. The heaven-appointed purpose of giving the gospel to the world in this generation is the noblest that can appeal to any human being."

—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 262.

Sabbath

Read 2 Samuel 7:18-29.

Success affects different people in different ways. After experiencing many hardships in his youth, David was richly blessed by God when he became king. Sum up in your own words how David responded to the blessings God had given him:

_____

_____

What can we learn from David about how we should respond to the good things God does for us?

_____

_____

Sunday

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

As David reflected on how God had blessed him by making him king, he wanted to do something to honor God in return. His idea seemed like a good one: he would build a permanent temple in which to worship God, to replace the movable tabernacle that had been God's house in Israel ever since the days of wandering in the wilderness.

What was the first thing David decided to do to secure God's presence in his new capital city? How did God respond? What was God's response to the second part of David's plan?

_____

_____

Monday

Read Acts 2:29-36.

God promised David that a king from his line of descendants would sit on the throne and rule Israel forever. At first glance, this seems like a promise that was not fulfilled. The line of kings descended from David ruled only until the Babylonian captivity—and for most of that time, the nation was divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, with the kings of David's line ruling only in Judah.

Christians believe that God's promise was fulfilled in a spiritual sense through Jesus, who came from King David's family line and whose reign will last into eternity. What evidence can you find in the Bible for that view?

_____

_____

God's promises to us are not always fulfilled in the way we expect them to be. God's plan may be far greater than we can comprehend, yet we can always trust Him to eventually bring good out of whatever happens.

Tuesday

Read Psalm 144:9, 10.

As Ellen White points out in the *Flashlight* quote the reign of David was a golden age for Israel in terms of power and influence among the nations. For a brief time the 12 tribes were united into one kingdom that was victorious over its enemies and prosperous within its own borders.

Why do you think God blessed David's rule in spite of the very human and serious mistakes he made? What can we do to open the way for God's blessing in our lives?

_____

_____

When our lives are in harmony with God's will, it's easier for God to pour out His blessings on us and to use us to bless others.

Wednesday

David experienced success during the early years of his reign. He had worked hard and earned that success, but success has its dangers as well as its benefits. A successful person can come to believe that he is "self-made."

While David never lost his sense of gratitude to God, unfortunately he fell to the temptation to put his faith in himself. How is it possible to be successful while not becoming overconfident, or acting as if ordinary rules don't apply to you?

_____

_____

Thursday

Read James 4:10.

How well do you handle success? Check one or more responses below:

___ I haven't experienced enough success to know.
___ Success worries me. I'm not comfortable with it.
___ I'm grateful when God sends good things my way.
___ I get conceited and make mistakes when things are going well.

When you are trying to succeed at something—school, sports, anything that's important to you—you probably pray and ask God to help you do well. Next time, also pray that if you succeed, God will help you to handle success well and use it to glorify Him and benefit others—just as David did during the "golden years" of his reign.

Friday

Read 2 Timothy 2:15.

Gratitude is good for you! When you reflect on the good things in your life, it lifts your spirits and strengthens your faith in God.

Make a list of 10 things you are grateful for. (Use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.) Pray a prayer of thanks to God for those blessings. Then, think of other people who have been part of those good things. Write a card, note, or email to each of those people to say thanks for what they have done for you.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 70.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.